

Vol. 2, No. 32 — April 25, 2014

THE SARASOTA News Leader

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PROMOTION VERSUS PROJECTS
A LIFT IN THE PRICE TAG**

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Welcome

When I was a college student working as a lowly intern at *The News & Observer* in Raleigh, NC, I used to gaze periodically at a big sign on the wall of the open-plan newsroom. It said, “Get it first, but get it right.”

A tangential maxim I have embraced all my career is “Make sure it is fair.” As much as I love to score a big scoop, I not only want to make sure the information is accurate, I also want to make sure the way it is presented is as fair as possible. To that end, *News Leader* Copy Editor Vicki Chatley has been invaluable. She does not shy away from pointing it out if she feels we have stepped across the line.

Sadly, if someone disagrees with the editorial stance we take on a position, the person tends to conflate that with our coverage of the issue. That can lead to the source “punishing” us by refusing to speak to us or failing to provide the most up-to-date information when we request it.

Those circumstances are never pleasant. Our only response can be what it always has been — working to the best of our ability to avail you of all the facts we can assemble from both sides.

Now that my rant is over, I encourage you to take note of the wide variety of news stories in this issue. Then you can relish the latest spectacular photos and essay contributor Fran Palmeri created for Earth Week and marvel at A&E Writer Elinor Rogosin’s descriptions of a contemporary dance program.

Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor and Publisher



THREAT FROM THE HOMELESS



PROMOTION VERSUS PROJECTS



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THREAT FROM THE HOMELESS

On one side of the railroad tracks stand tanks with thousands of gallons of volatile fuels; on the other side, a camp of vagrants who start fires and then fall asleep. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

CAMPFIRES NEAR A PETROLEUM COMPANY AND OTHER NEARBY BUSINESSES PROMPT COMMENTS TO THE CITY COMMISSION

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Don Fee is one of the most fire-safety conscious people in town. He has to be. His chain-link fence protects 100,000 gallons of diesel fuel and gasoline and 40,000 gallons of propane.

Over the past six months, he has grown increasingly concerned about camps of homeless people and vagrants starting fires that get out of control.

“We’re seeing fires three and four times a week, and it gets away from them

sometimes,” he told the Sarasota City Commission on April 21 during the open to the public slot on the agenda.

He works for Midco Petroleum, the only fuel storage and supply business left in Sarasota County. The business is located in the center of the City of Sarasota, where Sixth Street is bisected by the Seaboard Coastline Railroad. His business is on the east side of the tracks.

“*These people don’t want help. They are where they want to be.*”

Rick Mixon
Vice President
Midco Petroleum
Sarasota

Rick Mixon, vice president of Midco, has

received calls at 2 a.m. from delivery truck drivers reporting fires. He sees the burnt brush himself later those mornings, he says. He has emailed the city's Code Enforcement Office several times, but he has had no response. Thus, he and other people with businesses near his went to City Hall Monday afternoon to complain.

"The city needs to clear the grass and brush," said Mixon. "I'm begging you: Please get this under control."

As we enter the driest month of the year, Mixon and Fee fear an unattended campfire could create a wildfire that might — just might — start a 10-alarm conflagration. "You could build a fire here that blazes out of control," noted Mixon. "The businesses around me would be gone. I'm trying to be proactive here."

Amy Kubanek works on the west side of the tracks at the former Stottlemeyer Lumber Co. headquarters. "A fire would destroy our building," she told the commission. "We employ 100 people and could expand to 400. But people don't feel safe." She added that the company joined the city's program to help businesses prevent and handle trespassing but is experiencing delays in getting police officers to respond.

Midco could be considered a strategic asset for the region. During the past five hurricane strikes in the region, the company was key to fueling not only Sarasota but Manatee, DeSoto and Charlotte counties' emergency vehicles. Mixon said, "If we get burned out, the [Florida Department of Environmental Protection] would never let us build back.


Mixon is a lifelong resident of the area. In an interview, he said his opinion of the homeless



An aerial view shows the location of Midco Petroleum at 2212 Sixth St. in Sarasota. Image from Google Maps

and vagrant population has changed over the years. "It used to be, you could deal with people up and down the railroad. For years, I had sympathy," he added. "For the people who are truly homeless, the city does a good job for them. But over the past two years, people have become more belligerent, especially in the last six months."

He has seen public defecation and urination; spotted the syringes and condoms. "When you see somebody lugging a 24-pack of beer at 8 a.m., you know what's going on," he said. "These people don't want help. They are where they want to be."

Mixon noted that he recently called the Fire Department to report another campfire near his fuel facility. "Is it out of control?" asked the person on the other end of the line. "No," said Mixon. Replied the dispatcher on the phone: "Well, call back later." 

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PROMOTION VERSUS PROJECTS

Former Congresswoman Katherine Harris speaks to the City and County commissions about the upcoming Modern Pentathlon events that will be held in the county. Photo by Norman Schimmel

IN 3-2 VOTE, THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS APPROVE ANOTHER \$769,500 FOR TOURISM PROMOTION, BUT SOME SAY THEY WOULD PREFER SEEING THE MONEY SPENT ON INFRASTRUCTURE

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

Sarasota County's tourism bureau will have an additional \$769,500 to spend this year on promoting local sports and arts programs and marketing the county in general — from ads at Atlanta International Airport to a campaign in Manhattan's Bryant Park.

In a 3-2 vote on Wednesday, April 23, the County Commission approved Visit Sarasota County's request for additional

Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue to promote the community.

The amount represents \$318,600 in unspent funds the tourism bureau had and \$451,000 in extra, unbudgeted TDT revenue from

hotel room and vacation rentals. With the additional money, the bureau's current fiscal year budget increased from \$5,591,218 to \$6,360,718.

“Promotion has run behind when compared to similar communities.”

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



Because hotel occupancy rates have risen, thanks to a spike in tourism, more TDT dollars are being collected from visitors' overnight stays in the county. The matter of how to spend that unanticipated extra TDT revenue has prompted County Commission debate.

The topic was first discussed at a budget workshop last month. Commissioner Joe Barbetta has argued for increased spending on infrastructure that will draw in even more tourists and benefit residents, while other commissioners support more spending on marketing the beaches, existing sports venues and local arts programs.

On Wednesday, Chairman Charles Hines and Commissioners Nora Patterson and Carolyn Mason approved the additional marketing money, with Barbetta and Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson dissenting.

The extra money will allow the tourism bureau to "boost promotion going into late summer," usually the slower months for local hotels and businesses, Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, told the commissioners.

Patterson said promotion is the key to getting more tourists into Sarasota County. "I've been told Sarasota is pretty much a well-kept secret," she added.

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Penn Station, NYC takeover VSC would receive 4 weeks of inclusion on the Penn Station 22 screen digital advertising network, specifically on the Long Island Railroad concourse. VSC's advertising message would circulate among all LED units, LCD Corridor units, LCD Portrait units & LCD Soffit Units 24 hours a day. In Detroit: Performance, Bravo and Hour Magazines. Cleveland: Cleveland Magazine, Severance Hall Program Guides. Key publications in Philadelphia and Pittsburg.

A graphic from Visit Sarasota County shows how the agency plans targeted advertising campaigns for community arts and cultural programs, thanks to funds approved by the County Commission this week. Image courtesy Sarasota County

The tourism bureau will spend \$30,000 of the additional funding to research how visitors to Nathan Benderson Park spend their time and money in the community when they are not at rowing and other events hosted by the facility. The funding will also help market the Modern Pentathlon World Cup Final and the USA Ultimate Masters Championships, which will be held here this summer. Those events — for which Visit Sarasota County had not planned — were awarded to the community over the winter. The Pentathlon announcement came

as a result of lobbying by residents such as former Congresswoman Katherine Harris. “We didn’t have a clue about this a year ago, and it needs to be advertised,” Hines said of the Pentathlon.

Regional sporting events already have an estimated \$90 million annual economic impact on the county,

Haley pointed out.

But Hines cautioned that while he supported the request for additional promotional and marketing money this year, in future budget years, he would like to see more of that

“ *Those [infrastructure] opportunities increase additional demand for hotels and rental cars.* ”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

Overview of Funds \$769,500 Requested

- Advertising, \$255,000
- Website/Online, \$73,000
- Media Relations, \$50,000
- Arts/Cultural Advertising, \$250,000
- Sales, \$16,500
- Research, \$30,000
- Sports Marketing/Grants, \$95,000

revenue go toward new facilities to attract additional tourists and benefit local residents. One such example is the planned expansion of the Knight Trail Park Pistol and Rifle Range, Hines said. Last month, the commissioners voted to give the Sarasota Trap, Skeet and Shooting Clays club \$500,000 in TDT revenue to help pay for that project.

Barbetta said the \$769,500 could be better spent on facilities such as a conference center, an equestrian facility, sports venues or upgrades to the Sarasota County Fairgrounds.

“Those opportunities increase additional demand for hotels and rental cars,” Barbetta pointed out.

He attributed record-breaking tourism this fiscal year to one of the “worst winters” up North along with Visit Sarasota County advertising through an existing county agreement with the Baltimore Orioles. He cited those as reasons indicating a reduced need for additional tourism marketing efforts.

Barbetta added that he would support a “smaller amount” but not the \$769,500.

Vice Chairwoman Robinson also asked that Haley and her staff members be sensitive when planning their advertising campaigns. She would like to see more promotion of South County communities such as Venice. “They’ve had a spike in the southern portion

Arts and Culture



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A graphic explains a promotional plan involving Bryant Park in New York City. Image courtesy Sarasota County

of the county [in tourism],” Robinson said. “They are holding their own.”

A BUDGET ISSUE

During the board’s March 25 budget workshop, the County Commission undertook a discussion of the TDT revenue that has been coming in higher than budgeted. Figures through February show the county up almost \$700,000 over last year’s total for the same period of time.


“I want to invest more in assets ... to generate more tourism for the community,” Barbetta said during the workshop. These projects also “benefit the community,” he pointed out.

Investing in assets produces more tourism and creates more “generators of tourism,” such as hotels and local attractions, he noted. In turn, the latter create additional TDT revenue,

something that spending money on marketing and advertising does not do, he maintained.

New developments that draw tourism also become advertisements themselves, as they attract new people to the area and give visitors something to do, Barbetta said.

During Wednesday’s meeting, Patterson acknowledged that there are infrastructure projects to which TDT revenue could be allocated. A planned North County Sports Complex is just one example, she noted.

But marketing the area to potential vacationers is important, too, she said, adding there has to be a balance. “Promotion has run behind when compared to similar communities,” Patterson pointed out — a fact that a Visit Sarasota County consultant has made to the county’s Tourist Development Council, which Patterson chairs. 

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A LIFT IN THE PRICE TAG

Materials and some of the construction for Lift Station 87 remained highly visible this week in Luke Wood Park near downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE CITY COMMISSION LEARNS LIFT STATION 87 WILL COST ABOUT \$27 MILLION, AND DESIGN CONCERNS ARE YET TO BE WORKED OUT

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

On Monday evening, April 21, the cost estimate to build a new sewer lift station in Luke Wood Park doubled. The man responsible for engineering and designing Lift Station 87 told the Sarasota City Commission the total project cost is now \$27,112,600.

That is more than twice the original, 2008 estimate of \$12.5 million. A total of \$13,432,200 has already been spent, Robert Garland said. He is the project manager for McKim & Creed, the engineering

and design firm hired to pick up the pieces after the former company, AECOM, walked off the job in failure. A sizable lawsuit is under way over that.

Garland found the AECOM design contained major flaws. One necessitates deepening the borehole under Hudson Bayou by eight feet; a second flaw regards the pipeline south of the bayou. Those changes will add \$3.5 million to the expense.

“I’ve started to look at best practices. Boca Raton is now raising all their lift stations. It may have been an unrealistic promise to put it underground.”

Susan Chapman
Commissioner
City of Sarasota



Garland told *The Sarasota News Leader* on April 14 he suspected the original structure might need to be abandoned and a new wet well built because it has to be 13 feet deeper. That could add \$6.5 million to the project.

“This is a significant rebuild,” said Mitt Tidwell, the city utilities director, on Monday. He was joined at the presentation by city Project Manager Steve Topovski.

The original design called for the facility — four structures for pumps, emergency generators, electrical switchgear and odor control equipment — to be hidden from sight underground. Commissioner Paul Caragiulo asked the three engineers, “Have you ever seen a facility like this?” All three said, “No.”

In the meantime, the old Lift Station 7 on Pomelo Avenue continues to handle about one-third of the city’s sewage, despite a history of failures and spills. Twice it has sent 500,000 gallons into Hudson Bayou. Neighbors have been waiting for years for Lift Station 87 to replace it.

Ellen Miller lives next to Lift Station 7. “It failed in 2004,” she said Monday night. “It was to be decommissioned in 2010, then 2013. Now it’s May 2016. I’m asking for a moratorium on new building permits until [Lift Station] 87 is completed. Think of all the construction in the past 10 years, including a new wing at Sarasota Memorial Hospital.”

Richard Shaffett lives on Pomelo, too. “When will this insanity end?” he asked. “It’s a ticking time bomb right in our front yards. It’s a black-hole boondoggle.”

By Garland’s estimate, Lift Station 87 will be ready to operate in June 2015. Demolition of Lift Station 7 would begin in November of that year and be finished by January 2016.

SWAP HORSES?

Commissioner Susan Chapman, formerly a neighborhood activist, forced the city to admit the spills at Lift Station 7 had taken place, and then she forced the city to admit it did not even own the land under the facility. She made the case to decommission the



Three engineers explain to the City Commission on April 21 why the project doubled in price: (from left) City Utilities Director Mitt Tidwell, City Project Director Steve Topovski and consulting engineer Robert Garland. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

station and build a new one. Now she is wondering whether the underground design of Lift Station 87 might be yet another mistake.

“I’ve started to look at best practices,” she said. “Boca Raton is now raising all their lift stations. It may have been an unrealistic promise to put it underground.”

“We started this redesign using what’s already there,” replied Tidwell. He was referring to the underground structures built to AECOM’s specifications. He added, “We’d prefer it to be aboveground.”

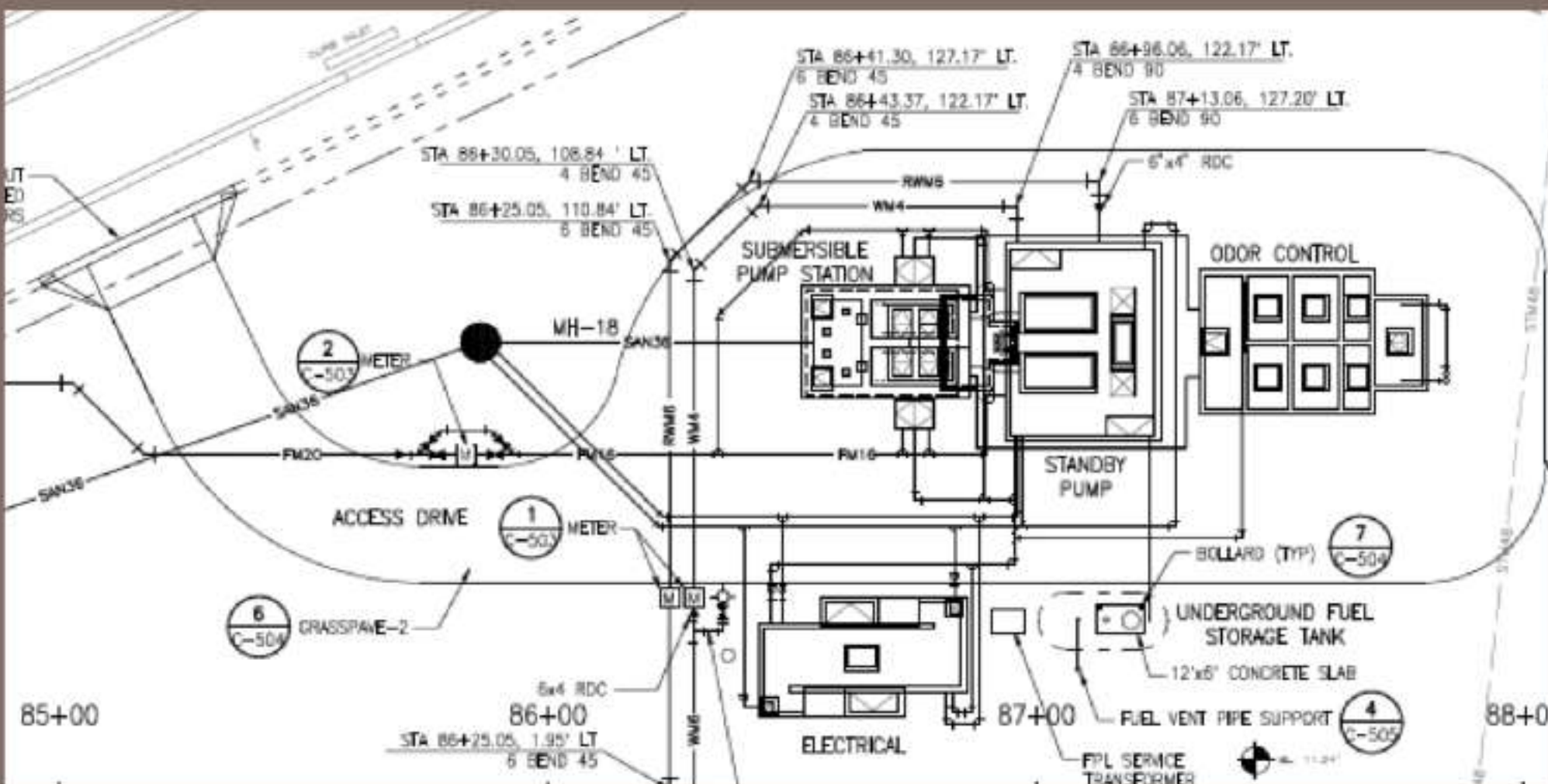
Another one of Garland’s recommended changes involves emergency back-up power. The AECOM design incorporated diesel-driven pumps in case the electrically driven pumps in the wet well lost power. But getting the diesel-driven pumps going full speed would

take an hour, allowing sewage to back up into the system.

Garland recommends using diesel generators to power additional electrical back-up pumps. He was thinking of installing the generators in another of the underground structures, but that might make them vulnerable to a Category 2 hurricane storm surge.

“We could bring some of the underground equipment aboveground, elevated above a [Category] 2 storm surge,” said Tidwell. “And then we could screen it.” In other words, the equipment could be put in a building disguised to look like a home or business instead of an industrial blockhouse.

Putting all the facilities underground raises the risk that a storm surge of 15 feet or more could exert enough water pressure to rupture the “lids” atop one or more of the four facilities.




A presentation about Lift Station 87 during a project team meeting in November 2013 included this site plan. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

If the switchgears were flooded, Garland said it would take six months or longer to replace them because they are custom-made.

With all the talk of a new and deeper wet well, new electrical pumps, moving diesel generators and other mechanicals well above ground, Vice Mayor Willie Shaw asked, “Is this approaching a total rebuild?” His question was reiterated by Caragiulo. “Should we look at conventional designs?”

Mayor Shannon Snyder boiled down the discussion to its essentials. “The only real question is, do we leave it underground or aboveground?” he pointed out. “We need a conversation about the entire system and how we respond to events.” He said that discussion was best left to a budget workshop about capital improvements funding that will be held later this spring.

In the meantime, neighbors adjacent to the stalled Lift Station 87 were thrown a bone. Having looked at a stranded construction site for a year, they have asked for some kind of screening. “Drape the site with something tasteful,” said City Manager Tom Barwin. As for the aboveground/below-ground design issue, Barwin added that he would task the city’s Urban Design Studio to prepare some drawings.

The city will pay for Lift Station 87 out of proceeds from the sale of its so-called wastewater “spray fields” at Hi Hat Ranch in eastern Sarasota County. But as Caragiulo noted, the new twice-as-high price tag for Lift Station 87 will just about wipe out the money from the land sale. 



Questions remain about whether the ‘wet well’ for Lift Station 87 should be above or below ground. The structure shown is aboveground. Image from 90.5 WESA via Wikimedia Commons

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SHOT DOWN

*Commissioner Carolyn Mason listens to discussion about the domestic partnership registry last fall.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

SARASOTA COUNTY DECLINES TO PURSUE ORDINANCE BANNING ANTI-GAY DISCRIMINATION

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

The Sarasota County Commission this week chose not to pursue a new ordinance that would ban discrimination against gays and lesbians in housing and employment, quietly ending a review period that began last fall.

While federal and state laws protect many Americans from discrimination, discrimination based on sexual orientation remains an uncovered category. Therefore in Florida, gays and lesbians, for example, can still be fired

for their sexual orientation or a landlord can legally decline to rent to them. That reality has prompted dozens of Florida counties and municipalities to pass so-called “human rights ordinances,” which generally protect their citizens from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

“*The state is not going to step up, so we do need counties and cities to all step up and do something about this.*”

Julia Nowak
LGBT Rights Activist
Englewood

The cities of Sarasota and Venice have both passed such regulations, and the county took steps last fall to begin researching the possibility of passing its own rule. County

Commissioner Carolyn Mason, responding to pressure from Englewood Realtor and local LGBT rights activist Julia Nowak, asked County Attorney Steve DeMarsh to report back to the board on how human rights ordinances work for other local governments.

DeMarsh did so this spring, with a pair of memos laying out the current legal situation for gays and lesbians. But would the commission act on the issue? That was the question Mason put to the board during a meeting held Tuesday, April 22.

Mason served on the Sarasota City Commission when it approved its own human rights ordinance. "I think that has worked pretty well for the City of Sarasota," she said. "You've seen their process, how it all works, but I needed to see what my board wanted to do."

The response: silence.

Eventually, Chairman Charles Hines broke the quiet time, saying his reticence to support the idea was not because he thought it wasn't needed. "I felt that this is a statewide issue," he said, "and it becomes difficult when local communities have overlapping ordinances."

At the same time, Hines continued, he understood the argument that "the state has not stepped up and you've got to start somewhere." He compared the proposal for a human rights ordinance to the recently approved domestic partnership registry, which gives gay and lesbian couples some rights in healthcare decision-making and more.

Neither Commissioner Joe Barbetta nor Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson chimed in, while Commissioner Nora Patterson said simply, "I agree with what you've said, Charles."



*County Commission Chairman Charles Hines.
File photo*

And that was that. The commission took no action.

Nowak, whose persistence prompted Mason to bring up the concept in the first place, told the commission that because of federal inaction, "it falls down to the states and the counties to protect us." She spoke with Mason immediately after the commission broke for lunch, and later told *The Sarasota News Leader* she's not giving up.

"The state is not going to step up," she told the board, "so we do need counties and cities to all step up and do something about this." 



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COUNT STILL STANDS AT TWO

Residents and business owners nearly filled the County Commission Chambers for the joint meeting on April 22. Photo by Norman Schimmel

PARCELS ON EAST AND OSPREY AVENUES REMAIN IN CONSIDERATION FOR A COME-AS-YOU-ARE HOMELESS SHELTER, BUT BOTH ARE PROBLEMATIC

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

As the Sarasota city and county commissioners have discussed and debated the concept of a come-as-you-are homeless shelter in Sarasota, two potential sites have been front and center.

During a joint meeting of the boards on Tuesday, April 22 — less than one week after consulting firm Cardno Entrix Inc. wrapped up a [due diligence and environmental analysis report](#) — the consultants

presented lists of “pros” and “cons” for each site.

Both pieces of property are problematic, as the consultants noted in their summaries on Tuesday.

“*We already have homeless people occasionally coming to this area off the railroad ... I am afraid if there is a homeless shelter in that area, there will be more of it.*”

Steve Lanning
Business Owner
Sarasota

Constructing a facility on the lot at 1800 N. East Ave. hinges on the approval of four condominium owners in a business partnership, a hurdle County Commission Chairman Charles

Hines cited as a cause of concern. The parcel configuration is also so tight, Cardno Senior Planner and Urban Designer Ryan Givens told the commissioners, the building layout barely fits, even in an L-shape. Moreover, stormwater facilities would have to be placed in an underground vault. "We can accomplish this design," Gibbons told the commissioners. "It is just a little difficult."

The property on East Avenue also has low levels of petroleum compounds and arsenic, as indicated by soil samples. Petroleum storage tanks were once located on the property, which used to be home to Morris Oil, according to a county staff summary of the Cardno report.

Meanwhile, the city-owned site at 1330 N. Osprey Ave. has concentrations of lead, arsenic, benzo(a)pyrene (a hydrocarbon



A Cardno ENTRIX Inc. consultant presents information gleaned from due diligence and environmental studies. Photo by Roger Drouin



The Sarasota City and County commissioners listen as County Chairman Charles Hines explains the procedures for public comments on April 22. Photo by Norman Schimmel

often found close to asphalt parking lots) and dieldrin (found in pesticides) in excess of allowable standards, as shown in the soil samples.

Cardno consultants and county staffers have said environmental issues are not a deal-breaker for either site, but Sarasota Mayor Shannon Snyder cautioned that the land that was once a landfill could require more extensive, and expensive, environmental

“ *Our homeless shelter is downtown Sarasota right now. It is the street, it is the parks, it is the backyards of people, and if we don't do something, that is the status quo and it will only get worse.*

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County



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1330 NORTH OSPREY AVENUE

• Pros

1. Near service core and close proximity to jail
2. Adjacent land uses are industrial existing buffers on all sides
3. Good site access with appropriate ingress/egress
4. Adequate water service is available on Osprey Ave
5. Adequate wastewater service is available on Osprey Ave
6. Property owned by City

• Cons

1. Relocation of current city services, vehicles and equipment
2. Stormwater solutions require DEP approval (time/cost TBD)
3. Site Configuration to avoid 16" wastewater main (relocation cost estimated at \$350,000)
4. Soil and ground water environmental concerns (time/cost TBD)

A chart lists the pros and cons associated with the potential shelter site at 1330 N. Osprey Ave. in Sarasota. Image courtesy Sarasota County

cleanup than the commissions have expected. Although he said he is “not adverse” to putting the shelter on that site, he added that there is “probably a reason we didn’t build on it” in the past.

Another “con” is that utilizing the city-owned site for a homeless shelter would displace some utility operations and parking spaces for 24 pieces of heavy equipment as well as 48 city Utilities Department vehicles. One potential replacement location for the city equipment would cost \$1.6 million. A deep injection well and a water main are located on the property, too, so the project would have to be planned around them.

County Commissioner Joe Barbetta asked whether both sites could be remediated.

“Certainly, these items can be addressed,” replied Cardno Environmental Engineer Richard Hagberg.

But it proved difficult for the commissioners to choose one site over the other — largely because both have problems that could potentially delay or derail shelter construction.

“I’m trying to take all this in,” City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell said at one point, “and compare [the Osprey Avenue land] to East Avenue.”

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1800 NORTH EAST AVENUE

• Pros

1. Near service core and close proximity to jail
2. Adjacent to existing large homeless encampment
3. Adjacent land uses are industrial
4. Located at end of street with existing buffers on all sides
5. Good site access with appropriate ingress/egress
6. Adequate water service is available on East Ave.
7. Wastewater service is available on 19th Street.
8. Affordable site purchase cost

• Cons

1. Land foot print is tight
2. Property is part of a Business Condo
3. Solutions require DEP approval (time/cost TBD)
4. Soil and ground water environmental concerns (time/cost TBD)
5. Utility line through site will limit building layout or require relocation

A chart lists the pros and cons associated with the potential shelter site at 1800 N. East Ave. in Sarasota. Image courtesy Sarasota County

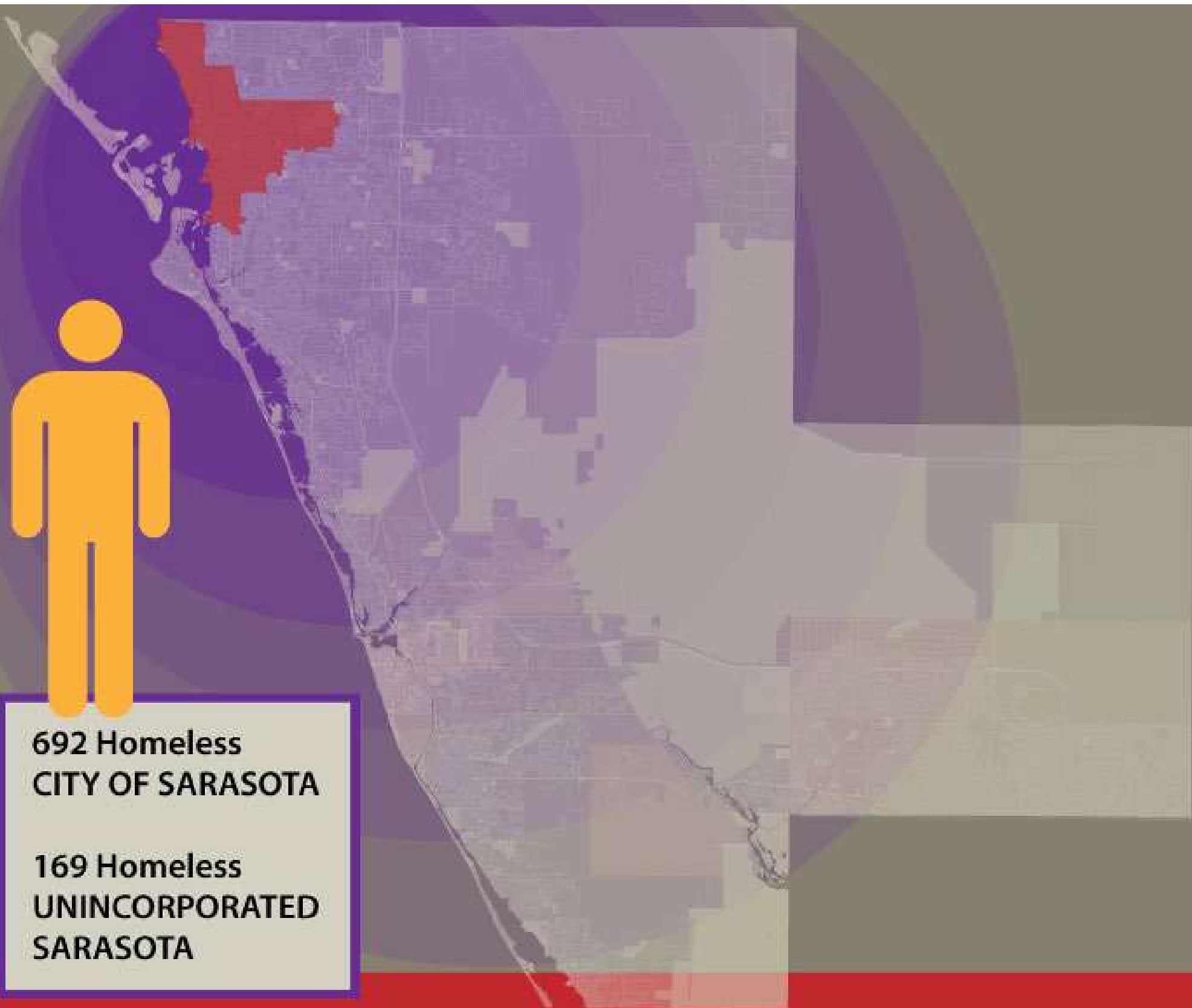
“It seems to me we are not where we should be at when it comes to choosing between the two sites,” said County Commissioner Nora Patterson. “The questions we raised need to be answered.”

Patterson wanted the consultants, working with city and county staff, to conduct more

extensive evaluations and comparisons of the parcels.

GREATER FEASIBILITY

After hearing from the consultants, the commissions decided to do exactly what Patterson had suggested: continue due diligence on



HOMELESS DENSITY - SARASOTA COUNTY

Created by Sarasota County Government. Data source, Sarasota County Fire Department, Timeframe June 2013 to March 2014.

A graphic shows far more homeless people have been documented in the City of Sarasota than in the unincorporated part of the county. Image courtesy Sarasota County

the two north Sarasota properties that are high on homelessness consultant Robert Marbut's list of recommendations. The vote was 8-2, with Vice Mayor Willie Shaw and City Commissioner Susan Chapman dissenting.

The boards also agreed to reconvene again in 60 days — as suggested by County Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson — after staff and the consultants have a better idea of the environmental and logistical issues that will have to be addressed and how much those would cost.

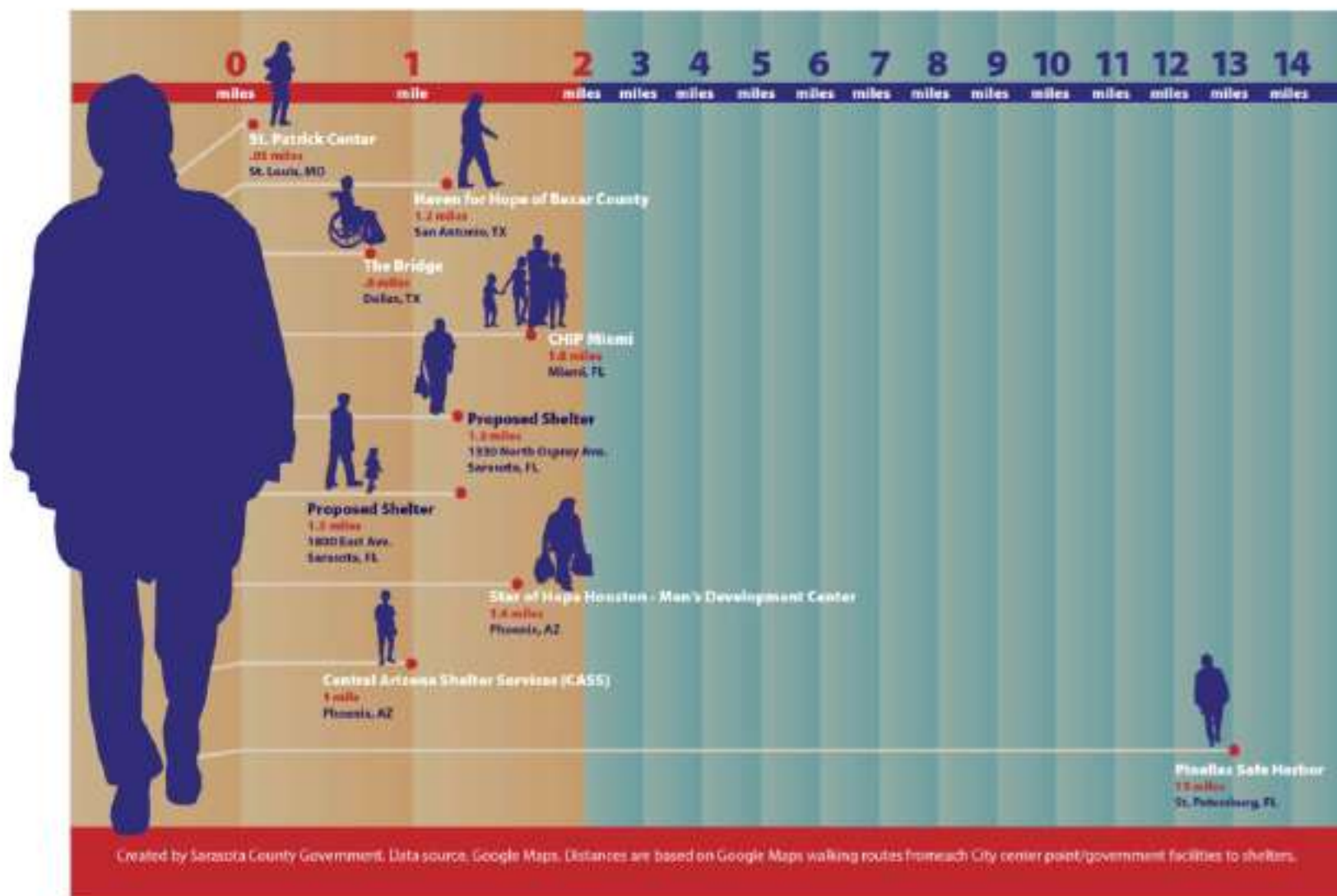
At that time, the commissioners will either choose between the two parcels or go back to “square one.”

Snyder said he thinks the East Avenue site looks more feasible because of the potential cost of environmental cleanup and relocation of city utility vehicles necessary if the boards chose the Osprey Avenue site. Atwell concurred with that sentiment.

“Right now I would look at the 1800 East Ave. site and how we can work it out [there],” Atwell said.



PROXIMITY TO DOWNTOWN – COMPARISON TO OTHER SHELTERS



A chart compares the proximity of the two potential shelter sites in Sarasota to downtown and illustrates the same factor in other cities with shelters. Image courtesy Sarasota County

A shelter in the city is the anchor for Marbut's strategy for addressing homelessness in Sarasota County. Among his other recommendations are the creation of a team of social service and law enforcement officials to reach out to homeless people; the development of other facilities, such as a center for helping homeless families and children; and the establishment of a county-funded Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) that would be used by all local homelessness service agencies.

PROPOSERS AND OPPOSERS

Of all the facets of the Marbut plan, it is the shelter that has attracted the most attention and sparked the greatest degree of controversy. Some residents and business owners have spoken out against it, while others have pleaded with local officials to build it soon.

That debate continued on Tuesday. Steve Lanning, owner of Lanning Tire on Lime Avenue, was among those who expressed concerns about the potential impacts a



Wayne Applebee, coordinator of homelessness issues for the county, poses outside the Commission Chambers before the meeting begins. Photo by Norman Schimmel

shelter would have on a section of the city business owners have worked to make safer and cleaner.

“We already have homeless people occasionally coming to this area off the railroad, defecating on concrete areas and going through trash,” Lanning said. “I am afraid if there is a homeless shelter in that area, there will be more of it.”

Cathy Antunes, vice president of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, pleaded with the commissioners to pursue more research about the potential impacts of a shelter on a neighborhood. Antunes also raised questions about how much funding the city will have to contribute to operating the facility.

Other residents advocated for the shelter.

It belongs in the city, said Sarasota resident Steve McAllister. “When you have a wound on your arm, you don’t put a bandage on your leg,” McAllister pointed out, responding to comments by Shaw and Chapman that a shelter should not be constructed in the city’s District One.

Neighborhood activist Diana Hamilton said that homeless people are constantly on the move between locations where they can get help. “Every place I go, I see homeless people every day, all day long, in our downtown,” Hamilton added. “We must do something. We have to move forward.”

New College student Joey Whitesman told the commissions, “I really hope and believe this shelter will help.”

In a comment near the end of the meeting, Commissioner Carolyn Mason had a message for the community: Residents must join forces on this project. “Quite frankly, doing nothing is not an issue,” Mason said. “So let’s just take that off the table and focus on working together so we can get there.”


In another remark just before the meeting’s adjournment, Barbetta said he thought Hamilton and McAllister were “right on point.”

“Both said it well. Our streets right now are where the homeless are right now,” Barbetta pointed out. “Our homeless shelter is downtown Sarasota right now. It is the street, it is the parks, it is the backyards of people, and if we don’t do something, that is the status quo and it will only get worse.” Barbetta added that he would like to see the shelter project expedited, if at all possible.

City Commissioner Chapman countered that.

“What we’ve painfully learned is government mistakes are the biggest mistakes,” Chapman said. “I think we are about to make a big government mistake. I think this is a flawed site selection process.”

Specifically, Chapman said the Osprey Avenue parcel should remain a utility site.

In a previous interview with *The Sarasota News Leader*, Chapman noted she favors a means of providing regular housing for the homeless as the first approach to the issue. In addition, if a shelter were built, she would prefer a mid-county location. 

Dripping faucet-20db whisper-20 db spoken conversation-50 to 70 db a cats meow-30 to 65 db
Birds singing-60 db A babbling brook-40 db a pin drop- 10 db a squeeze toy 90 friggen db.

so the city of the arts wants us to play live music at a volume no louder than a cats meow, or people having a conversation?



SOUNDING OFF

(Above) Image from the [TheLiveMusicAlliance Facebook page](#).

MUSICIANS PLEAD WITH THE COUNTY COMMISSION TO BACK AWAY FROM ITS TIGHTER NOISE RESTRICTIONS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

They went [live on Facebook](#) on March 21, two days after the Sarasota County Commission approved a revised Air and Sound Pollution Ordinance that lowered legal decibel limits. On April 22, they went live before the County and City commissions to protest the new regulations.

Although the two boards were meeting in Sarasota to discuss the planned homeless shelter (see the related story in this issue), Tony LeClerc told the commissioners it was the first opportunity musicians had to speak to them about the changes in the ordinance. Still, he said, “I don’t mean to hijack the meeting.”

LeClerc was one of nine speakers who

pleaded with the County Commission to backtrack on its [March 19 decision](#). They represented Live Music Alliance, organized by Sarasota native Twinkle Yochim.

The new decibel limits are “so restrictive and impossible that it makes lawbreakers out of all of us,” Yochim said. “We’re requesting that you guys *please* redress this. Find a better way.”

Yochim requested that the bass level be set at 10 over the ambient noise level, noting that the latter “tends to be 72, 78, depending on where you’re at.”

“No one’s interested in being bad neighbors. We don’t want to cause problems for anybody; we love our community.”

Tony LeClerc
Musician
Sarasota

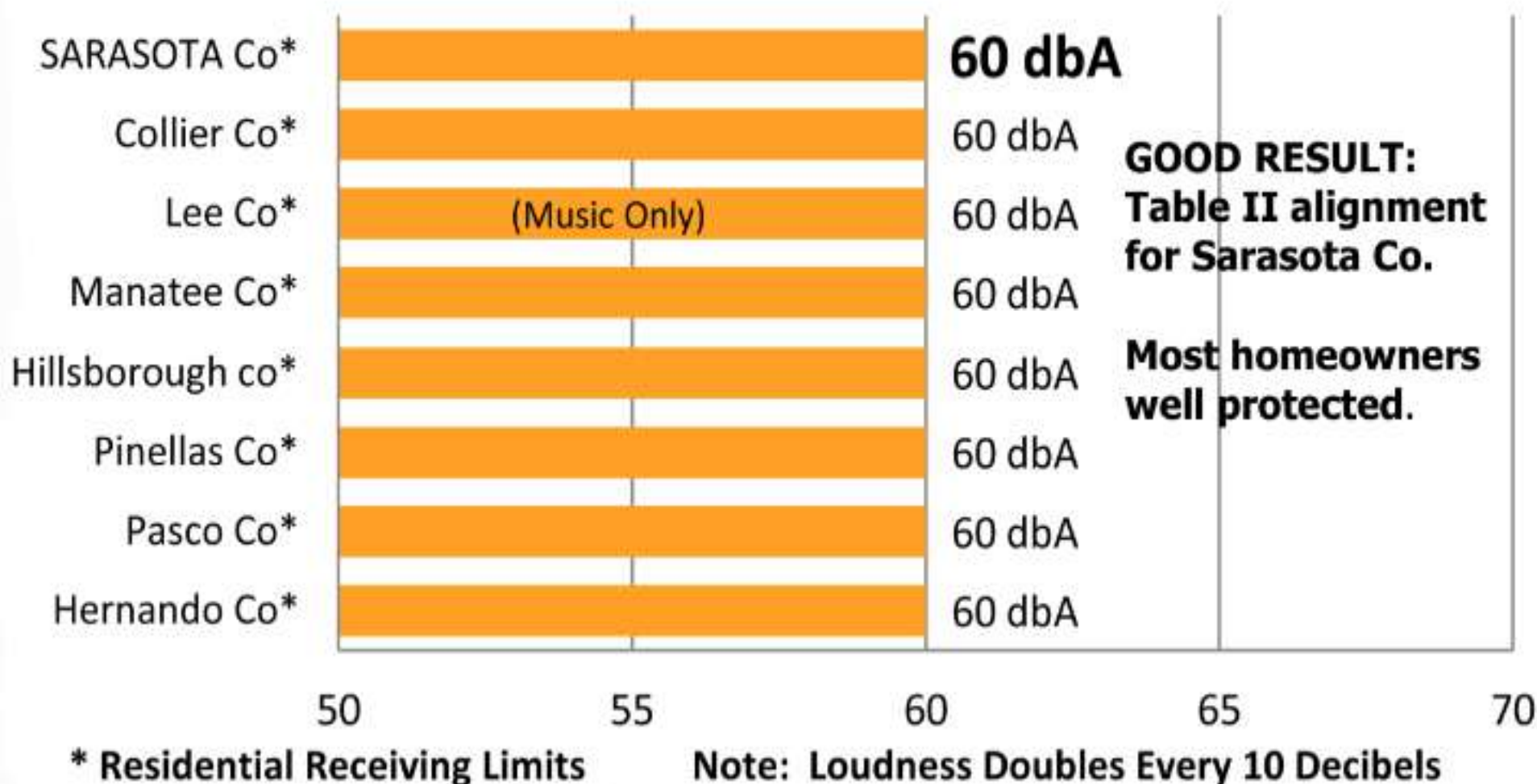
The maximum bass level (dbC) the County Commission approved on March 19 is 65 between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. as measured from a receiving area zoned



Musician Christopher Young protests the revised county sound ordinance during public comments at the April 22 joint meeting of the City and County commissions. Photo by Norman Schimmel

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

New Table II Protection from Outdoor Noise until 10PM



Decibel Limits (dbA) by County - FL West Coast

As requested by the River Forest Civic Association, the County Commission on March 19 approved lower maximum decibel readings for noise received at residential property lines. A second table shows that the request puts Sarasota County in company with its Southwest Florida neighbors. Image courtesy Jim McWhorter

residential, while the dbA level (described as the range of sound people actually hear) was lowered to 60 during the same time frame.

The other maximum allowable readings for residential receiving areas are 55 dbA and 60 dbC between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.

People in the River Forest Civic Association and other residents in the proximity of [Bob's Boathouse](#) at 5515 S. Tamiami Trail requested the changes, citing a diminished quality of life since the restaurant opened in early November 2013 and began offering live music.

Jim McWhorter, a retired professional engineer and president of the River Forest Civic Association, explained in emails to the commissioners that the proposed limits would align Sarasota County with the other

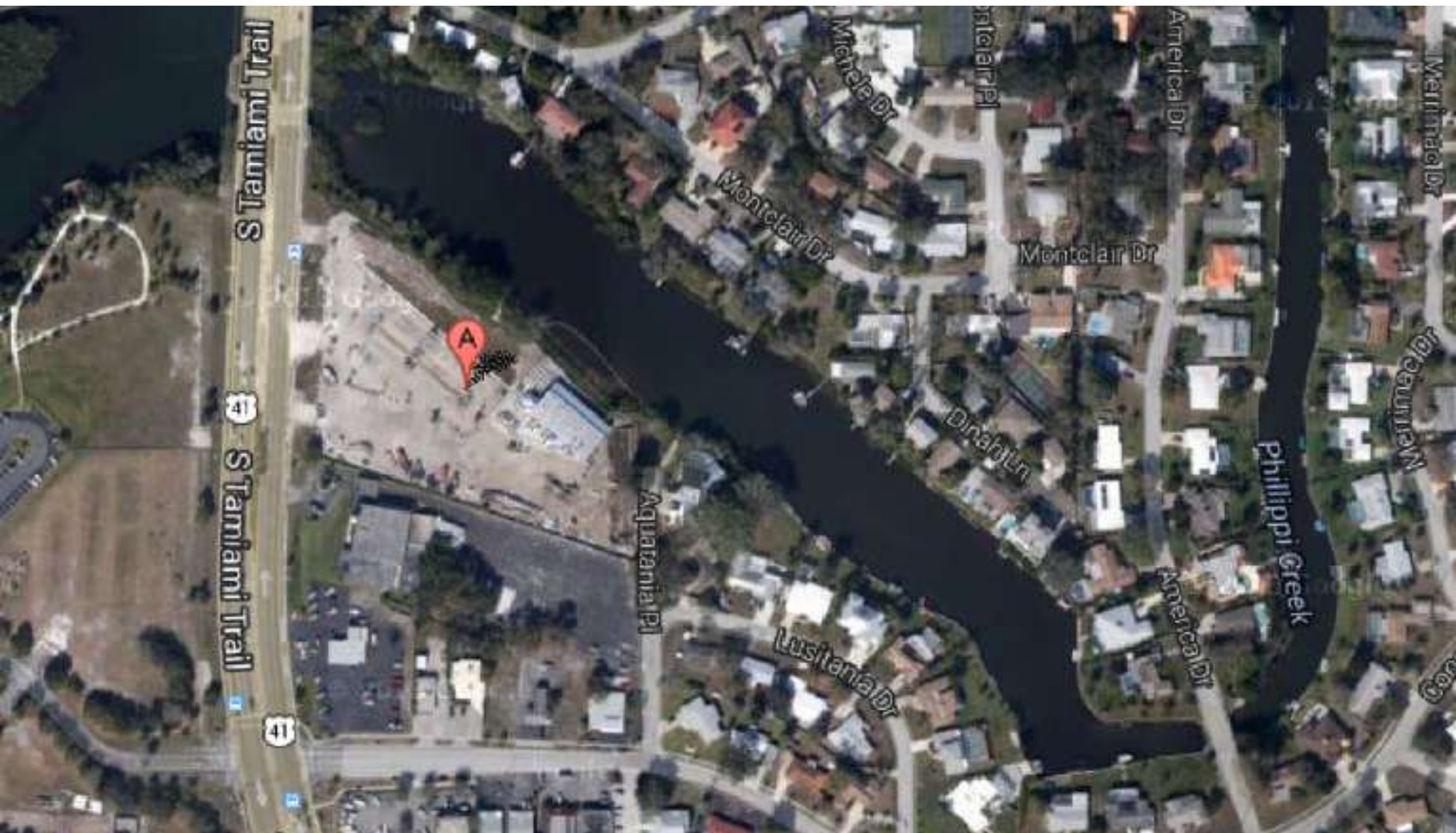
Southwest Florida counties, whose allowable noise limits were lower. Sarasota County Zoning Administration Office staff confirmed his research.

Nonetheless, county staff recommended levels of 65 dbA and 70 dbC between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. for residential receiving areas.

"This is a music Mecca," Yochim of the Live Music Alliance told the commissioners on April 22, "and I am not so sure that the [county board members] understand the talent and the revenue generated on a daily basis."

She added that she founded the alliance "because I realize the one thing we haven't done in the past is be organized."

As of late morning on April 23, the group had 1,964 "likes" on its Facebook page.



An aerial view shows the proximity of residential areas to Bob's Boathouse on South Tamiami Trail. Image from Google Maps

LeClerc pointed out the group is working on the documentation necessary for it to become a limited liability corporation and that it has obtained legal representation from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Sarasota attorney Morgan Bentley.

LeClerc also told the commissioners, “No one’s interested in being bad neighbors. We don’t want to cause problems for anybody; we love our community.” However, he said, “Sixty decibels might as well be 10 decibels. ... It’s easy to [go over the limit].”

‘POLICE PRESENCE’

Several speakers pointed to Sarasota’s reputation as the “City of the Arts.”

“I’ve been all over the world,” Yochim said, adding that Sarasota has a reputation for live music similar to those of Nashville, TN; Seattle; and Austin, TX.

LeClerc pointed out, “We are the ‘City of the Arts.’ We celebrate that.”

“Hearing [music] wafting on the breeze is a good thing, not a bad thing,” Yochim noted. “No one’s windows are getting rattled here.”

Residents across Phillippi Creek from Bob’s Boathouse dispute that, however. On the same day the Live Music Alliance representatives appeared before the commissions, Michele Chapman, who lives on Montclair Drive, told the *News Leader* in an email, “A musician’s right to play loud music stops at our right to NOT have it penetrate our homes and bodies without our consent.” Chapman added, “If the musicians would just be considerate of our rights, then there would be no conflict. Only due to the profound inconsideration of business owners and musicians are most noise codes even needed.”

Yochim complained to the commissions about the citations Bob’s Boathouse has received from the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office since the new noise levels went into effect, calling the action “constant police presence.”

She pointed out that once a deputy shows up, “People get nervous; half of our audience



Residents on Montclair Drive are right across Phillippi Creek from Bob’s Boathouse. File photo

leaves. ... I've been performing for 33 years and to call it 'noise' diminishes the expertise of these musicians."

In response to a request by County Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson for information about citations written since the ordinance went into effect on March 20, Sandra LeGay, manager of the Code Enforcement Office, responded in an April 22 email that Bob's Boathouse had received one warning, nine citations and one Notice to Appear.

The latter is a step necessary to seek an entity's compliance with the county code. It can lead to an appearance before a Special Magistrate.

LeGay added, "As far as I know, no other entities have been cited."

Only one of the nine speakers Tuesday afternoon, Christopher Young, appeared before the County Commission during the March 19 public hearing on the proposed changes to the ordinance. He reminded the board this week that he cautioned them against changing the regulations because they would be infringing on people's First Amendment rights.

He recently returned from a trip to Detroit, he noted, adding that that city "is dead. Is that what you want here?"

LeClerc asked the board members to review materials representatives of Live Music Alliance brought them in regard to noise regulations in other areas. "We would love to work with you guys and the neighborhoods and the communities to figure out something that could be done," he added.



Montclair Drive resident Michele Chapman stands at the podium as Sarasota County Code Enforcement Officer Kevin Burns (center left) and Jim McWhorter, president of the River Forest Civic Association, compare notes on decibel readings during the March 19 County Commission meeting. Photo by Rachel Hackney

RESPONSES FROM COMMISSIONERS

As is customary, none of the commissioners commented on the remarks. However, on April 10, Yochim posted on the alliances' Facebook page the following responses from county board members to a letter she had sent them, pleading for modification of the new regulations.

Chairman Charles Hines wrote on April 7, "I have seen you perform many times and loved it," noting that she probably had performed in Manatee and Charlotte counties as well as Sarasota County and asking whether she was familiar with those local governments' sound regulations.

Hines concluded, "We reduced the ordinance to a level that is similar to those [of] other Counties. Thanks for your input as this is a very difficult issue to try to find a reasonable balance."

The same day, Carolyn Mason responded, "Please know that this was not an arbitrary decision, and that in coming to the decision we arrived at, I took a lot of things into consideration, including information from our staff as well as from neighbors. Additionally, for me, finding a balance between what works for the business as well as the neighbors was and remains paramount. It isn't easy or popular some times, but necessary."

Vice Chairwoman Robinson wrote on April 9, "Our ordinance has been made consistent with all other counties in our region. We found this was necessary due to the abuse of homeowners near certain venues. I believe this change will help us co-exist."




Twinkle Yochim. Image from her website

Late on the night of April 22, Yochim posted a thank-you note to all the supporters of Live Music Alliance who were in the audience for the meeting: "[I'd] say we kicked some a** today! nothin I love more than a good scrap! nice job people!"

She also noted that a new noise ordinance on which city staff is working soon will be coming up on a City Commission agenda.

Although City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo held meetings in 2013 to try to resolve issues over live music in downtown Sarasota, the city board has yet to address a new ordinance.

A discussion was scheduled for the City Commission's Feb. 18 agenda, but Mayor Shannon Snyder announced that night that the matter would be deferred to a future meeting. 



NO 'MICROMANAGEMENT'

Benderson Park is busy on Nov. 16, 2013 as teams compete in the first Sarasota-Bradenton Head Regatta. Photo by Norman Schimmel

COUNTY COMMISSION DEBATES WHETHER RECENT ROWING FACILITY MISSTEPS SUGGEST MORE OVERSIGHT IS NEEDED

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Responding to weeks-old news that the Sarasota nonprofit created to manage the rowing facility at Nathan Benderson Park had temporarily lost its ability to solicit charitable donations, County Commissioner Carolyn Mason this week floated the idea of naming more than one county representative to the board of the 501(c)(3) nonprofit, but the proposal went nowhere.

In early April, the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* reported that Suncoast Aquatic Nature Center Associates (SANCA) had failed to file the necessary paperwork with the state to allow the organization to collect tax-deductible donations. According to a presentation SANCA President Paul Blacketter gave the County Commission in January, the nonprofit is planning to raise \$22 million in the next few years.

While further reporting by multiple outlets revealed SANCA's state filing problem was quickly corrected, Mason this week said the controversy had caused "heartburn" and that perhaps the county should be exercising more direct "oversight" of the nonprofit.

"I need some assurances that things are headed in the right direction," she said, suggesting that perhaps the county ask for the right to name "a couple" of representatives to the SANCA board.

No other commissioner backed Mason. County Administrator Tom Harmer and Manatee County Administrator Ed Hunzeker both attend SANCA board meetings, Harmer told the board, offering a level of oversight with which the commission seemed comfortable.

"I don't think this board wants to get into the day-to-day micromanagement of SANCA,"

Chairman Charles Hines said, adding that Harmer's and Hunzeker's presence at meetings offers "some level of review."

While the commission took no action to ease Mason's "heartburn," it did this week modify its contract with Enterprise Florida, the public-private partnership that oversees the state's economic development programs.

Enterprise is working with the county to implement the \$5 million the state Legislature allotted for the rowing facility during last year's session (in addition to the \$5 million approved in 2012). The county has negotiated with the organization for months about language that requires the county to repay the state if economic impact goals aren't met. The action this week simplifies reporting requirements for the county, making it responsible for annual rather than quarterly analyses. **SNL**

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RESET QUASHED

Mark Huey, chairman of the Newtown Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Board, and Lorna Alston, general manager of the North Sarasota Redevelopment Office, address the City Commission on Monday. Photo by Norman Schimmel

CITY COMMISSION DECIDES NOT TO RISK COUNTY WRATH OVER THE NEWTOWN COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

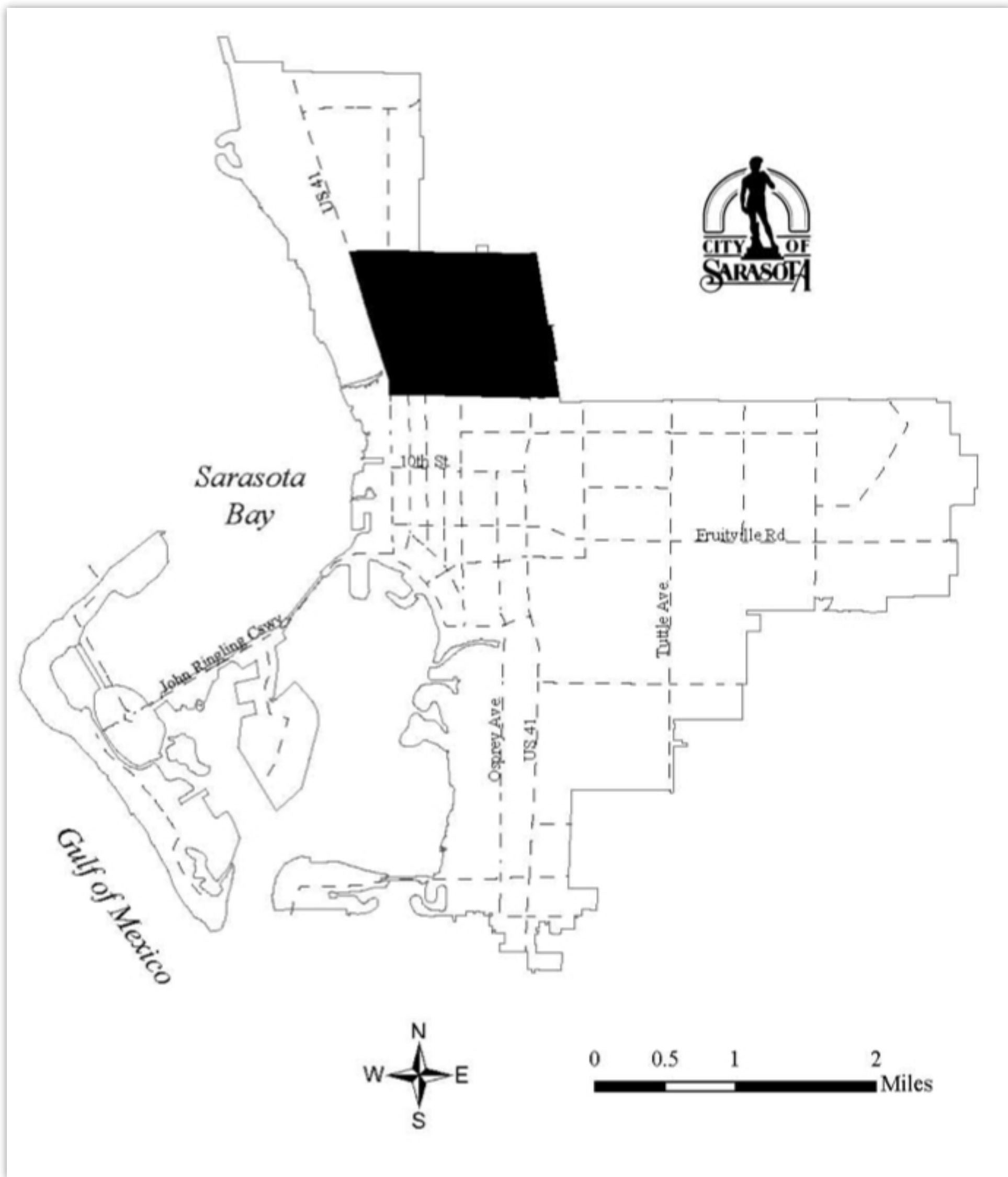
The first hint of “linkage” has emerged in the city’s quest for county approval to extend the term of its Downtown Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). A study committee recommended the city and county grant another 30 years to the CRA, which uses a tax-differential scheme to fight slum and blight.

In 2007, the city unilaterally extended the CRA to a defined area in north Sarasota, just before the bottom fell out of property values. Because the CRA depends on a difference between a “base year” and the current year to compute its tax revenue take, the difference for the north Sarasota CRA has been negative

every year, because property values remain below 2007 levels.

In addition to suggesting the Downtown CRA be extended, the study committee proposed a “reset” of the base year for the north Sarasota, or Newtown, CRA to 2013, in anticipation of a continued rise in property values.

But the idea blew apart at the Monday, April 21, meeting of the City Commission. Attorneys for the city and county have sparred over the reset idea, with County Attorney Steve DeMarsh saying the city does not have the power to unilaterally take such action. City Attorney Bob Fournier thinks otherwise, but



A map shows the area of the Newtown Community Redevelopment Agency. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

until the city moved to act, their disagreement was academic.

When an ordinance to reset the date came up for a public hearing Monday, Fournier said the city had three options: Walk away from the idea, hold the first public hearing but wait on the second to seek county permission or go forward with unilateral adoption.

The reset idea is small potatoes, starting with maybe \$9,000 a year. But Newtown receives more than \$1 million per year from the Downtown CRA. If the county decides not to extend the Downtown CRA, that money will go away.

While Sarasota County does not participate in the Newtown CRA, its share of the funding for the Downtown CRA is more than \$3.5 million a year. That led Vice Mayor Willie Shaw to say, "It would be fruitless to go forward with the reset for \$9,000 and lose out on the \$3.5 million."

Shaw implied a linkage. If the city acted unilaterally to reset the CRA in his district, it would run the risk the county would use that decision to deny any extension for the Downtown CRA.


There are several contentious issues between the city and county at this time. The Newtown

CRA base year reset was one of them, but no longer. Shaw made a motion to scuttle the ordinance. It passed unanimously.

The question remains whether the county will use this leverage to get its way on other issues, including the fate of city-owned property along Ringling Boulevard across from the jail that the county covets for a new judicial center and the site of a proposed shelter for homeless people and vagrants.

As a historical note, the city has already and unilaterally reset the Newtown CRA base year. Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown reminded the commission Monday, "We reset it after two public hearings [from 2007 to 2008]. We did not seek permission from the County Commission. The City Commission did that without the permission of the county."

Since the proposed ordinance was scrapped, Fournier and DeMarsh can continue their academic argument, with Brown's historical anecdote added.

Just before the vote, Mayor Shannon Snyder said, "The county has been very cooperative with us recently." Unsaid was the implied rest of the sentence: "And we would like to keep it that way." 

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The Institute for the Ages has its offices on Main Street in Sarasota. Image from the website

NONPROFIT HAS NOT MET COUNTY GRANT HIRING GOALS, BUT SAYS REVAMPED DEAL BETTER SUITS ITS 'STARTUP' MODEL

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Sarasota County this week approved changes to a \$1.2 million financial incentive agreement with a local 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to working with Sarasota's aging population that so far has not met full-time employment goals stipulated in its deal.

In November 2011, the nonprofit Institute for the Ages inked a deal with the county for the money, agreeing to meet a variety of milestones over a three-year period. The Institute grew out of an initiative plotted by Sarasota County Openly Plans for Excellence; its

“*Instead of just forcing ourselves to hire eight full-time people, we can be more flexible and nimble and tap into more specialized talent.*”

Tom Esselman
CEO
Institute for the Ages

mission is to connect innovative companies and researchers with the county's elderly population.

One third-year stipulation in the nonprofit's deal with the county called for the Institute to show it has hired eight full-time employees "with an average annual wage of not less than the then-Current Metropolitan Statistical Average for this area," calculated to be slightly more than \$37,000.

But the Institute hasn't met those hiring goals. It now employs just four full-timers. However, the Institute argued in a request to the county this month, it has worked with part-time and contract workers at a level commensurate with its eight-employee goal.

According to a spreadsheet laying out all its workers' hours and wages, the Institute has hired four part-time employees and has commissioned work from eight contractors, some of them not local — e.g., the New York PR firm DJC Communications.

"With respect to the local versus non-local hiring, these non-local roles are all involved in media to help raise the national profile and exposure for the Institute, which is a clear mandate of the Incentive contract," Institute

CEO Tom Esselman wrote in an April letter to the county.

"We're a startup," Esselman tells *The Sarasota News Leader*. "It's a brand new entity and we're trying to do something very unique." He says the eight-employee stipulation, which was hammered out before he was hired, was intended primarily to make the Institute demonstrate that it is a "growing organization."

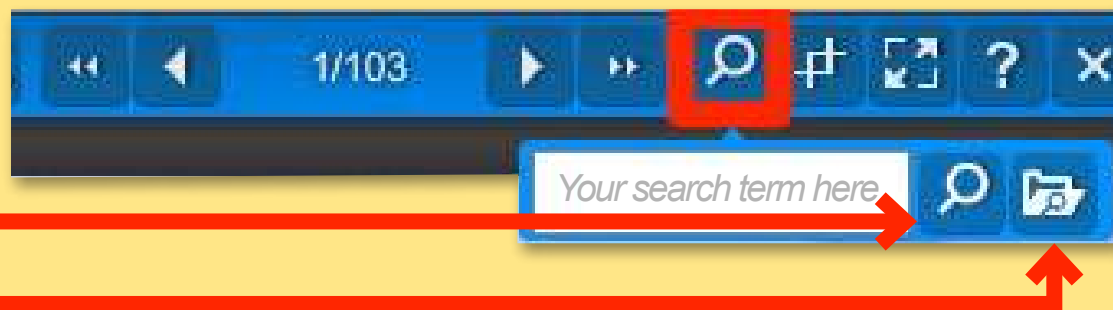
But rather than just hire eight employees to meet an arbitrary goal, Esselman says the Institute leadership has thought carefully about how best to spend the resources it has been given. "We look at this as a great opportunity to show that we're better stewards of the county's money," he adds. "Instead of just forcing ourselves to hire eight full-time people, we can be more flexible and nimble and tap into more specialized talent."

Esselman, a former Hallmark executive, says the approach is common these days. "I follow national trends like crazy and the most important trend in terms of startups has been this workforce trend of hiring more and more part-time people," he adds. "When you're a startup, it helps you become a lot cleaner and meaner." 

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THIRD TIME NOT THE CHARM



“ The lawyer part of me says that there are other uses for this property. ... I’ve been here 31 years. I’ve seen that property underwater.

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County



A graphic prepared by county staff shows the lot at 162 Beach Road in comparison to nearby properties.
Image courtesy Sarasota County

IN SPITE OF A THREAT OF A LAWSUIT, THE COUNTY COMMISSION HOLDS FAST ON REFUSING TO LET A COUPLE BUILD A HOUSE SEAWARD OF THE GULF BEACH SETBACK LINE

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

It took about 30 minutes less than a two-and-a-half hour public hearing in January 2013, but the result this week was the same: On a unanimous vote, the Sarasota County Commission denied an Osprey couple's petition to construct a two-story house on Siesta Key's Beach Road that would stand 176.5 feet seaward of the Gulf Beach Setback Line (GBSL).


The action came despite a threat from the couple's agent, a Sarasota attorney, that they would file a lawsuit against the county for a

"taking" of the land if their latest request were turned down.

Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on Siesta, made the motion, pointing out that she had "literally been standing at the street when the two next-door properties ... really stood fully in the water." Patterson added, "And while there's lots of beach there [now], and it's really tempting [to approve the request], I don't believe [the beach] will stay that way."



The lot at 162 Beach Road (left) was flooded by Tropical Storm Debby in June 2012. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

A man with light brown hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a red patterned tie, is shown in profile from the chest up. He is standing at a podium, speaking into a microphone. His hands are visible at the bottom of the frame, holding a pair of glasses. The background is dark and out of focus.

“ *To deny this variance would put an unreasonable hardship on the land, because without this variance, there is not reasonable or economically viable use available for the property at all.*

William Merrill III
Agent for Ronald
And Sania Allen

”

Bill Merrill III, agent for the Allens, addressed the County Commission about the variance in February, before the public hearing was postponed until this week. File photo

Ronald and Sania Allen bought the 7,429-square-foot parcel at 162 Beach Road as part of a two-lot package in 2009, paying \$5.4 million for them. They were seeking a variance to build a 3,088-square-foot house on the 162 Beach Road site and construct a paver driveway of 1,421 square feet. In January 2013, the County Commission refused their request to put a 4,744-square-foot house on the parcel.

On Wednesday, Chairman Charles Hines told his colleagues, “It’s just against my core in America to tell someone how big their house should or shouldn’t be.” However, he added,

“Looking at this, I believe there is a reasonable expectation that there is a reasonable use that’s available” for the property. “This is still a big house on this lot.”

“My concern is we have to focus on what’s in front of us,” Commissioner Joe Barbetta pointed out. He then referenced comments the couple’s agent, William M. Merrill III of Icard Merrill in Sarasota, had made that a denial of the request could result in a lawsuit. “We can speculate we’re going to be sued; we can speculate it’s a taking [but] I can’t support [the petition] as it appears.”



June 25, 1992
From CSV 79-03-92-191



Photos from 1992 show the 162 Beach Road property flooded. Images courtesy Sarasota County

Barbetta added, “The lawyer part of me says that there are other uses for this property. ... I’ve been here 31 years. I’ve seen that property underwater.”

Barbetta seconded Patterson’s motion.

Because two earlier petitions were denied for the same site, County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh told the board, “I think it important to give direction as to what the commission might think is a more appropriate petition,” unless the board felt no construction should be allowed on the site.

“It’d be hard for me to approve anything here,” Patterson responded, adding that she felt his suggestion was unfair. The Allens’ proposal did not meet the criteria for approval under the county’s comprehensive plan, she said.

“I just have a hard time believing that there is an obligation on our part to approve something that’s several thousand square feet,” Patterson added.

“To deny this variance would put an unreasonable hardship on the land, because without this variance, there is not reasonable or economically viable use available for the property at all,” Merrill asserted, adding that it would be “a categorical taking.”

Merrill referred the commissioners to a section of the county’s code of ordinances, which says, “Nothing in this article or the Comprehensive Plan shall be construed to result in a temporary or permanent taking of private property without due process of law.” If the board denied a variance petition for the property for a third time — especially as this was a request for a smaller structure than the one proposed in 2013 — “I submit to you that



Howard Berna, environmental supervisor in the county's Natural Resources Department, prepared the staff review of the variance petition. Photo by Rachel Hackney

this would be a temporary or permanent taking of private property without due process of law,” Merrill stressed.

Since the Allens purchased the property, the ad valorem tax on it has risen dramatically, he said, “despite [Ronald Allen’s] protests” to property tax officials.

According to the Sarasota County Property Appraiser’s Office, the assessment was \$41,140 in 2009. A year later it jumped to \$665,100. In 2013, the assessment was \$816,629, records show.

When Hines asked if he had any idea why the appraised value had continued to rise, Merrill replied that staff members in the Property Appraiser’s Office had indicated to Ronald Allen that they felt the figures reflected the

value of the land and the fact “that it was a buildable lot ...”

Even after the County Commission denied the variance petition last year, Merrill noted, “They didn’t feel that [the value] should be lowered; in fact, it got increased.”

TRYING TO MAKE HIS CASE

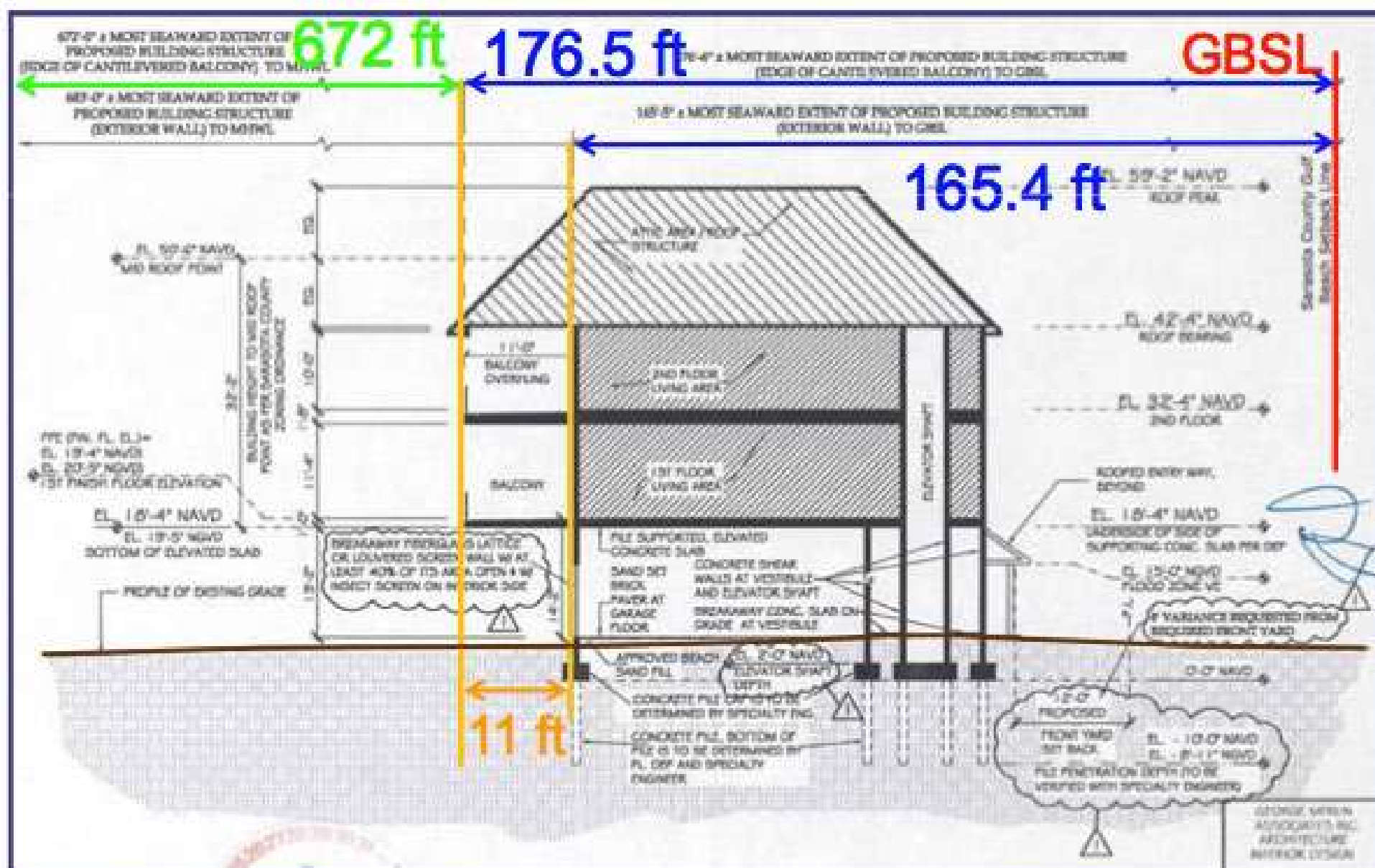
Merrill showed graphics to the board as he noted that the 162 Beach Road parcel and an adjacent lot (168 Beach Road) are the only pieces of property without houses on them between Beach Access 3 and Siesta Public

Beach, except for a county-owned lot and two other parcels — one owned by the Tivoli Siesta Key condominium complex; the other, by Terrace East, to ensure residents have unobstructed views of the beach. (Neither complex is on the water.)

In response to another question from Hines, Merrill said he provided the tax information and photos of the neighboring houses to underscore what Ronald Allen’s “reasonable expectation was” in regard to the parcel. “You think that you’re going to be able to build a house there, and that’s what he [thought],



Dimensioned Cross Section



A cross section shows plans for the house proposed to be built at 162 Beach Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County

only to find out [he and his wife] were not able to do that.”

At Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson’s request, County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh explained that any development has to be consistent with the county’s comprehensive plan, “so I think that it is appropriate, really, to focus on the criteria in the ordinance to determine whether or not to grant a variance and, specifically, also, whether it’s the minimum variance necessary.”

DeMarsh referenced an earlier comment by Merrill that the lot was platted in 1926, a factor in whether a denial of the variance could be considered a taking. The history of the property would be reasonable to consider, DeMarsh pointed out.

“Steve, I don’t mean to argue with what you’ve just said,” Patterson told him, “but there are platted lots even seaward of this [regarding which variances have been denied] many times.”

“I didn’t conclude whether it would be a taking or not,” DeMarsh replied, referring to a denial of the petition. “I gave you a principle of law to consider.”

He added that the board should consider the numerous factors related to any lot when asked for a variance to build on it, including its location seaward of the Gulf Beach Setback Line and its elevation “to determine what the reasonable ... expectations of an owner purchasing [it] would be.”

At another point during his presentation, Merrill directed the board to a section of the county’s comprehensive plan that references dune management guidelines. That language

indicates commissioners “should discuss preservation but ‘encourage public acquisition if preservation is contemplated,’” Merrill said, “so if you are looking to deny this today, then we would contemplate that you are going to be then considering buying this property at some point in the future, and, certainly, my client would entertain that discussion ...”

Merrill also stressed that the Allens had reduced the size and scope of their plan since they submitted their petition last year. Merrill characterized the changes as “substantial modifications to this [design] in line with what you asked us to do.” For example, he said, the structure would be two stories, instead of three, over the ground level and the pool had been eliminated from the design.

Additionally, Merrill presented figures showing that the house the Allens proposed would be about 2,800 square feet smaller than the average size of homes along the stretch of Beach Road he had referenced earlier. “We believe this is as small as you can go” and still get a reasonable return on the investment, Merrill said.

In response to a question from Patterson, Merrill agreed that the two houses to the immediate north of the 162 Beach Road lot have smaller houses on them than the one planned by the Allens. Located at 156 and 152 Beach Road, he said one has 1,783 square feet of habitable space; the other, 1,782 square feet.

“So they’re quite a bit smaller,” Patterson replied.

“Yes,” Merrill told her, but he added that they were built before 1979, when the comprehensive plan went into effect.

When Patterson pointed out that the comprehensive plan tightened building regulations on the county's coast, Merrill responded that after 1979, "Houses got bigger, not smaller."

The staff report says the Allens' 3,088-square-foot house "would be ranked as the third largest residence based on Living Area ... and fifth most intensive residential construction based on Living Area/Land Area (41.57%)," based on a comparison with 16 nearby properties.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Among the speakers who addressed the commission during the public hearing was Jono Miller, a New College faculty member who pointed out that he started his environmental consulting firm in the county 39 years ago.


"I would just bite the bullet and concede that it's a taking," he said as he urged the board to deny the petition. He added that the commission should offer to pay the Allens the fair market value for the land, because its history shows clearly "that it's a compromised lot that really can't or shouldn't be developed."

Representing the residents of the Terrace East condominiums in Siesta Village,

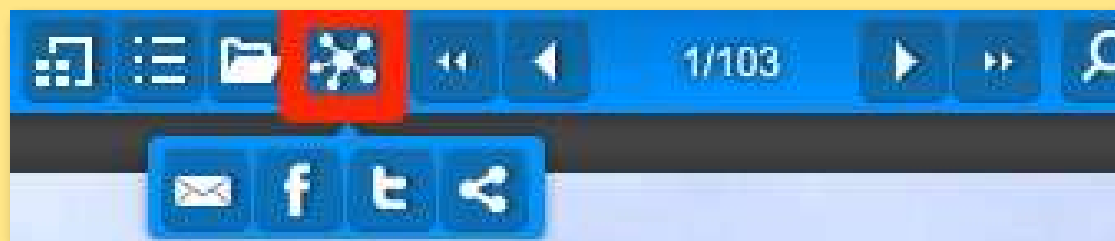
Cathleen O'Dowd, a partner in the law firm of Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick in Sarasota, told the commissioners, "[The Allens] purchased the property assuming the risk of not being able to develop it."

She also pointed out that the commission in 1993 unanimously denied a request to construct a home on the site.

Allen Worms, a retired professor and wildlife biologist who volunteers with Sarasota Audubon, reported to the board that on April 14, a snowy plover nest had been found with three eggs in it only about 50 feet from the Beach Road property. The whole state has only about 200 snowy plovers, he said, stressing their endangerment. "It's a fragile area," he added of the area that includes the Allens' lot.

During Merrill's rebuttal, he called up Michele Steinbaum, a biologist with the Sarasota firm of Steinbaum and Associates, to dispute Worms' assertion. "It would be atypical for snowy plovers to nest on this lot," she said, because the birds utilize the wet sand of the beach for their nests, which are "way far away from this lot." 

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THE WAIT NEARS AN END

The Gulf of Mexico pools around a Lido Beach condominium complex. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota

THE CITY OF SARASOTA WILL PROCEED WITH A PEER REVIEW AS SOON AS IT RECEIVES THE LIDO RENOURISHMENT PROJECT DATA FROM THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, WHICH SHOULD BE BY EARLY MAY

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

As soon as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) delivers to the City of Sarasota the model and analysis regarding the proposal to renourish Lido Key Beach, the city will ask a local independent consultant to conduct a peer review of the material, City Engineer Alexandria DavisShaw told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week.

The COE has requested that step, she said, so the agency will have an opportunity to

make any modifications the consultant recommends before the COE begins holding public meetings on the data.

City Manager Tom Barwin wants to make certain the findings have been double-checked, DavisShaw continued.

“They’re planning to be done with the model and the report very soon.”

Alexandrea DavisShaw
City Engineer
City of Sarasota

“They’re planning to be done with the model and the report very soon” — within days — DavisShaw said on April 22, referring to the Army Corps of Engineers.

The material will be available to the public as soon as the city receives it, she pointed out.

In an April 23 email to the *News Leader*, Susan J. Jackson, a spokeswoman for the COE in its Jacksonville District office, said she had spoken to the COE project manager, Milan Mora, who reported that the district is still “conducting an internal peer review of the model (this is a normal part of our process). We anticipate providing the model to the city for [its] peer review in May.”

Jackson added that the COE would start working with DavisShaw in the next few weeks to start coordinating a public meeting schedule.

Cliff Truitt of Coastal Technology Corp. (CTC) will undertake the peer review for the city, DavisShaw told the *News Leader*.



Alex DavisShaw. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Sea birds rest on the shoal in Big Pass just after dawn in early March. Photo by Rachel Hackney

CTC's [website](#) explains that it was founded in Florida in 1984 and that it specializes "in coastal engineering, coastal zone management, coastal geology and environmental permitting services."

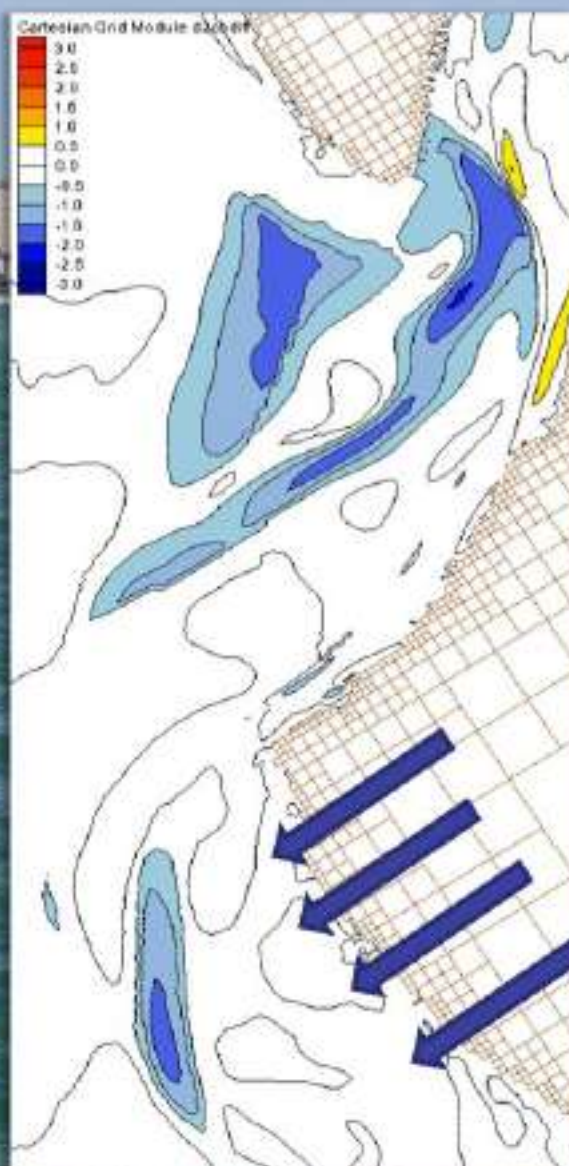
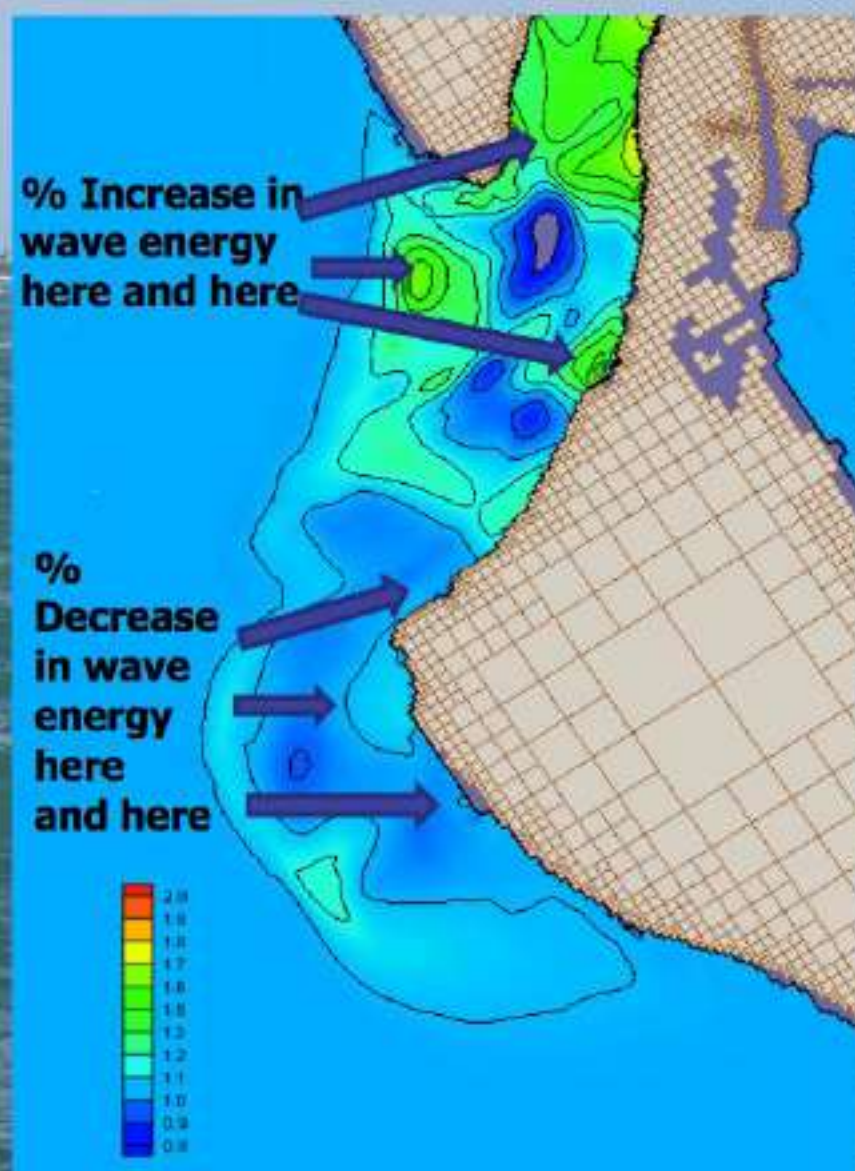
The firm is based in Sarasota.

Truitt has worked on past versions of the county's Inlet Management Plan for big Sarasota Pass and New Pass, she added, "so he is familiar with the characteristics of both passes. ... He has not participated in any of the work the Corps has done."

Because of the time the review may take, DavisShaw continued, it could be mid-June before the COE is ready to hold the first public meeting on the modeling and analysis. However, if the peer review finds no causes for concern, she said, the COE might proceed with meetings on an earlier timeline.

Sarasota County may want to pursue a peer review of the materials on its own, DavisShaw noted. Commissioner Nora Patterson has advocated for that in meetings this year of Siesta Key organizations.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT SIESTA KEY?



Results from the CMS morphologic model yields No indication of increased erosion over the Existing Condition at Siesta Key



A slide shown to the City and County commissions in October 2013 predicted no substantial negative effects on Siesta Key from the dredging of Big Pass and the installation of three groins on South Lido Key. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

A resident of Siesta Key, Patterson has heard island owners of homes and businesses voice concerns about the potential impacts on Siesta's beaches regarding the COE's proposed dredging of Big Pass and the construction of three groins on South Lido Key. As presented in several public meetings last year, the COE plan calls for the dredging of more than 1 million cubic yards of sand from Big Pass for the first renourishment of Lido Beach under a 50-year-long project. Subsequent renourishments of Lido would take place every five years, with sand alternately coming from New Pass, COE Project Manager Mora has said.

The approximate cost of the work is \$22 million, with the federal government to handle about 63 percent of the expense. The rest of the cost would be covered by the city — through county Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue allocated for beach renourishment — and state funding.

PUTTING THE COUNTY ON NOTICE

In the meantime, a Tampa attorney has notified Sarasota County Administrator Tom Harmer that he and his firm have been hired by Best Western Plus-Siesta Key to "assist it in legally protecting its interests and in ensuring that the proposed project to renourish Lido Beach does not adversely affect Siesta Key."

In the April 17 letter, Donald E. Hemke of Carlton Fields Jordan Burt added, "I understand that we may be similarly representing other organizations through SOSS2, Inc., 'Save Our Siesta Sands 2.'"


SOSS2 was founded as a nonprofit organization to oppose the dredging of Big Pass.



Army Corps of Engineers Project Manager Milan Mora addresses the Sarasota County Coastal Advisory Committee in September 2013. File photo

The letter points out that the ownership of the hotel, located at 6600 S. Tamiami Trail near Siesta Key, "does not oppose renourishment at Lido Key, but insists that any renourishment does not jeopardize Siesta Key in any way and that alternatives to obtaining sand from Big Pass be appropriately explored and used."

Hemke asked Harmer to include him on any email or notice list to ensure he receives information about the Lido Beach project. He also requested that Harmer provide him a point of contact "for coordinating any requests for public records," pursuant to the Public Records Act, "in any way relating to the proposal to renourish Lido Key."

Maria Bankemper, co-owner and general manager of the Best Western Plus, is the immediate past chairwoman of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce. She and her father, Mike Lepore, are directors of SOSS2. 



CITY COMMISSION WRAP-UP

The City Commission listens to a presentation on April 21. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE STATE STREET PARKING GARAGE PROJECT WILL BE CLOSE TO MAKING DEADLINE, AND A NEW 'MOBILITY FEE' SYSTEM HAS STARTED ITS COURSE TO BECOMING LAW

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The April 21 Sarasota City Commission meeting was about big money, ordinance tweaking and more (and more) talk about homelessness.

The State Street parking garage is now off and running, having received the commission's blessings for construction to begin. It took six related agenda items to cut the cord and start the baby breathing on its own. The gestation period has been about a decade.

The cost is estimated at \$11.4 million to provide parking for 300 cars, 20 bicycles and eight motorcycles. The price is well above

the \$7.2 figure originally budgeted. The city has a complicated funding plan to cover the difference, with money from the Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Agency, shifts between internal accounts and borrowing from the Workers' Compensation Fund and the Fleet Liability Fund.

During the early design phase for the project, the public was asked to contribute ideas. One was a green roof, possibly even a city park atop the mid-rise building. That went nowhere, but city Chief Planner Steve Stancel told the commissioners the city is in discussions with Florida Power & Light for

the company to lease the rooftop and install solar panels.

Commissioner Paul Caragiulo said of the garage plan, "I've supported this from the beginning, to develop nearly an acre of the downtown area. There are some issues with spending. The 50-percent increase does not give me confidence I would like to have, but parking garages are an important part of our downtown."

Caragiulo then voted against the project, joined by Mayor Shannon Snyder. But the other three commissioners voted in favor of it. The same vote split was repeated when it came time to approve the funding scheme.

The city is obligated under a contract with the developers of [Pineapple Square](#) to provide

the garage by February of next year. Stancel says it will be a race to the finish line. Expect a groundbreaking in May.

IMPACT FEE TAKES A HEADER

Although a raft of public hearings will still be required, the city commissioners cleared the way for Sarasota to opt out of the county's road impact fee system and replace it with a more dexterous "mobility fee" that can be used for more than just road improvements.

City Engineer Alex DavisShaw has been working on the plan for many months. It requires undoing many codes, interlocal agreements, ordinances and coordination with Sarasota County. At issue on the afternoon of April 21 was a resolution declaring an intent "to terminate the road impact fee inter-local



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

agreement” that was signed in 1990, almost a quarter-century ago.

Under the existing system, the developer of any new construction is required to compensate the city or county with cash for any impact the new project will have on roads. The mobility fee plan uses the same ethic but allows the money to be spent for more than extra lanes for traffic. Bike and pedestrian paths could be funded, as could a variety of forms of transit (water taxis, buses, trolleys, streetcars, electric vehicles).

To goad construction, Sarasota County slashed its road impact fees years ago. Later in this new process, the city must decide how much it will charge for mobility fees. “It adds flexibility that wasn’t there in the old regime,”

said Rod Warner, a seasoned citizen volunteer on a variety of transportation issues.

DavisShaw said she would like to start the new system by the beginning of the next fiscal year, Oct. 1. “This is our future,” said Commissioner Suzanne Atwell. “We need to do this.”

The commission agreed to advertise a public hearing that will be held to establish rates for the mobility fee.

THE HOMELESSNESS REFLEX

On Monday, the commission also took four votes and heard one report on vagrancy and homelessness in the city. Mayor Snyder has asked City Manager Tom Barwin to provide a



A surface parking lot stands on the site where the State Street garage will be built. Photo by Norman Schimmel

report on the latter issue at every meeting; April 21 marked the debut of Barwin's briefings.

Barwin said the Seminole Gulf Railway has begun clearing brush from its right of way. The rail corridor has long been the site of a string of encampments, probably going back to the hobo days of the 1920s. At least one of those encampments has been linked to fires adjacent to a fuel storage facility (see the related story in this issue).

Barwin added that the encampment near the cemetery between 10th and 12th streets is still in use. "We did one trash cleanup, and we will need to do another in the very near future," he said. That is the encampment the City Commission ruled off-limits to police unless there were calls there for service.

The police attempted to use "homeless outreach teams" to offer people in that camp free lodging at The Salvation Army and a variety of



1330 NORTH OSPREY AVENUE CONSTRUCTION STAGING UPDATE

- **City staff successfully secured an agreement with a private land owner for the purpose of the deep injection well staging area.**



A graphic shows the property where staging could be handled for the deep injection well project. Image courtesy Sarasota County

social services. The commission ordered that halted because the city and county's homelessness issues consultant told a daily newspaper the city should wait until a shelter was built to take such action. The city asked the consultant, Robert Marbut, for clarification, but Barwin said, "He has not responded to our request that the outreach teams continue."

City and county staffs continue to meet, coordinate and share information, Barwin noted. The following day, the City and County commissions were scheduled for a joint session to discuss vagrancy, homelessness and a possible site for the shelter (see the related story in this issue).

Construction begins at one of the proposed shelter sites on April 28, but not for a center for the homeless. The property is home to a city utility facility now being prepared for injection of brine from the city's reverse-osmosis drinking water treatment plant. The effort will require more than 1,000 feet of pipe that was to be stored on-site.

The area is one of two under study for a come-as-you-are shelter for the homeless and vagrants. Should the utility site across 12th Street from the sewer treatment plant be chosen for the shelter, all of the construction materials for the injection facility would need to be moved — tons of it. On Monday, the city deferred the decision to lease a new area to "stage" the construction material. But at the end of its joint meeting Tuesday — with still no decision on a site — the City Commission voted 3-2 to spend \$1,075 a month to lease


property for the pipe and other gear. Vice Mayor Willie Shaw and Commissioner Susan Chapman voted in the minority.

Another homeless-driven issue settled Monday will ban people from loitering in roundabouts. The vote was triggered by a man who has been spending his days on the inner curb of the roundabout at Ringling and Pineapple.

"The purpose is to promote traffic safety for motorists and pedestrians on the roadways," explained City Attorney Bob Fournier of the action.

"I can think of about five other things in this community that are more important than Ian sunning himself in the roundabout," said Snyder of the man at the focus of the initiative. "I think it is targeting one person, and I cannot support this." The vote to approve the ban was 4-1, with Snyder in the minority.

Then the commission amended three provisions of its outdoor-lodging ordinance so the law would be more congruent with the new county ordinance. Until a shelter is built, however, there will be little or no enforcement of the changes, a cautionary action because of a federal court decision in Miami called the Pottinger case. That decision made it clear homeless people cannot be held legally accountable for acts of nature, for example, if a city does not provide facilities for them as alternatives.

Those changes to the ordinance were approved unanimously. 

People await assistance during a Veterans Stand Down event in the Dallas area of Texas in October 2011. Image from Flickr via Wikimedia Commons

VETERANS STAND DOWN EVENT PLANNED FOR APRIL 26

The 2014 Veterans Stand Down event, which is designed to connect veterans to vital services, will take place from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturday, April 26, at the William L. Little Health and Human Services Center (county Health Department), located at 2200 Ringling Blvd. in Sarasota, the center has announced.

Additional services will be offered in Payne Park Auditorium, a short walk away, a news release notes.

Veterans should bring their IDs (Veterans Administration cards or DD-214 forms), if available, the release points out.

The event is free, the release adds; bus passes are available in advance by calling 366-2224,

Ext. 146, or attendees will be reimbursed the day of the event with a receipt.

The Stand Down program is a way for veterans not already receiving services to get access to many providers and types of support in a one-stop setting, the release notes. Veterans who attend the event will be able to get help in accessing Veterans Administration benefits and services, for example. Further, housing assistance also will be available for homeless veterans, the release says. Local organizations providing programs relating to mental health and substance abuse treatment as well as legal and employment services will have representatives on hand to supply information and referrals, the release explains. Additionally, the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota

County (formerly known as Sarasota County Health Department) will have its Health in Motion Mobile Medical Unit parked nearby, so attendees can receive no-cost blood pressure and blood sugar (diabetes) screenings, HIV testing and health education, the release continues. "In addition, attendees can get help with finding a primary healthcare provider," the release points out.

Because of the significant interest in haircuts last year, a team of barbers, hair stylists and nail technicians from Manatee Technical Institute will be on hand again.

Nonperishable food items, personal care items and Veterans Administration surplus items also will be provided. The Salvation

Army will offer food and refreshments, the release notes.

"We are dedicated to helping veterans within our community," said Phil Gorelick, vice president of Programs at Jewish Family & Children's Service (JFCS), in the release. Among the JFCS offerings is the Operation Military Assistance Program, a federally funded service to assist veterans with obtaining or maintaining permanent housing. "The Stand Down allows us to connect with homeless veterans, providing access to resources they may not be aware exist, which supports the process of helping them to become self-sustaining," Gorelick added in the release.

For more information, visit JFCS-Cares.org/ or call 366-2224, Ext. 146.

SBEP TO CELEBRATE ARBOR DAY WITH CLASSES AT TWIN LAKES PARK

Sarasota County, the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension program, Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) and Florida Power & Light (FPL) will celebrate Arbor Day with two free educational events at the Sarasota County Extension Office, located at Twin Lakes Park at 6700 Clark Road in Sarasota, SBEP has announced.

Tree School will be held from 8 a.m. to noon on Friday, April 25, a news release points out. "The event will focus on best practices and proper tree care for landscape professionals," the release says.

Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) as well as International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA) credits will be available to participants.

Value of Trees and Pruning for Tree Health will be held from 1 to 4 pm, on Saturday, April 26, the release continues. "The event will feature pruning demonstrations and a discussion on how to place the right tree in the right location," it adds. Information about coastal trees and special considerations when managing them will be included. A panel of experts will be on hand to answer questions," it notes, and participants will receive free pindo palm seedlings, while supplies last, courtesy of FPL.

A commemorative tree planting at the Sarasota County Extension Gardens at Twin Lakes Park will be held following the class on April 26.

Advanced registration is recommended for both classes, the release notes. That can be done online at sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu or by calling 861-5000.

NATIONAL DRUG TAKE-BACK EVENT PLANNED FOR APRIL 26

Law enforcement agencies throughout Sarasota County will participate in the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) national event to “take back” and properly dispose of prescription medication on Saturday, April 26, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Sheriff’s Office has announced.

The Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office has permanent drop boxes at the Criminal Justice Center, 2071 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota, which is open 24-hours a day; and the south county office, 4531 State Road 776, Venice, where the hours are 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

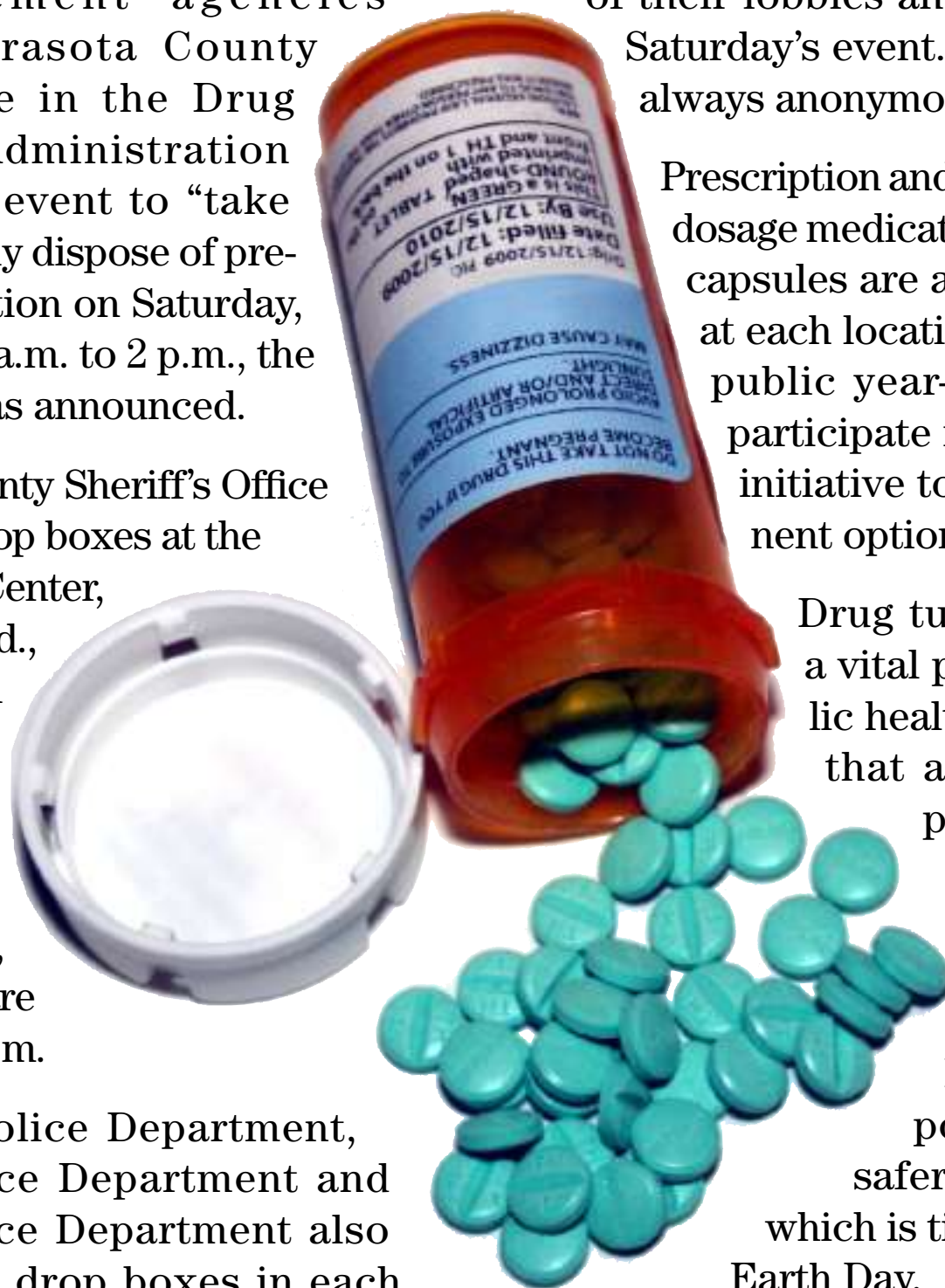
The Sarasota Police Department, the Venice Police Department and North Port Police Department also have permanent drop boxes in each

of their lobbies and are participating in Saturday’s event. Medication turn-in is always anonymous.

Prescription and over-the-counter solid dosage medication such as tablets and capsules are accepted. While boxes at each location are available to the public year-round, the agencies participate in the national turn-in initiative to publicize the permanent option for proper disposal.

Drug turn-in events address a vital public safety and public health issue. Studies show that a majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including from home medicine cabinets.

In addition, proper disposal of medication is safer for the environment, which is timely in recognition of Earth Day.



Got Drugs?

Turn in your unused
or expired medication
for safe disposal
here



National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day
Saturday, April 26, 10am-2pm

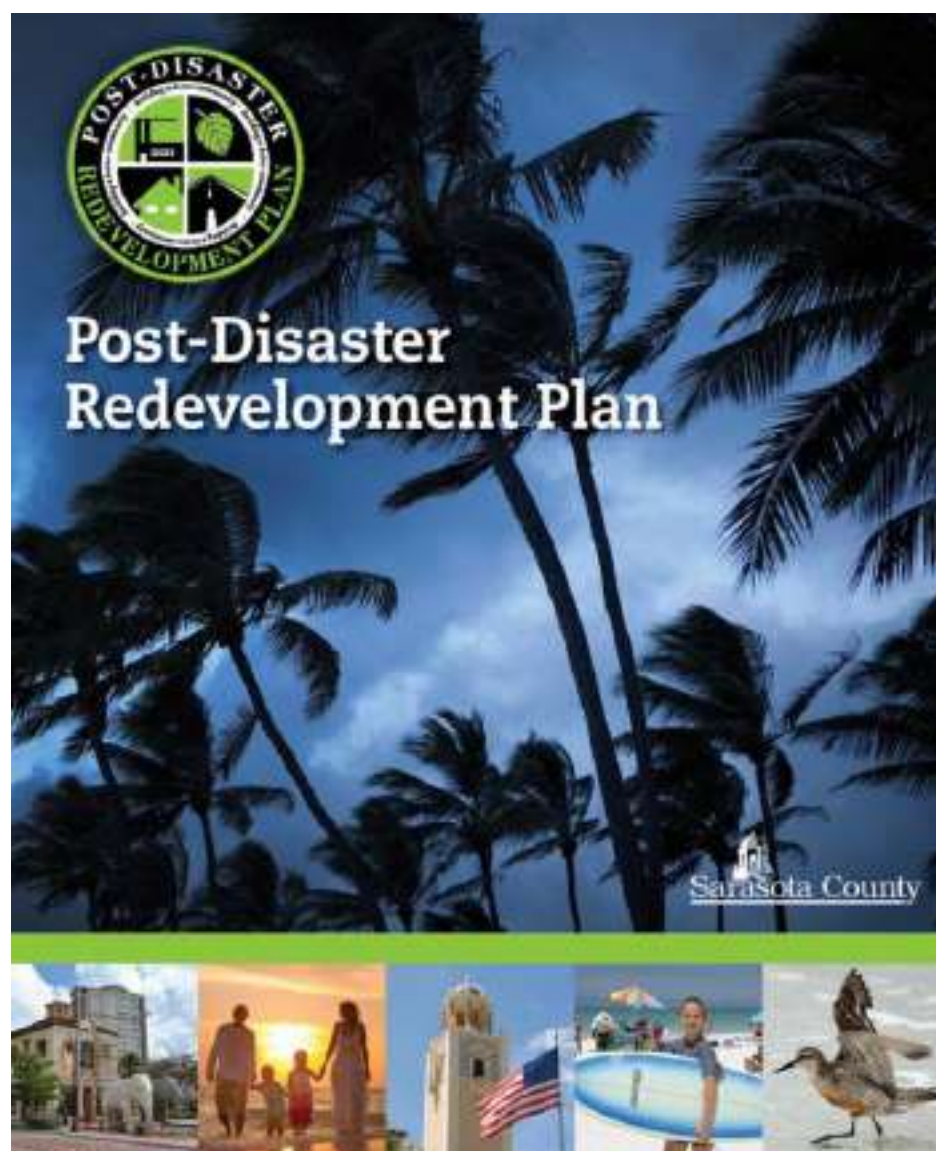
PUBLIC COMMENT SOUGHT ON POST-DISASTER PLANNING

The new [Sarasota County Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan \(PDRP\)](#), a countywide report that proposes best practices for redeveloping the community after a major disaster, will be the focus of two public meetings next week, the county has announced.

The PDRP emphasizes actions that can be taken before a catastrophe, such as a major hurricane strike, to prepare the way for hazard mitigation and community improvements “consistent with the local comprehensive plan and with citizen participation,” a news release says. Recovery topics addressed in the plan include business resumption and business redevelopment; housing repair and reconstruction; infrastructure restoration and mitigation; short-term recovery actions that affect long-term redevelopment; sustainable land use; environmental restoration; and financial considerations, the release points out.

The county’s local municipalities (the cities of Sarasota, Venice and North Port and the Town of Longboat Key) are evaluating the plan, “making it more applicable to their respective jurisdictions,” the release notes. For the PDRP to apply within a municipality, its local government board would need to adopt it, the release explains.

The plan is also available for county residents to review. It can be found online at www.scgov.net/PDRP. All residents are encouraged to read it to become more aware of the risks and the need to prepare for disaster, the release says. “Residents are also asked to consider and comment on the priorities for redevelopment outlined in the plan,” the release adds. Comments may be emailed to



PDRP@scgov.net or mailed to PDRP Comments, Sarasota County Coastal Resources, 1001 Sarasota Center Blvd., Sarasota, FL 34240.

The two open meetings scheduled for next week to obtain public opinion on the plan will be held as follows:

- Tuesday, April 29, 6 to 8 p.m., Twin Lakes Park, 6700 Clark Road, Sarasota.
- Wednesday, April 30, 6 to 8 p.m., Venice Community Center, 326 Nokomis Ave. S., Venice.

The County Commission is set to discuss the PDRP on Wednesday, June 11, at 1:30 p.m. in the Commission Chambers located within the County Administration Center at 1660 Ringling Blvd. in Sarasota.

Sarasota County was one of six Florida counties selected to develop PDRPs as part of a pilot project for the Florida Department of Community Affairs and Florida Division of Emergency Management, the release points out. “These counties’ experiences will shape future guidance from the state on the content

and planning process for PDRPs,” it adds. Because Sarasota County has been featured as a pioneering case study in the state’s Post-Disaster Redevelopment Planning guidebook, the release continues, “the county will have a jump start on any planning requirements that come from this program.”

PAYNE PARK TENNIS CENTER HOSTING FREE PLAY DAY APRIL 25

Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department is hosting a Free Play Day Friday, April 25, at the Payne Park Tennis Center, located at 2050 Adams Lane in Sarasota, the county has announced.

From 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. all 12 clay courts, ball machines, instructional clinics and activities will be “absolutely free,” a news release points out. “The daylong event will feature tennis clinics from 4 to 6 p.m., round-robin events for all levels from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. and a potluck tennis party beginning at 6:30 p.m.,” the release adds.

“Sarasota County Parks and Recreation offers tennis facilities in many of our park locations, but the Payne Park Tennis Center is more than just courts to play on,” said Carolyn Brown, director of the Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department, in the release. “It’s a full-service tennis facility featuring certified professionals, lessons, competitions, clinics and more.”

Payne Park Tennis Center, which was established in 1993, features the following, the release notes:

- 12 [Har-Tru Hydrogrid](#) tennis courts.
- Canopy-covered bench seating.
- Water fountains at the courts.
- Locker rooms with showers.



A list of rules hangs on the fence above the Payne Park Tennis Center sign. Photo by Scott Proffitt

- Lighted courts for evening play.
- Certified teaching pros ([USPTA/USPTR](#)).
- Hitting wall.
- Courtside tables.
- Lessons and clinics.
- Leagues and round robins.
- Tournaments.

For more information contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 or visit www.scgov.net.

SARASOTA MEMORIAL CEO ANNOUNCES RESIGNATION AS OF JUNE 1

After nearly 10 years in the position, Gwen MacKenzie will be stepping down next month as president & CEO of Sarasota Memorial Health Care System, the hospital has announced.

MacKenzie will be returning to her home state to assume a leadership role with the nation's largest Catholic and nonprofit health system," Ascension Health, where she will have oversight of the organization's Michigan Ministries, a news release points out.

MacKenzie will remain at Sarasota Memorial through the month of May. She will start her new job on June 1, the release adds. In the latter role, MacKenzie will be responsible for the administrative direction, strategic positioning and operations of Ascension Health's five health systems in Michigan — Borgess Health, Genesys Health System, St. John Providence Health System, St. Joseph Health System and St. Mary's of Michigan — which collectively have 31,000 employees and more than 150,000 patient discharges and 4 million outpatient visits throughout the state, the release notes.

"Sarasota Memorial is a very special organization with outstanding doctors and staff, and it's been an honor to serve this community," MacKenzie said in the release. "It will be hard to leave so many good friends and colleagues."

Marguerite Malone, chairwoman of the Sarasota County Public Hospital Board, announced MacKenzie's resignation to staff and physicians on Wednesday, April 23, the release points out. The board has appointed Sarasota Memorial Chief Operating Officer (COO) David Verinder as interim CEO, effective June 1. Verinder joined Sarasota Memorial in 2006 as chief financial officer and has served as COO since 2010, the release adds.

"Thanks to Gwen's outstanding leadership and vision, she is leaving Sarasota Memorial



Gwen MacKenzie/Photo contributed by Sarasota Memorial Hospital

in an exceptionally strong position, from both a quality and financial perspective," Malone said in the release.

Since joining Sarasota Memorial in 2005, MacKenzie "has successfully implemented numerous patient care and operational improvements," the release continues. "Indeed, the organization has been repeatedly honored by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (Magnet designation), [\[U.S. News & World Report\]](#), Thomson Reuters, HealthGrades and numerous other national organizations for our excellent care and robust operational performance," it adds. "The organization's positive financial results paved the way for bond-rating upgrades and our \$250 million campus improvement project," it notes.

MacKenzie "also led the organization through a period of unprecedented growth and improved access to care, opening seven outpatient centers in the past nine years, including Sarasota Memorial's freestanding Emergency Room and Health Care Center in the medically underserved community of North Port," it says.

DISTRICT SCHEDULES SPRING PRESCRIBED FIRES FOR SARASOTA COUNTY

The Land Management Section of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) will be conducting prescribed burns during the months of April, May and June on both the Deer Prairie Creek Preserve and the neighboring Schewe Tract, the district has announced.

Deer Prairie Creek Preserve, which is jointly owned and managed by SWFWMD and Sarasota County, is located between Interstate 75 and U.S. Highway 41, a news release notes. The Schewe Tract, which is located north and south of I-75 just north of Deer Prairie Creek, is fully owned and managed by the district. Both of these parcels are located west of North Port. Approximately 950 acres will be burned, in small manageable units, the release notes.

According to Will VanGelder, SWFWMD's land management supervisor, burns are implemented to mimic natural fire cycles under a controlled situation, the release explains. "The objective is to avert uncontrolled wildfires and enhance the area's natural conditions by maintaining the ecological and wildlife habitat values," the release says. Prescribed burns are conducted only "when weather conditions are optimal to meet the desired objectives and to minimize impacts to the public," the release notes.

"Although every effort will be made to assure that smoke does not affect homes or highways, vehicle operators should exercise caution if smoke reduces visibility on the area's roads or highways," the release points out.



A section of a brochure shows Deer Prairie Creek Preserve. Image from Sarasota County

Images courtesy takebackyourpower.net

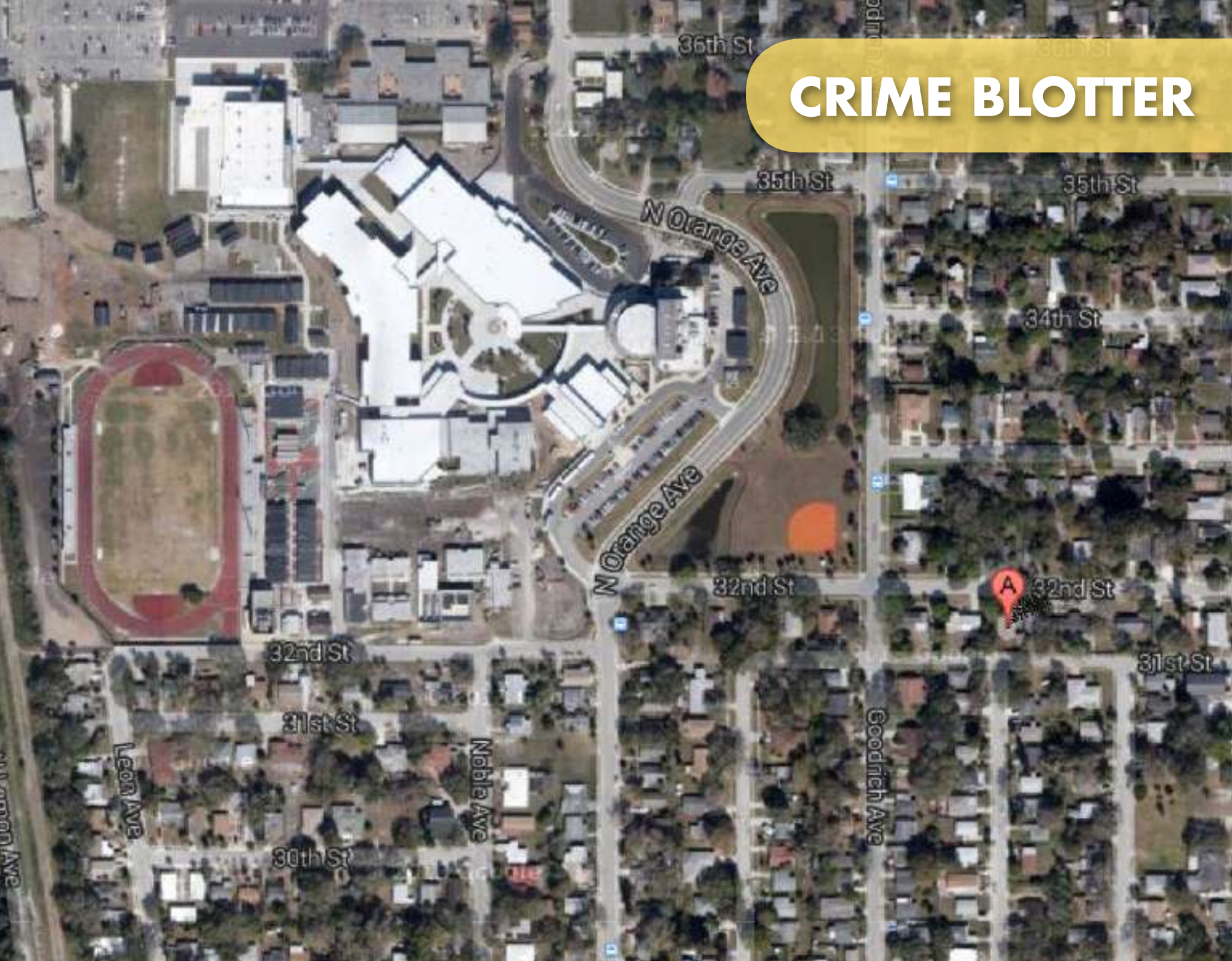
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CRIME BLOTTER



A flag shows the location of the Sarasota residence where a woman was killed early Saturday morning after a vehicle smashed into her bedroom. Image from Google Maps

62-YEAR-OLD WOMAN KILLED BY DRIVER FLEEING CRIME SCENE

Jakeilah R. Weeks, 24, of Tampa, was charged with Vehicular Homicide, Burglary, two counts of Battery, Petit Theft and Obstruction in connection with a crash that cost a Sarasota woman her life early on the morning of Saturday, April 19, in Sarasota, the Sarasota Police Department has reported.

Just before 3:30 a.m. Saturday, officers with the Police Department were dispatched to a report of a domestic situation and burglary at a home in the 1700 block of 29th Street

in Sarasota, a news release says. The officers learned from Donta Carswell Jr., 24, of 1719 29th St., Sarasota, that Weeks was upset because he had broken up with her and he had begun dating another woman, according to the report. He was lying facedown on the ground in front of his home when the officers arrived, the report notes.

As the officers were interviewing Carswell, the report continues, his mother, who lives at 1725 29th St., yelled to them that a woman,

later identified as Weeks, had just broken into her home and was attempting to flee the scene in a vehicle. When an officer ran up to the car and banged on the window to get Weeks' attention, she ignored him and fled north on Maple Avenue, the report continues.

Officers ran to keep visual contact of Weeks on Maple Avenue and witnessed her crash her vehicle into the back wall of a home at 1728 32nd St., the release says. The vehicle smashed through an exterior wall of the home and into a bedroom where the homeowner, Eleanor Ball, 62, of Sarasota, was sleeping, the release points out. Ball died at the scene, the release adds.

Weeks first was taken to the hospital for treatment of injuries sustained in the crash and later was booked into the Sarasota County Jail on Saturday, the report notes.



Jakeilah R. Weeks/Contributed photo

SOUTH FLORIDA GROUP ARRESTED IN ATTEMPTED BURGLARY CASE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested four men from south Florida for allegedly trying to break into a home on Western Pine Circle on the morning of April 23 while children were alone inside, the office has announced.

"The mother left the house to take one child to school but received a text from one of the children at home that said someone was trying to break in," a news release says. "She told the kids to run out the back" and head to a neighbor's residence, it adds. As they did, "the oldest child snapped a picture of the suspects' vehicle in the driveway," the release continues.

A witness who called 911 saw two men run to the car, which sped off northbound, the release adds. A description of the vehicle and the tag number were radioed to deputies, who located and stopped the car on Interstate 75 at Laurel Road, the release notes.

The occupants of the vehicle were identified as 22-year-old Trevon Jackson, 19-year old Darian Jones, 24-year-old Marcus Felder and 20-year-old Gary Saulby Jr., the release says. Each suspect told detectives a different story regarding the reason they were in the area, it points out.

All four men are charged with one count each of Attempted Residential Burglary. Jackson is also charged with Violation of Probation.



Marcus Felder/Contributed photo



Trevon Jackson/Contributed photo



Darian Jones/Contributed photo



Gary Saulby Jr./Contributed photo

MAN CHARGED AFTER INVESTIGATION INTO LOCKER THEFTS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has charged a Bradenton man in connection with multiple locker thefts at two Crunch Fitness locations, the office has reported.

On April 7, a man's wallet was reported stolen from a locker at the Bee Ridge Road gym, a news release says. The victim's debit card and credit card later were used at several locations to purchase gift cards worth more than \$1,800, the release adds. After detectives issued a law enforcement bulletin, a Manatee County detective identified the suspect as Jared Mustrat, 27, of 10407 Winding Stream Way, Bradenton, who was suspected in a similar crime at a Crunch Fitness location in that city, the release points out. On Monday, April 21, two more locker thefts were reported at the Bee Ridge Road gym, the release notes.



Jared Mustrat/Contributed photo



*The suspect is shown in a surveillance video.
Contributed image*

One victim reported the theft of credit cards and \$300 in cash, the release says, while the second victim found nearly \$1,500 in fraudulent charges when he checked his online credit card statement.

Deputies located Mustrat on April 22 and booked him into the Manatee County Jail, the release adds. "At this time he is facing one count of Scheme to Defraud, one count of Grand Theft and two counts of Fraudulent Use of a Credit Card for the Sarasota County crimes," it says. Additional Manatee County charges are pending as the investigation continues.

SARASOTA MAN CHARGED IN CONNECTION WITH BURGLARIES

Jason Flores, 22, of 1644 Eighth St., Sarasota, has been arrested and charged with residential and commercial burglaries, the Sarasota Police Department has reported.

More charges are pending, a news release says.

Flores was implicated in four burglaries, the release adds: one at a business at 1899 Fruitville Road in Sarasota and three residential incidents — at 2466 Loma Linda, 2380 Bahia Vista St. and 2253 Bahia Vista St., the release points out. He was arrested after officers saw him running in an area neighborhood, the release notes.


Flores is charged with three counts of Occupied Burglary (a felony), one count of Possession of Burglary Tools (a felony), one count of narcotics Possession (a felony) and one count of Burglary — Structure Unoccupied (a felony), the release continues.

Lt. Pat Ledwith with the Bureau of Criminal Investigations said in the release, “We just want to remind residents: Lock it up. Lock your homes, your vehicles and your screen



Jason Flores/Contributed photo

doors to your homes and protect yourself. If you see something suspicious, call 911.”

Anyone with any information about a crime is encouraged to call Det. Sgt. Tom Shanafelt at 954-7089, leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 366-TIPS (8477) or going online at sarasotacrimestoppers.com. 



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

Call: (941) 366-TIPS (8477)

Click: SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com

Text: Text “TIP109” plus your message to CRIMES (274637)

OPINION



SIESTA KEY JUSTIFIABLY FEARS THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

EDITORIAL

Shortly, we understand, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) will deliver to the City of Sarasota its much anticipated models/analysis regarding the Lido Renourishment Project — specifically, the effects that could be expected from dredging Big Sarasota Pass and constructing three groins on South Lido Key to keep sand in place on the renourished beach.

As City Engineer Alexandria DavisShaw explained to the *News Leader* this week, the city will have its own consultant — who has remained independent of the COE work — look over that material to see whether any major concerns exist or if modifications are needed before the federal agency schedules public meetings on the data. Therefore, it

could be mid-June before the Army Corps airs its findings in the first such session.

However, because the materials will become a matter of public record once the agency delivers them to the city, we expect a scramble of requests for them. Regardless of what the city's independent consultant finds, we also imagine a lot of people are going to be unhappy. The key issue all along in this process has been a lack of public trust regarding the Army Corps' work. The agency has pushed back the timetable for the release of these documents so many times, it is difficult not to be cynical in considering the reasons. The prime one, of course, is whether the Army Corps has been massaging the material to make it more palatable.

OPINION

We feel terribly sorry for DavisShaw. In a letter she sent the *News Leader* last week (see it below in this section), she points to text in the [Big Pass Piano music video](#) released earlier this month, which protests the proposal to dredge Big Sarasota Pass for sand to renourish Lido Beach.

“No decision has been made at this time,”

DavisShaw stresses about the dredging plan, adding, “If the data in the final analysis shows that the proposed Lido Beach project would put Siesta Key beaches, homes or businesses at risk, neither the City of Sarasota staff nor the Army Corps of Engineers staff would support moving forward with it.”

DavisShaw has an excellent reputation in this community, which makes it all the more painful that she has to contend with criticism that rightfully should be directed at the COE. In fact, we continue to rue the treatment she received when two representatives of the federal agency joined her in a presentation about the Lido project during a public meeting hosted last December by the Siesta Key Association (SKA). DavisShaw was berated by people in the audience, who were angry and fearful about the very idea of dredging Big Pass, which has remained untouched over the centuries.

What DavisShaw wants — and what the vast majority of opponents of the project have

agreed is needed — is sufficient renourishment of Lido Key so structures do not start tumbling into the Gulf of Mexico. But whereas

DavisShaw has spoken of caution, the COE representatives have been cavalier about how the project might affect Siesta Key.

Anyone who sat in the audience for the Sarasota County Coastal Advisory

Committee (CAC) meeting on Sept. 18, 2013 and listened to Army Corps of Engineers Project Manager Milan Mora talk about the whole scenario saw smugness and heard assurances that brought to mind the line from that old joke: “We’re the government and we’re here to help you.” It was enough to make any Siesta resident want to run from the room, screaming in terror.

Perhaps Mora thought the volunteers who serve on the CAC would be an “Amen chorus” for him. After all, he was the man from the government, there to keep Lido from falling into the sea.

During remarks to representatives of the news media almost exactly a month later — just hours before he was to present the same PowerPoint slides to a joint meeting of the City and County commissions that he had shown the Coastal Advisory Committee — his assertions were still that assured. Both the dredging of Big Pass and the installation of the groins on South Lido Key are necessary to

“What has prompted one organization after another on Siesta Key to protest facets of the Army Corps of Engineers plan as Mora has outlined them has been the sheer uncertainty of their impacts on Siesta Key.”

OPINION

the project, he said. They will not harm Siesta Key, he insisted — with no solid models or analysis at the time to back him up.

The smugness was not evident, though, when he addressed the two local government boards. However, that agenda item began with a consultant for Visit Sarasota County presenting slides showing the annual \$155 million impact Lido Key Beach has on the county's economy. Worry about losing that money clearly was etched on the face of Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County.

The threat to the commissions was evident: If you do not do this project as the COE has planned it, you will suffer greatly.

By the time Mora appeared before the SKA audience in early December, his attitude at times was that of a parent chiding children. "This is the way it has to be," he essentially told the crowd, which included Lido residents, "unless you want man-made Lido Beach to disappear."

No wonder the crowd's ire mounted as the meeting went on that evening.

It was left to DavisShaw, again, to stress that the federal agency's analysis and models regarding the dredging of Big Pass and the construction of the groins would undergo peer review and that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection would take a very careful look at the plans as well.


What has prompted one organization after another on Siesta Key to protest facets of

the COE plan as Mora has outlined them has been the sheer uncertainty of their impacts on Siesta Key. Is it worth creating a fiasco on one island just to lessen erosion on another?

For at least the past three fiscal years, Siesta Key has collected more Tourist Development Tax revenue than any other location in the county — including the City of Sarasota, in which Lido Beach is just one tourist destination. In the 2013 fiscal year, which ended on Sept. 30, 2013, Siesta had total collections of \$4,773,981.52. That figure surpassed collections for all of the city by more than \$200,000, according to the Sarasota County Tax Collector's Office.

In all this discussion, we have seen no one with the county or city provide documentation showing the total economic impact Siesta Key has on the community.

We wholeheartedly support Siesta residents and business owners who want to protect their island and their livelihoods. The County and City commissions, as we see it, have no choice but to find a highly qualified, highly respected person with a scientific background to conduct a peer review of the Army Corps of Engineers models and analysis.

In the meantime, when we consider all those assurances Milan A. Mora has provided the public with no science to support them, we remain mindful of the tagline for the 1986 horror film *The Fly*: "Be afraid. Be very afraid." 

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PATIENCE REQUESTED

To the Editor:

In response to the April 18 article *Plea for the Pass*, I am concerned that emotion is at the heart of misinformation being disseminated about the proposed long-term plan to provide restoration and stabilization for Lido Beach.

Text in the music video states that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the City of Sarasota “plan to dredge sand from Big Pass, risking Siesta Key beaches, businesses and homes.” To be clear: No decision has been made at this time. The fact-finding phase is still ongoing. The Army Corps of Engineers is reviewing previous research and is finalizing its own computer modeling to determine potential impacts, if any, on Siesta Key. A peer review also will be conducted.

It is vitally important to withhold judgment until the process is completed and the final reports are issued.

The City of Sarasota has a responsibility to provide accurate, factual information to the community. If the data in the final analysis shows that the proposed Lido Beach project would put Siesta Key beaches, homes or businesses at risk, neither the City of Sarasota staff nor the Army Corps of Engineers staff would support moving forward with it.

We ask for your patience as we await the facts in the final reports, which we anticipate will be completed by mid-June.

Alex DavisShaw
City Engineer
City of Sarasota



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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



Sarasota Leisure

EARTH, AIR, FIRE AND WATER
A FESTIVAL OF INTENSE ENERGY
SIESTA SEEN

Inside

Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast

EARTH, AIR, FIRE AND WATER

FOR EARTH WEEK, A CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD THAT MAKES US AND SUSTAINS US

Story and Photos

By Fran Palmeri

Contributing Writer

Editor's note: Fran Palmeri has created a photo essay in observance of Earth Week, including with it quotes from some of her favorite writers, who span almost 2,000 years.

Man has been called by the ancients a lesser world, and indeed the term is rightly applied, seeing that if man is compounded of earth, water, air and fire, this body of the earth is the same.

Leonardo da Vinci

1452-1519

Notebooks



EARTH

She receives us at our birth, nourishes us when we are born, and ever afterward supports us, lastly, embracing us in her bosom when we are rejected by the rest of nature, she then covers us with a special tenderness.

Gaius Plinius Secundus (Pliny the Elder)

AD 23-79

Natural History



AIR

The air cannot be owned. It cannot be controlled. It cannot be contained. It has no borders or boundaries. It is hot or cold, thick or thin, heavy or light, wet or dry as it pleases. It appears and disappears at will. It spins, rises, falls, swirls, spurts, mounts up, swoops down, expands, contracts, tumbles, jets, sprays, mixes, flows, sinks, stays, or rests. ... It changes the world, it changes the fate of creatures and the destiny of peoples.

William Bryant Logan

Air, the Restless Shaper of the World,
2012





FIRE

We are uniquely fire creatures on a uniquely fire planet. Other planetary bodies in the solar system have elements of combustion — Jupiter has the ignition source in lightning; Mars, traces of free oxygen; Titan, a methane-based fuel. Only Earth, however, has all the essential elements and the means by which to combine them — only Earth has life. Marine life pumped the atmosphere with oxygen, and terrestrial life stocked the continents with carbon fuels. Fire and life have fused biotically ever since ...

Stephen J. Pyne

World Fire: The Culture of Fire on Earth,
1995

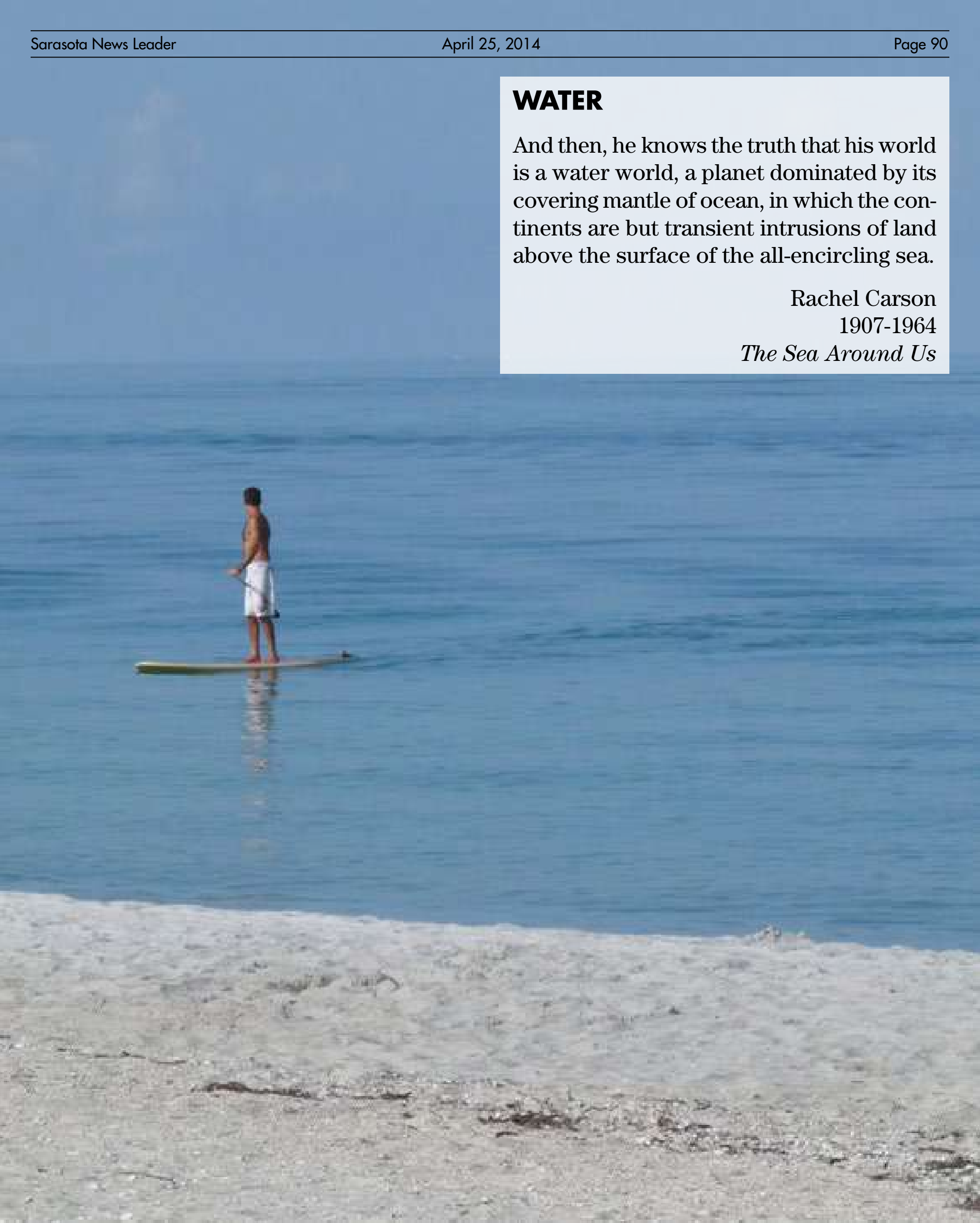




WATER

And then, he knows the truth that his world is a water world, a planet dominated by its covering mantle of ocean, in which the continents are but transient intrusions of land above the surface of the all-encircling sea.

Rachel Carson
1907-1964
The Sea Around Us













A FESTIVAL OF INTENSE ENERGY

Lil Buck performs The Dying Swan at the 2011 Vail International Dance Festival. Image from DanseTrack

LIL BUCK PROVIDES AN EXTRAORDINARY FINALE TO AN EVENING OF CHARISMATIC PERFORMANCES

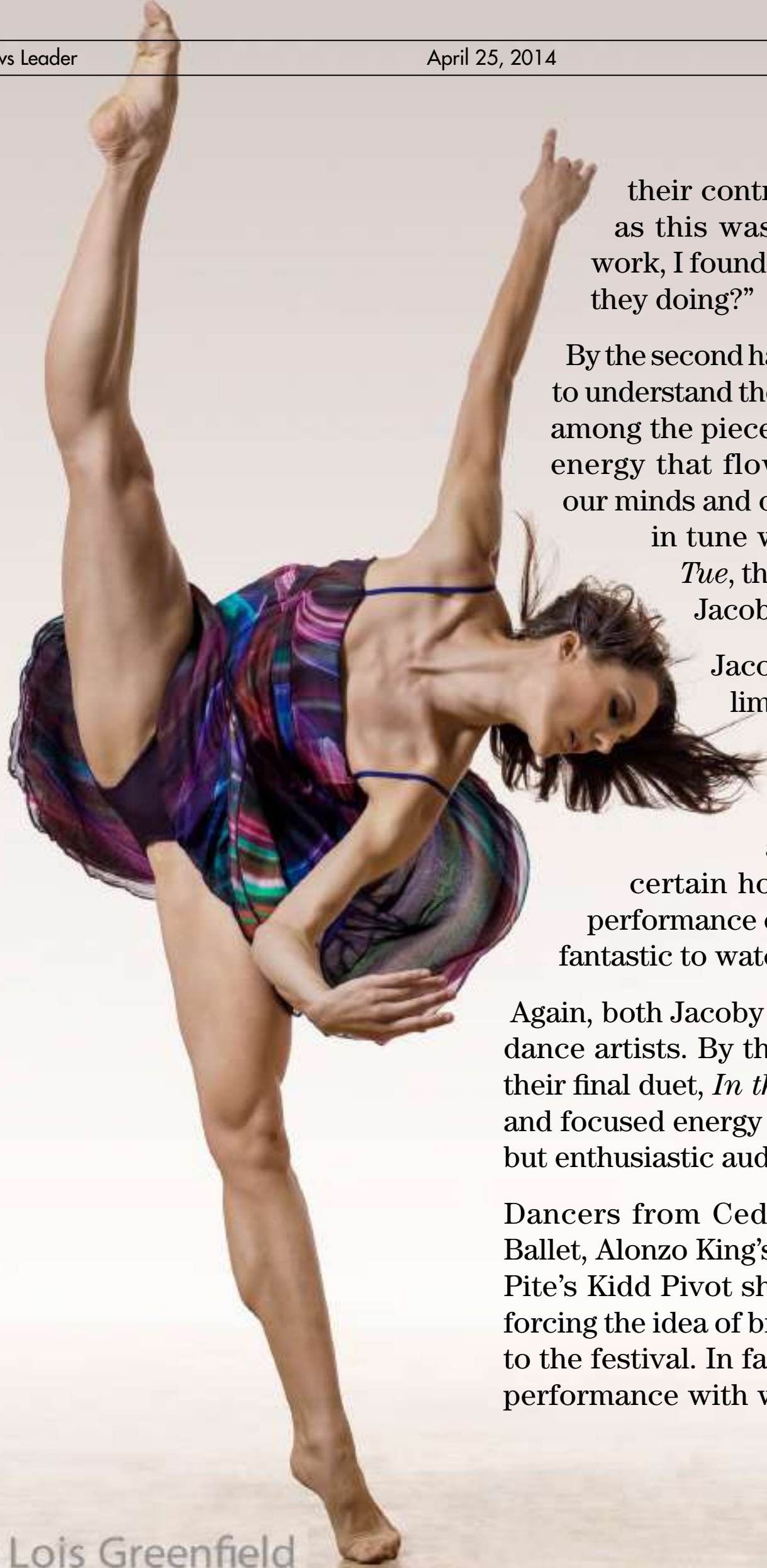
By Elinor Rogosin
A&E Writer

Lifted, an evening of contemporary dance presented by the newly formed Sarasota International Dance Festival, did break the mold of most dance performances, as the program's solos and duets ignored theatricality for personal intense dancing. Drew Jacoby, a dramatic dancer who impressed Sarasota audiences in the past when the International Carreno Dance Festival debuted on the same stage, joined former Sarasota Ballet Director Robert de Warren in organizing this reinvention of the festival. The original manifesto of bringing to the Sarasota dance scene celebrated dance artists with edgy

choreography remains the same. *Lifted* lived up to its promise.

Jacoby, who is now a member of the Nederlands Dans Theater (NDT), appeared with her NDT partner, Madhi Walerski, in two duets choreographed by Walerski.

Blink of an Eye, like most of the evening's choreography, explored relationships of people to themselves and others through intensely complex, isolated movements that began with familiar gestures and traveled through the nervous system and muscles of the individual dancers. Jacoby and Walerski are statuesque, strong dancers; it was fascinating to watch



their controlled artistry. However, as this was the evening's opening work, I found myself asking, "What are they doing?"

By the second half of the program, I began to understand there was a common theme among the pieces of using/exploring the energy that flows through our bodies, our minds and our emotions. I was more in tune with the performance of *Tue*, the solo choreographed for Jacoby by Marco Goecke.

Jacoby is tall with long, long limbs. In this solo to a vague French song, she was like an image of wild energy pouring out of a long column. I am not certain how to describe Jacoby's performance other than to say she was fantastic to watch.

Again, both Jacoby and Walerski are superb dance artists. By the end of the evening, in their final duet, *In the Seam*, their eloquence and focused energy had captivated the small but enthusiastic audience.

Dancers from Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, Alonzo King's Lines Ballet and Crystal Pite's Kidd Pivot shared the program, reinforcing the idea of bringing a variety of dance to the festival. In fact, there will be another performance with world stars at the end of

September. It will be interesting to discover whether the programming will be similar, as two of the pieces I saw last week were excerpts. I had to wonder about the relationship between the duet and the rest of the work in each case.

Acacia Schachte and Jason Kittelberger from Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet were like two praying mantises in an excerpt from *Horizons*. In a selection from *Decadence*, he was a dark lump of a man crawling toward his partner. There were hints of sexual games, often violent, in the choreography of both duets.

In *Migration*, Meredith Webster and David Harvey from Alonzo King's Lines Ballet where caught up balancing on one leg, in space and toward one another, while quirks of energy seemed to rustle through their bodies. Webster is a graceful dancer whose articulate fluidity and focused energy pulled me into the journey of two figures fighting for balance while they were continually being pulled in other directions.

During their second duet, *Meyer — Pas de Deux*, I began to wonder how many ways a man and a woman could explore winding and unwinding around each other without making meaningful connections.

All the dancers in the evening's program were a joy to watch, but perhaps Bryan Arias was the most charismatic performer, apart from the break dancer, Lil Buck.


In *Wind Turned Under*, Arias was a lone individual responding to the emotion in the music, *Suite for Viola Solo*. He offered a fluid dynamic, focused performance.

In contrast, in *A Picture of You Falling*, he brought the only light moments to the evening's intense exploration of physical movement. The piece began with odd thumping noises that sounded like gunshots. A taped voice revealed those were the sounds of Arias' heart beating. The voice then told him to walk three paces, turn and repeat. Arias did this a number of times and eventually fell, got up and walked off.

He is a charismatic performer, a reflection of that connection between movement and feeling that comes from the dancer's focus and innate talent.

I have saved comments about Lil Buck for the end of this piece. He is a charming young man who combines break dance moves and ballet in his performance. His popularity brought in an unusual number of younger audience members.

The Dying Swan, first choreographed in 1907 by Michael Fokine for Anna Pavlova, has always been an audience favorite. For this performance, Lil Buck teamed with Nina Kotova, who played the melancholy St. Saens composition on the cello while he — in a T-shirt, jeans and white high-topped sneakers — interpreted the famous solo. Break dancing has never been so graceful and fluid. Lil Buck "moon walked," *boureed* on the tips of his sneakers, rippled his arms like a swan's wings and caught the fluttering motion of the animal in squiggly movements that traveled snakelike through his legs and arms.

The end was most remarkable, as Lil Buck folded himself inside his own legs with his head bent over as if in death. 



COUNTY STAFF SUMMARIZES THE PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTING NEW OUTDOOR DISPLAY REGULATIONS; ANOTHER BARGE IN BIG PASS PROMPTS A LOT OF BUZZ; AND THE TEMPORARY USE PERMIT ORDINANCE WILL UNDERGO ANOTHER PUBLIC HEARING SO ITS SUNSET DATE CAN BE EXTENDED



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Sarasota County staff estimates it will take four months from the time the proposed zoning revision regarding outdoor displays on Siesta Key begins the formal process of wending through Planning Commission and County Commission review before a “verdict”

will be delivered on it, according to an April 17 memo from staff to the County Commission.

The information was requested by Commissioner Nora Patterson during the board’s April 8 meeting.



A Sun Ride Pedicab driver prepares to let off a group in front of Robin Hood Rentals in early April. With parking spaces at a premium, pedicabs have been busy on the island this season. Photo by Rachel Hackney



Mark Toomey is one of the leaders of a group of Siesta business owners working on a new outdoor display ordinance. File photo

Siesta Seen

The memo summarizes the effort under way to revise the Siesta Key Overlay District (SKOD), the compendium of county rules that governs the entire island. The Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) unanimously endorsed the proposed outdoor display changes during its April 1 session. The modifications provide a set of specific rules, but no business could put wares outside without first applying for and receiving a permit from the county.

The April 17 memo notes that architect Mark Smith, acting on behalf of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce, contacted Assistant Zoning Administrator Donna Thompson in January this year regarding the potential text amendment to the SKOD; he “provided suggested language developed by the Chamber and the Siesta Key [Village] Association.”

Thompson then met with Deputy County Attorney Alan Roddy to review the language and get Roddy’s feedback. In March, Smith provided Thompson with “a final draft of the language” the SKVA would be voting on in April, it notes.

On March 31, Mark Toomey of Robin Hood Rentals contacted Thompson “regarding the process for a Citizen Initiated Text Amendment,” the memo adds. Zoning staff emailed Toomey the application and advised him that the proposed amendment would necessitate one public hearing before the Planning Commission and two hearings before the County Commission. “At this time,

staff has not received a formal submittal by any entity representing Siesta Key,” the memo points out.

When I reached him on April 22, Toomey was very busy, but he said he felt that after this week, with season slowing down, he would have time to check on the status of the revision.

In the meantime, when I asked whether he planned to seek Siesta Key Association (SKA) approval of the version the SKVA approved this month, he replied that he does not feel that is necessary. SKA board members have been aware of the process, he pointed out. Moreover, he said of outdoor displays on the key, “It’s not something [SKA members] police.”

SKA President Michael Shay told me he has provided his board members with the latest copy of the revised SKOD, but they have taken no formal action on it. Shay also said that Mark Smith has not been able to schedule a walk-through of the Village, as Shay requested at the April 1 SKVA meeting, so Smith could point out to him businesses that are and are not complying with the provisions of the proposed ordinance. “I want to know,” Shay added, “based on what’s on paper, what it’s going to look like.”

Toomey did promise to let me know once the clock starts ticking on the formal adoption process.

Siesta Seen

ANOTHER BARGE

The local “webisphere” was abuzz again last week after another barge sighting in Big Pass. This time, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was not behind the appearance. Instead, the barge was hired to help with one of the final facets of the stormwater project, formally known as the Beach Road Drainage Project, I learned.

On April 15, SKA President Shay sent out the first email I saw, noting the barge had a crane on it and that it was being moved around by a small tug. Unlike the Army Corps of Engineers’ vessel spotted in the pass a few weeks earlier, however, he pointed out that this one had no obvious markings on it to link it to the Corps or any other agency.

“It has been moored at least for the last 2 nights in Big Pass just off the seawall at Givens St. & Ocean Blvd.,” he added in the email to City Engineer Alex DavisShaw and county Coastal Resources Manager Laird Wreford. “During the day it has been seen in various spots in Big Pass itself. Any idea what it is doing?”

A day later, Shay was able to get a closer look, so he sent another email to city and county staff noting that he had observed a circular emblem on the wheelhouse of the tug and on the crane, both saying “Kelly Brothers 239-482-7300” and both with a logo of a helmeted deep sea diver.

County emails were flying, too, with people apparently having contacted Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on Siesta.



Another barge in Big Pass last week prompted considerable island chatter. Contributed photo

Credit SKA Vice President Catherine Luckner with the sleuthing that led to the answer. Alex Boudreau, the county project engineer in charge of the stormwater work next to Siesta Public Beach, explained to Luckner — who kindly explained it to me — that employees working for Forsberg Construction of Punta Gorda — the firm with the stormwater project contract — had hired the barge to enable divers to attach a diffuser to the pipeline that extends about 2,000 feet into the Gulf of Mexico from the stormwater site. That diffuser will be another element in the treatment of effluent before it is discharged into the gulf.

The wind was blowing just a bit too hard for the divers to do their work underwater, Luckner said, so they were doing what they could on the barge until conditions improved. That was why the barge was in Big Pass — biding its time.

During the April 22 County Commission meeting, Patterson referenced an email she had received that morning complaining about noise from the barge.

Siesta Seen

In that correspondence, a Siesta resident explained to Patterson that the barge has been anchoring overnight in Big Pass along the seawall in the 4800 to 4900 block of Ocean Boulevard, where a vacant lot sits (the same site Shay had noted).

The writer continued, “The barge pulls in, its crew goes home for the night, and it goes back out into the Gulf in the morning. This is clearly for [the crew’s] convenience, and is serving no legitimate work purpose.”

He added, “The problem is that they drive huge pilings into the pass each night to anchor the barge.” Patterson related that to

her colleagues on the commission: “Every night, they’re pounding in stakes to anchor the barge.” She asked County Administrator Tom Harmer to have staff check into the situation and find out how long it was going to continue. Harmer promised to do so.

Late that afternoon, Isaac Brownman, the county’s director of public works, reported by email to the commission that the barge was scheduled to leave the site the following afternoon, adding, “outfall diffuser installation is complete. Final inspection of the diffuser will take place next week from a standard power boat.”



A group of children seems well entertained with each other and their smartphones as adults stroll past them in Siesta Village. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

THE TUP ORDINANCE

On a unanimous vote — following about 5 minutes of discussion — the County Commission this week approved the advertisement of a public hearing on extending by two years the sunset date of the Temporary Use Permits (TUP) provision in the Siesta Key Overlay District zoning ordinance. The new date would be June 8, 2016 and the revised ordinance would include Halloween among the holidays for which a permit could be sought.

The original ordinance, approved in June 2011, allows bars and restaurants to request TUPs for outdoor activities during specific holiday periods. However, as Assistant Zoning Administrator Donna Thompson pointed out during the April 22 County Commission meeting, no bar or restaurant has applied for a TUP under the ordinance since the law went into effect.

Nonetheless, Thompson said, the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) had sent staff an email requesting the extension of the sunset and also seeking to add Halloween to the list.

The existing ordinance allows for TUPs to be issued for the following holidays, beginning no earlier than 11 a.m. and ending at the hour specified:

- New Year's Eve — valid until 12:30 a.m. on New Year's Day.
- St. Patrick's Day — valid to 10 p.m.
- Memorial Day — valid to 10 p.m.
- Independence Day (July Fourth) — valid to 12:30 a.m. on July 5.
- Labor Day — valid to 10 p.m.
- Thanksgiving — valid to 10 p.m.

The ordinance also provides for the TUP to include one extra day immediately before or after the holiday for which it is obtained, and it is valid to 10 p.m. that day. "If a second day is requested, all subsequent parties requesting a TUP for that holiday desiring a second day must select the same second day," it points out.

Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson reminded her colleagues and staff, "There was, back in 2011, a *whole* lot of angst over the number of days" allowed for these TUPs. While she said she knows Patterson regularly attends SKA meetings, she wants to be sure the SKA is aware of the movement to extend the sunset date.

"I don't want to take anybody by surprise by this," Robinson added.

"I've never heard restaurateurs talk about problems with this," Patterson said, "and I don't think SKA could narrate any problems, because [businesses] actually, apparently, have never taken advantage of the opportunity [to apply for a TUP]."

Patterson added, "It's sort of strange that there have been no permits."

Thompson pointed out that the only time staff had received an application for one

Siesta Seen

was for a haunted house at Halloween. Because Halloween was not among the specified periods in the ordinance, the application was denied, she noted, “which is why we’ve asked to include Halloween” in the revised ordinance.

Further, Thompson said, with no TUPs having been sought other than that one, staff was seeking the sunset date extension “to see if we are going to have a problem when someone takes advantage of [a TUP].”

“I’ll be back to the board with any feedback I get,” Patterson responded.

In May 2012, Russell Matthes, co-owner of the Daiquiri Deck in Siesta Village and a past president of the SKVA, told me the reason he believed no TUPs had been pulled was the fact that they are not cost-effective.

He pointed out that the TUP language allows for special events on specific holidays, adding that Siesta Village bars and restaurants normally plan special events at those times. The ideal use of a TUP, he added, would be during a slow time of the year, but the ordinance does not make that possible.

FIESTA TIME

The 36th Annual Siesta Fiesta will take place in Siesta Village along parts of Ocean Boulevard and Beach Road on Saturday, April 26, and Sunday, April 27.

The hours, as usual, will be 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. Parts of both Ocean and Beach



Siesta Fiesta is this weekend. Contributed image

Road will be closed to traffic to allow tents to be set up.

The show brings a wide variety of artists and fine craftsmen to the Village.

And do not forget about the T-shirts. The Siesta Key Village Association — with help from the Siesta Key Association — will have the 2014 version on sale, with proceeds going to the SKVA for a variety of projects to benefit businesses in the Village. 



A&E BRIEFS

Friday, April 25th

at 7:30pm

Ticket Donation \$10

Linda Bento-Rei flute
Vytas Baksys piano

More information?

www.bonifacechurch.org

Music Department:
941 349-5616 x 325/326

MARVELOUS MUSIC TO BE PRESENTED AT ST. BONIFACE CHURCH

Linda Bento-Rei and Vytas Baksys will present flute and piano selections during a *Marvelous Music* program at Siesta Key's St. Boniface Episcopal Church on April 25, the church has announced.

The event will begin at 7:30 p.m. The ticket donation is \$10.

The church is located at 5615 Midnight Pass Road.

Bento-Rei has performed frequently as a soloist and in chamber music programs throughout New England, a news release notes. Since 1989, Baksys has been the faculty pianist with the Fellowship Conducting Program at The [Tanglewood](#) Music Center and a frequent keyboardist with the Boston Symphony and Boston Pops orchestras, the release continues.

The program will feature *Sonata Latino* by Mike Mower; CPE Bach's *Sonata in G minor*; Joseph Jongen's *Sonata pour flute et piano*, Op. 77; and Peter Schickele's *Spring Serenade*, the release adds.

The performance of *Sonata pour flute et piano* is part of what has come to be known as Bento-Rei's "Jongen Project," the release notes. "Having fallen in love with the flute music by this composer," the release says, she is in the process of recording many of his works for flute and other instruments.

"Most of Jongen's music is known only to enthusiasts of the pipe organ, though he composed prolifically in almost all forms of music," the release points out.

Tickets are available [online](#) and they will be offered at the door.

THE MERCY SEAT TO BE PART OF ACTING GROUP'S LATE NIGHT SERIES

The Florida State University(FSU)/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training will present *The Mercy Seat* by Neil LaBute on Sunday, April 27, as part of its Late Night Series, the group has announced.

The performance will be offered for free at 9 p.m. in the Asolo Repertory Theatre's Cooley Rehearsal Hall, a news release says.

It originally was scheduled for April 21, the release notes.

"This bold piece takes place on September 12, 2001 – the day after 9/11," the release explains. "Ben should have been at work in the towers that day," the release continues. He should be dead. Instead, he spent that ill-fated morning with his mistress, Abby. With his wife uncertain whether he made it out of the towers, Ben now has the chance to run away with Abby," it adds.

"LaBute examines the complexity and innate selfishness of humanity in this fascinating two-person play," the release says. Directed by Ronda Hewitt, this piece will star third-year Conservatory student Cale Hauptert and his wife, Kimberly Wiczer-Hauptert.

The Cooley Rehearsal Hall is located on the second floor of the FSU Center for the Performing Arts at 5555 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota.

This event is free and open to the public, but seating is limited. No reservations or tickets are required. Donations will be welcome, the release adds.

The play is 90 minutes with no intermission, the release notes, and it has mature language and themes.



The Florida State University Center for the Performing Arts is located in the Ringling Complex on North Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Photo by Ebyabe via Wikimedia Commons

SEASON OF SCULPTURE TO HOLD WRAP PARTY ON MAY 4

Season of Sculpture, Season VII, invites members of the public to its *Wrap Party and Presentation* on Sunday, May 4, at the Francis in downtown Sarasota.

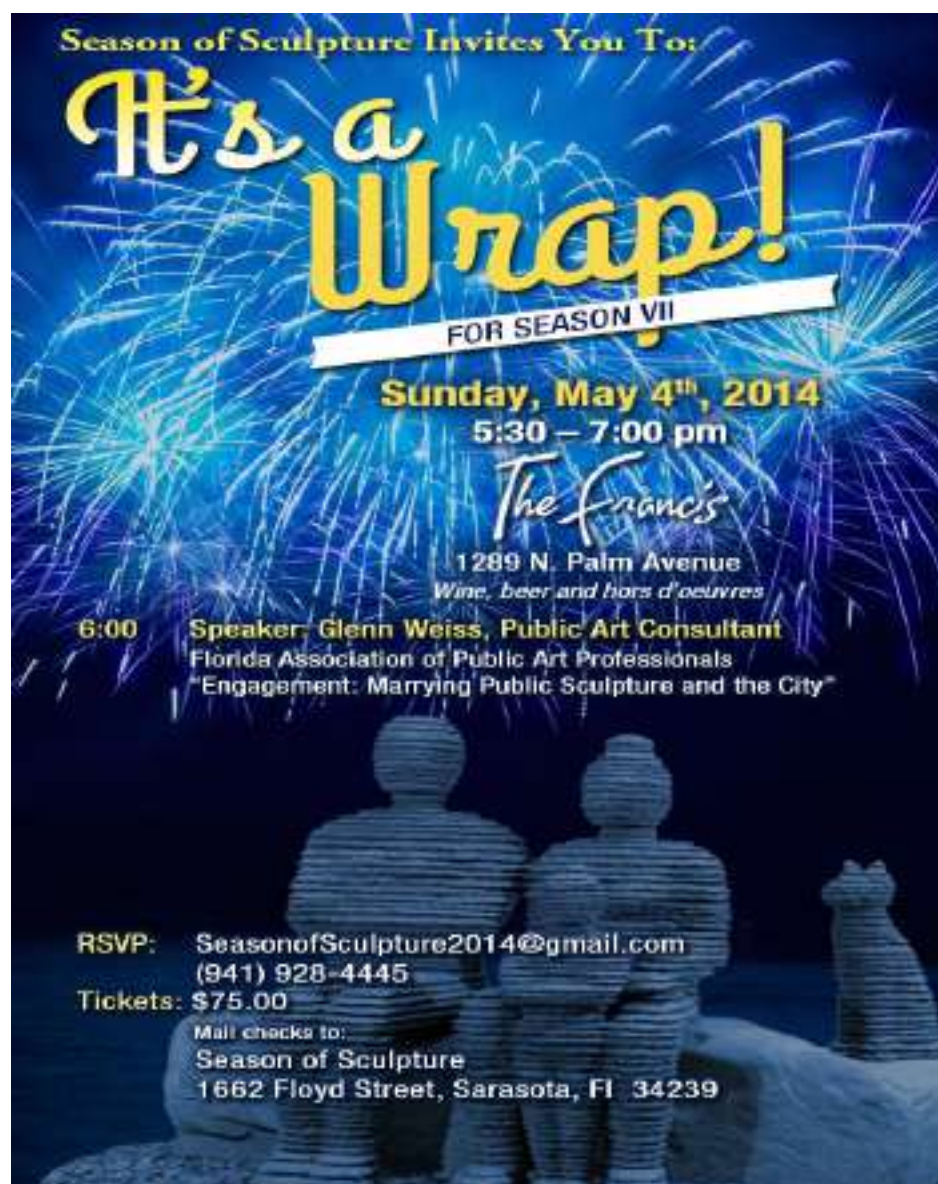
Public art consultant Glenn Weiss, a member of the Florida Association of Public Art Professionals, will discuss *Engagement: Marrying Public Sculpture and the City*, a news release says. The event will begin at 5:30 p.m. and end at 7 p.m., the release adds.

It also will feature “conversation over drinks and hors d’oeuvres,” the release notes.

The Francis is located at 1289 N. Palm Ave.

Tickets are \$75. Those planning to attend are asked to RSVP by emailing seasonofsculpture2014@gmail.com or calling 928-4445.

Please mail checks to Season of Sculpture, 1662 Floyd St., Sarasota, FL 34239.



VENICE THEATRE TO PRESENT TOUCHING DRAMA *THE ELEPHANT MAN*

The Elephant Man will close out Venice Theatre’s 2013-14 MainStage Series with a two-week run, from April 29 to May 11, the theatre has announced.

This new production of the 1979 Tony Award-winning drama by Bernard Pomerance is based on the life of John Merrick, who was severely disfigured, a news release explains. “*The Elephant Man* focuses on Merrick’s transformation from a freak show curiosity to a friend of 19th century London’s aristocracy,” it adds.

Tickets are \$25 to \$28 for adults and \$10 to \$15 for students. They are available at the theatre’s box office, online at venicestage.com.

or by phone at 488-1115. The theatre is also offering a first-week special rate of \$20 through Sunday, May 4, the release points out.

The show’s title, *The Elephant Man*, “refers to the derogatory description given to Merrick (played by Venice newcomer Matt McClure) by his sideshow promoters,” the release notes. The play opens with scenes of him on display in a London storefront and then at a carnival sideshow in Belgium, the release says. “After being mistreated, abandoned and left helpless, he is eventually admitted to London’s prestigious Whitechapel hospital under the care of celebrated physician Frederick Treves (played by Steven O’Dea),” it continues. “Merrick is introduced to London society and



evolves from an object of pity to an intelligent and witty favorite of the aristocracy and *litterati*, the release adds.

Venice Theatre is located at 140 W. Tampa Ave. on the island in Venice. Box office hours are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and one hour before all performances.

Kelly Woodland will play Mrs. Kendal and Matt McClure will take the part of John Merrick in The Elephant Man. Contributed photo by Renee McVety

FST YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL FEATURING *UNDER SIX*

Florida Studio Theatre (FST) has announced that the winning plays of the *Under Six* program have been selected. The playwrights will be honored on Saturday, May 10, at the Young Playwrights Festival (YPF) awards ceremony.

The festival of *Under Six* world premieres is made up of plays written by children in grades K-6, selected from material submitted by more than 3,000 young playwrights, the release explains. With FST Director of Education Beth Duda at the helm, professional actors will “carefully weave together this collection of plays with reverence to the written word” of the young creators, the release adds.

Performances have begun and will continue through May 23. Tickets, which are \$6, may be purchased through the FST box office by calling 366-9000, or by visiting the [website](#).

Approximately 12,000 students from Sarasota and Manatee Counties are bused to the theatre to see the works of their peers, the release notes.

The list of winners follows:

- *Chomp!* by Ms. Williams’ first-graders, Phillippi Shores Elementary IB World School.
- *A Flash Into Time* by Joshua Fitzgerald, Sarasota Christian School, fifth grade.
- *Hand Kisser* by Logan Wendell, Rowlett Magnet Elementary, fifth grade.
- *Lost in Space* by Zackary Asbridge, Garden Elementary, fifth grade.
- *Mr. E and the Case of the Stolen Jewel!* by Nicholas Paredes, Fruitville Elementary, fifth grade.
- *One Stuck Rock* by Luke Downes, Sarasota Christian School, fifth grade.
- *Peter’s Homework* by Logan Schultz, Garden Elementary, fourth grade.
- *The Princess and the Guitar* by Ada Borovikov, Yamit School, sixth grade.
- *Snowy and Winter on Their Adventure* by Pearl Azeroual-Dray, Swan Azeroual-Dray



Florida Studio Theatre is located at 1241 N. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

and Hannah Kremer, Miami Country Day School, fifth grade.

- *Tears By The Lake* by Haydn Sage, Miami Country Day School, fifth grade.
- *The TV Time Machine* by Emma Carter, Sigsbee Charter School, fourth grade.

• *Time Out* by Seth Stahlmann, Generation Harvest, sixth grade.

- *Trading Up!* by Nash Klein, Gulf Gate Elementary, first grade.
- *Uh Oh! Not Again!* by Torrica Green, Emma E. Booker Elementary, fourth grade.

MUSICA SACRA CANTORUM LOOKS FORWARD TO MAY 4 MILESTONE

In the final program of its *Britten to Britain* 2013-14 season, Musica Sacra Cantorum, Sarasota's sacred choral ensemble, will present a program to celebrate a milestone it has achieved: the first residency of any Sarasota choral ensemble at a British cathedral, the group has announced.

The program, *Cathedral Close*, will take place on Sunday, May 4, at 4 p.m. at St. Boniface Episcopal Church, located at 5615 Midnight Pass Road on Siesta Key. Tickets are \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door. For advance purchase, visit musicasacracantorum.org or call 405-7322.

Musica Sacra Cantorum is honored to have been selected to serve as the choir-in-residence at Great Britain's historic Lichfield Cathedral in July, a news release says.

Cathedral Close will feature works written solely for the concert hall as well as pieces chosen from the repertoire to be performed during the Lichfield residency, the release adds.

The anthems for the program and the residency "reflect our American heritage," the release notes. Among them will be selections by Harold Friedell, Leo Sowerby, Rene Clausen and Ned Rorem. Two large-scale works,

MUSICA SACRA CANTORUM

Cathedral Close

Britten
Rejoice in the Lamb

Mendelssohn
Hear My Prayer

Fauré
Cantique de Jean Racine

Sowerby
Blessed are they that fear the Lord

Rorem
Sing My Soul His Wonderful Love

McCarthy
Vidi Aquam

Clausen
Set Me As a Seal

Sunday
May 4,
2014
4 PM

St. Boniface
Episcopal
Church
5615 Midnight
Pass Rd.
Siesta Key
(Sarasota), FL

Rejoice with us as we prepare for our July residency at Lichfield Cathedral.

Tickets
\$20 Advance Sale / \$25 At the Door
Purchase online at www.MusicaSacraCantorum.org
By telephone at 941.405.7322

Benjamin Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb* and Gabriel Fauré's *Cantique de Jean Racine*, "will be balanced by Mendelssohn's poignant *Hear My Prayer*, featuring soprano Fiona Gillespie in her Florida debut," the release points out.

LEGEND BRINGING THE ALL OF ME TOUR TO SARASOTA

Nine-time Grammy Award-winning artist John Legend will appear on the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall stage April 27 as part of *The All of Me Tour*, the hall has announced.

“The performance will feature Legend in an intimate and acoustic setting,” highlighted by guitar and vocal accompaniments and a string quartet, a news release points out. The tour comes on the heels of the release of Legend’s highly acclaimed fourth studio album, *Love In the Future*, which he produced with longtime collaborators Kanye West and Dave Tozer, the release adds.


Legend released his debut album, *Get Lifted*, in December 2004, the release continues. That critically acclaimed album included his first hit single, *Ordinary People*, which won him multiple Grammy Awards, the release says.

Throughout his career, Legend has strived to make a difference in the lives of others, the release points out. In 2007, he launched the Show Me Campaign, an initiative that focuses on education as a key to breaking the cycle of poverty. He has been honored with many awards for his philanthropic efforts and sits on the boards of The Education Equality Project,



John Legend/Contributed photo

Teach For America, Stand for Children and the Harlem Village Academies, the release adds.

Tickets are \$36 to \$91. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit VanWezel.org. 

*A Second Chance
on My Smile.*



I am so incredibly pleased, with my beautiful smile
and my comfortable and natural bite. - Barbara Lee

For a complimentary consultation call 941.923.5406 | Christine Koval, D.M.D. | www.askdrkoval.com



Marden Paru/Contributed photo

HEALTH AND MEDICINE IN THE BIBLE TO BE TOPIC OF BRIEFING

The next Freethinkers' Briefing, held in cooperation with the Lifelong Learning Academy (lla-sm.org), will feature Marden Paru in a presentation titled *Health and Medicine in the Bible*, offering an overview of medical and health practices in the original Hebrew Bible, the Freethinkers has announced.

The free program will be held from 10 to 11:30 a.m. on Friday, April 25, at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, located at 3975 Fruitville Road in Sarasota.

Among the questions Paru will address, a news release says, are the following:

Did our ancestors get it right?

Was early medicine "folk medicine" or science-based?

Do ancient Israelite rituals prevent disease?

Does modern medicine draw on early Biblical texts?

Other remarks will focus on key elements of Biblical ethics pertaining to saving lives and

the outbreak of skin diseases seen early on as punishment for sin.

Paru is the dean and co-founder of the Sarasota Liberal Yeshiva (an adult Jewish education institute), former director of continuing education at Temple Beth Shalom and an ethics instructor at the Melton Adult Mini-School, which is sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee, the release points out. He trained as a social worker and served for many years as an executive of nonprofit organizations, it adds.

Paru studied religion and sociology at Yeshiva University in New York City, the release continues. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in sociology and political science at the

University of Tulsa and a master's degree at the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration.

"Freethinkers' Briefings are evidence-based summaries of what the general public needs to know about complex issues in the fields of religion, morality, ethics and justice," the release notes.

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

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

REGISTRATION CONTINUES FOR TEMPLE EMANU-EL'S MITZVAH DAY

Temple Emanu-El, located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota, invites the community to participate in the eighth annual Mitzvah Day on Sunday, May 4, beginning at noon.

Taking its name from the Hebrew word *mitzvah* — which means commandment but is often associated with good deeds — "Mitzvah Day is an afternoon devoted to hands-on service projects that benefit charitable agencies" throughout Sarasota and Manatee counties, a news release explains. "There are opportunities for people of all ages to be involved," it adds.

The preferred registration deadline is April 28, but several projects will be available for late registrants or walk-in volunteers who wish to participate, the release notes.

After creating cards for soldiers serving overseas, hospitalized patients and nursing home

residents, attendees will gather in the Temple Emanu-El sanctuary for a brief rally led by Rabbis Brenner and Elaine Rose Glickman, the release points out. Following the rally, Mitzvah Day participants will engage in projects to benefit organizations including the Salvation Army, Anchin Pavilion, Manasota BUDS, Cat Depot, Take Stock in Children, Sarasota County Fire Department, Honor Animal Sanctuary, All Faiths Food Bank, Lions Club, BeTheMatch, Easter Seals, Suncoast Communities Blood Bank, Manatee County Schools, The Jewish Center of Sun City, SPARCC, SMART Horse Therapy Stables, Jewish Family & Children's Service and Sarasota Memorial Hospital, the release says.

Interested attendees of all faiths are invited to join the hundreds of Temple Emanu-El volunteers who participate in Mitzvah Day. For more information, call 379-1997.



Temple Emanu-El Religious School students Emma Katz and Julianna Maggard decorated cookies for firefighters at a previous Mitzvah Day. Contributed photo



Temple Emanu-El Mitzvah Day Steering Committee member Stan Levinson collected food donations at last year's event. Contributed photo



Temple Emanu-El Director of Religious Education Sabrina Silverberg and Cindy Gilburne display cards created for hospitalized patients at last year's Mitzvah Day. Contributed photo

WORKING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Confirmation class from Temple Sinai, along with chaperones Rabbi Geoff Huntting and David Berkowitz, recently attended the L'taken Social Justice Seminar in Washington, D.C., organized by the Reform movement's Religious Action Center, the Temple has announced. As part of the intense four-day program, students chose issues to research and presented position papers in the offices of U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan, R-Longboat


Key; Sen. Bill Nelson, D-FL; and Sen. Marco Rubio, R-FL. They shared the experience with hundreds of other high school students. The Temple Sinai group gathered outside the Capitol for a commemorative photo (from left): Rabbi Geoff Huntting, Aspen Kaye, Danny Gardi, Dana Berkowitz, David Berkowitz, Kaitlyn Siegel, Ethan Blumenstein, Dana Saltz, Michael Fallacaro, Marisa Freedman and Fiona Marlowe. Contributed photo



WORSHIPPERS GATHER FOR SUNRISE SERVICE ON LIDO KEY

Temperatures in the low 60s in no way deterred hundreds of people from gathering before dawn to celebrate Easter on Lido Key Beach.

Conducted by the Church of the Palms, the service began at 6:30 a.m. near the Pavilion.

The line where the gray sky met the gray Gulf of Mexico may have been barely distinct at times, but the light shone brightly on the cross and the shroud marking the risen Lord. 







COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

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| 25 APRIL | Linda Bento-Rei and Vytas Baksys in concert April 25, 7:30 p.m. St. Boniface Episcopal Church, 5615 Midnight Pass Road, Siesta Key. Admission: \$10 donation. Information: 349-5616 or bonifacechurch.org . |
| 25+ APRIL | Dabbert Gallery presents Barbara Krupp and Allan Teger Through April 28; times vary. 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 955-1315 or DabbertGallery.com . |
| 25+ APRIL | Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe presents Bubbling Brown Sugar Through May 11; times vary. 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$29.50. Information: 366-1505 or wbtsrq.org . |
| 25+ APRIL | Florida Studio Theatre presents Tom Jones Through June 1; times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$19 to \$42. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org . |
| 26+ APRIL | 36th Annual Siesta Fiesta April 26-27, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Ocean Boulevard and Beach Road in Siesta Key Village. Event to feature fine arts and crafts created by 250 artists from around the country, presented by the Siesta Key Village Association and Howard Alan Events Ltd. For more information, visit the website . |
| 28 APRIL | Gloria Musicae presents Voices of the Holocaust April 28, 7:30 p.m., Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$25 to \$70. Information: 953-3368 or GloriaMusicae.org . |
| 29+ APRIL | Asolo Repertory Theatre presents Hero: The Musical April 29 through June 1; times vary. Mertz Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$21 and up. Information: 351-8000 or AsoloRep.org . |



SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS

A 'SPRITELY' GUIDE TO THE ARTS

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.