

THE SARASOTA

Vol. 2, No. 35 — May 16, 2014

News Leader



NOT A PUBLIC POOL
THE NEXT MAYOR
GENERALLY SPEAKING

Inside

Old school journalism. 21st century delivery.

GET TO KNOW US



swipe:
flip pages left or right



Single Tap:
show/hide on-screen controls



Double Tap:
zoom-in or zoom-out on a single page



Pinch: (Not supported on some Android devices)
Zoom-in or zoom-out on a single page



Rotate: (Not supported on some Android devices)
View different layouts for landscape/portrait



Move:
When zoomed-in, move around the page

Toolbar Options



Text Mode



Search by keywords



Open/close the mini carousel of pages



View the table of contents



View the archives of this publication



Email the current page to a friend



Social bookmark the current page

A.K.A. HELP

SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher

Rachel@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

Cooper@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

Stan@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Roger Drouin

County Editor

Roger@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Norman Schimmel

Staff Photographer

NSchimmel@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Fran Palmeri

Contributing Writer

FPalmeri@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Harriet Cuthbert

Contributing Writer

HCuthbert@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Elinor Rogosin

A&E Writer

ERogosin@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

John Riley

Editorial Cartoonist

Riley@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Vicki Chatley

Copy Editor

Vicki@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Letters To the Editor

Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Cleve Posey

Production Manager / Graphic Designer

Cleve@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Robert S. Hackney

Opinion Editor / General Manager

Robert@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Advertising Sales

Sales@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Subscription Services

Subs@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Press Releases & News Tips

News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com



Find us on:
facebook®



Welcome

This proved to be one of those weeks when all sorts of things seemed to pop up out of nowhere: controversy over a pool inside Bob's Boathouse, Mayor Shannon Snyder throwing his hat in the ring for County Commission — and ramping up speculation about who will be elected mayor on May 16 — another delay in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' release of materials on the Lido Beach Renourishment Project and the Downtown Improvement District having to backpedal on its earlier response to talk of reinstituting paid parking downtown.

Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker delved into the new inspector general position at the Sarasota County Clerk of Court's Office, and County Editor Roger Drouin snared interviews with a Walmart representative and the developer of the retail chain's Neighborhood Market planned for the Bee Ridge/Beneva roads intersection.

Plans for the Rosemary District, concerns about summertime violence among the homeless and a single-family homes development proposed for a former landfill site are just a few samples of other stories in this issue.

It was a busy week on the news side, even without City and County commission meetings before deadline. (The county board will hold another budget workshop on Friday, while the city board will have its mayoral election and the mayor will present his State of the City address.)

On the lighter side, Harriet Cuthbert has written a lovely commentary about a couple who recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, and Fran Palmeri has graced us with another glorious essay, complete with magnificent butterfly photos. It is definitely a piece that will make you "ooh" and "aaah."

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher





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



NEWS

NOT A PUBLIC POOL

9

Bob's Boathouse is facing ramifications from the Health Department for its use of an area county staff approved as a fountain — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

THE NEXT MAYOR

16

Analysis: With Snyder joining Caragiulo in the race for County Commission, the guessing game proves even more intriguing — *Stan Zimmerman*

GENERALLY SPEAKING

22

Could a new inspector general accreditation build more faith in county government? — *Cooper Levey-Baker*

SUMMER STRAINS

27

Violence among the homeless another challenge, Salvation Army commander says — *Stan Zimmerman*

DENSITY BOOST GETS THUMBS UP

30

Planning Board approves new overlay district for the Rosemary District, sending it on to the City Commission — *Stan Zimmerman*

RAZING THE WAY FOR WALMART

33

Demolition clears site for 24-hour Walmart Neighborhood Market at southwest corner of Bee Ridge and Beneva roads — *Roger Drouin*

A NEW USE

39

A developer proposes a 202-home cluster development at a closed golf course that once was the home of two landfills — *Roger Drouin*



COVER PHOTO CREDIT

Front Cover: *Reefed Tack* - Norman Schimmel

SIESTA SEEN



NEWS BRIEFS



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



STAYING UP OR COMING DOWN?

43

The Downtown Improvement District board voices concerns about the future of the historic DeMarcay Hotel property and has to do backtrack on a letter opposing parking meters — *Stan Zimmerman*

STILL WORKING ON THE DETAILS

50

Extended warranties and storm surge protection focus of latest Lift Station 87 discussions — *Stan Zimmerman*

ANOTHER DELAY AND POLICY QUESTIONS

55

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers expects to release its Lido Renourishment Project material June 11, but a Tampa law firm wants an environmental impact statement, too — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

\$964,257 AND COUNTING

61

Tourist Development Tax revenue continues to climb at the same time other county revenue data proves strong — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

TWO CITY COMMISSION MEETINGS

66

Sale of the former community garden site, the Lido Pool's future and capital improvements are on board agendas next week — *Stan Zimmerman*

SIESTA SEEN

70

Snowy Plovers and Least Terns are busy nesting on the beach; nighttime work is under way on the Stickney Point Road bridge; and a swimmer is rescued at the beach — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

NEWS BRIEFS

77

CRIME BLOTTER

89

SHARE





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

OPINION

EDITORIAL

Thanks to the county administrator, the end of the county's mowing contracts ordeal may be in sight

96

COMMENTARY

Love is in the air — *Harriet Cuthbert*

98

ALL THE REST ...

'B' IS FOR BUTTERFLIES

Lepidoptera may be a common sight, but you can do more to attract them — *Fran Palmeri and Laurel Schiller*

101

A GRAND FINALE

Orioles host the Sarasota Orchestra at Ed Smith Stadium — *Staff Reports*

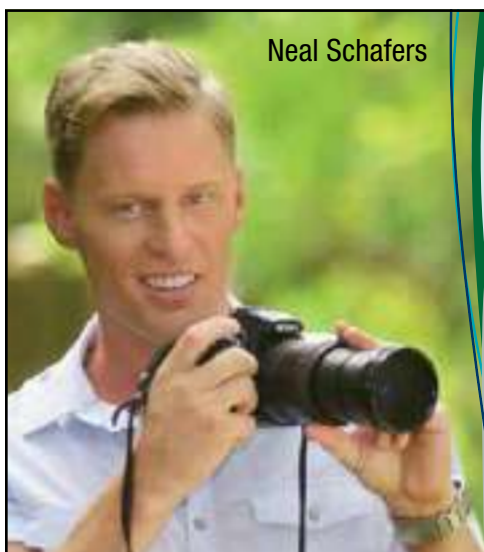
109

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

114

SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS

116



Neal Schafers

Find joy in a picture-perfect smile.

My interest in photography reminded me about how my smile made me unhappy. A childhood accident caused my permanent teeth to come in askew. I had seen how Dr. Koval restored the smile of a friend's father. With Dr. Koval, we discovered I also had cracked fillings and a shifted jaw — all which she corrected.

I am 100% satisfied with Dr. Koval's meticulous work and sincere care to make my smile look natural and picture-perfect.

For a complimentary consultation call **941.923.5406**

To view our extensive smile gallery, visit **askdrkoval.com**

ENHANCE YOUR SMILE. ENHANCE YOUR LIFE.



Christine Koval, D.M.D.
Awarded 20 Gold Medals for Smile Makeovers by the Florida Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry.



**KOVAL
&
KOVAL**
dental associates

Neal Schafers

Find joy in a picture-perfect smile.



Awarded 20 Gold Medals
for Smile Makeovers by
the Florida Academy of
Cosmetic Dentistry.

My interest in photography reminded me about how my former smile made me uncomfortable to have my own picture taken.

A childhood accident resulted in lost teeth. When my permanent teeth came in they were askew and very small in proportion to my smile. I had seen how Dr. Koval perfectly restored the smile of my friend's father. Upon my own exam with Dr. Koval, we discovered that I also had worn and cracked fillings, and a shifted jaw - all which she corrected.

Dr. Koval sincerely cares about her patients and their smiles. I am 100% satisfied with her meticulous work to make my smile look natural and picture-perfect.

For a complimentary consultation call **941.923.5406**
To view our extensive smile gallery, visit **askdrkoval.com**

ENHANCE YOUR SMILE. ENHANCE YOUR LIFE.

Christine Koval, D.M.D. | Restorative, Cosmetic & Laser Dentistry | General Dentistry
2477 Stickney Point Road, Suite 216A | Sarasota, FL | 941.923.5406 | www.askdrkoval.com



NOT A PUBLIC POOL

A sign at the front door of Bob's Boathouse indicates the hours. Photo by Rachel Hackney

BOB'S BOATHOUSE IS FACING RAMIFICATIONS FROM THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT FOR ITS USE OF AN AREA COUNTY STAFF APPROVED AS A FOUNTAIN

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Bob's Boathouse on South Tamiami Trail in Sarasota is under investigation for a new issue, *The Sarasota News Leader* learned this week: transforming the area for a fountain into a public pool.

Tom Higginbotham, environmental health administrator of the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County, told the *News Leader* on May 13 that staff from the department's Office of Environmental Health had visited the

restaurant on May 7 in response to a complaint about an area near the bar where patrons are invited to sit or stand with their feet in water.

The shallow area was permitted by Sarasota County Building Department staff "as a fountain" prior to the opening of the business last

fall at 5515 S. Tamiami Trail, Higginbotham said. "When you start letting people into that section to swim or wade," he continued, that is a violation of [Florida State Statute](#)

“It looks like [the restaurant owners are] offering it to [their] patrons as an interactive water attraction.”

Tom Higginbotham
Environmental Health Administrator
Florida Department of Health
Sarasota County



514, which governs public swimming and bathing facilities.

He added that his staff saw photos on the Bob's Boathouse Facebook page showing people in the water. (By the time the *News Leader* checked that page on May 13, no photos could be found.) Higginbotham characterized allowing people in the water as having "crossed the line. It looks like [the restaurant owners are] offering it to [their] patrons as an interactive water attraction."

The pool is near part of the dining area and the bar inside Bob's Boathouse, he noted. It appears to be no deeper than 2 feet, he added.

Any swimming pool has to be licensed through the Department of Health, he pointed out.

This facility, he continued, "is not built as a public swimming pool."

His staff could find no indication of pumps or a filtration system and no appearance of equipment to feed chlorine into the water or to maintain the proper pH.

Further, he explained, the pool would have to have a 4-foot shoulder around it, and the depths would have to be marked.

The list of Health Department violations is so long, Higginbotham said, "it was causing our computer system a little trouble" when staff was entering the data.

When he spoke with the *News Leader* on May 13, Higginbotham was working with a Fort Myers attorney for the Florida Department



A photo that appeared on the Bob's Boathouse Facebook page in early May showed people in the pool. Contributed image

of Health to make sure all the violations are documented thoroughly. “The legal outcome ... is pending at this point,” he added, though he expected the Health Department to take action by the end of the week. That will entail sending the business an official notice that it is in violation of the state statutes, he pointed out.

Based on the preliminary investigation by his office, Higginbotham said, “It does not appear it would be easy” to convert the area to a swimming pool, especially given its proximity to the bar.

Returning its status to that of a fountain, he continued, “would probably be the easiest solution.

One source who spoke with the *News Leader*, but who asked not to be identified in this article, said that when the restaurant first opened, a chain-link fence surrounded the water. About three weeks ago, that source said, a member of the source’s family visited Bob’s Boathouse and saw someone climbing out of the water.

Another source, who also declined to be identified, reported dining there a few weeks ago and finding it curious that the pool area — which the source estimated as perhaps 20 feet long — was so close to an outdoor dining section of the restaurant. A deck chair stood in the water at that time, the source told the *News Leader*, while other chairs were situated around the body of water. The setting



Another item on the punch list generated after the March 21 hearing required Bob’s Boathouse to get a new county permit for a fence around the dumpster. Photo by Rachel Hackney



reminded that source of a lanai setting with chairs around a swimming pool, the source added.

Later on May 13, Higginbotham told the *News Leader* by email that he had discussed the situation with attorney James E. Aker of Sarasota, who has been representing Bob's Boathouse in the restaurant's effort to obtain a Certificate of Occupancy from Sarasota County.

In a telephone interview with the *News Leader* on the evening of May 13, Aker said he had no comment on the Health Department

matter at that time. "I haven't studied it," he explained. After he has had the opportunity to review whatever formal action the department takes, he added, he would discuss it with the *News Leader*.

However, Aker did say, "Every time I've been [at the restaurant], nobody's gone in [the pool]."

OTHER WOES

At the same time the Health Department is addressing the pool matter, Aker and county staff are preparing for another appearance

(Above) The sign at Bob's Boathouse on May 13 advertised musical entertainment that night. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Public Utility Department:

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

Natural Resources:

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

Land Development:

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

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

Zoning Administration:

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

Building:

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

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

before a Code Enforcement Special Magistrate on May 23, when they will provide an update on the completion of a “punch list” of items created by county Building Department staff. All those items must be finished before the restaurant can get its Certificate of Occupancy.

At the conclusion of a [March 21 Code Enforcement hearing](#), Special Magistrate Meg Wittmer established a timeline for Bob’s Boathouse to complete the punch list: 120 days to submit a lighting plan to the county, 90 days for watercourse buffer requirements and 60 days for the remaining 10 items.

The May 23 hearing will start at 9 a.m. in the County Commission Chambers in the Sarasota County Administration Center at 1660 Ringling Blvd. in downtown Sarasota.

One other item that should have been on the original punch list involved the planting of 36 trees on the site, Aker explained on May 13. Bob’s Boathouse was cited by the county for wrongfully removing trees and ordered to

replace them, he said. That issue was on a separate track from the other punch list items, he continued. New trees were planted, and the matter was resolved in the past couple of weeks to the satisfaction of county Natural Resources Department staff, he noted.

“So that was, frankly, quite an accomplishment,” Aker added.

One item that has proven problematic, he pointed out, has been capping off the existing water line at the rear of the lift station. He said he preferred not to cast any blame in regard to that matter, especially because it appears it will be resolved next week. “It’s just been one thing after another. ... Once that gets done,” he noted, “then the fence around that lift station can be put in.”

Bob’s Boathouse also is making substantial progress on the lighting plan it has to submit to county staff, he said.

“I’m optimistic that we’re going to get this [list of items] done.” 



Work remains to be done around the lift station on the grounds. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Manuel R. Chopote, LUTCF

Chepote Insurance Inc.

1300 Main Street • Sarasota, Florida

(941) 366-0100

Serving Sarasota & Manatee Counties

**Auto • Home • Life
Renters • Motorcycles
Flood • Business • Annuities
Financial Services**



agents.allstate.com/manuel-r-chepote-sarasota-fl.html

AFFORDABLE ACUPUNCTURE FOR EVERYONE

Our Mission

To provide our community with high quality and affordable acupuncture and herbal medicine and to create a treatment space that connects people and builds community.

- **Gene Burgess and Melonie Burgess, licensed acupuncture physicians**
- **Serving Sarasota since 2008**
- **Treatment rates are on a sliding scale, from \$15-\$35; new patients pay a one-time additional fee of \$10**

Click To Schedule An Appointment Online

3615 Webber St • Sarasota, FL 34232
(941) 922-4611
SarasotaCommunityAcupuncture.com



MENTION THIS AD TO RECEIVE \$5 OFF THE NEW PATIENT FEE



Open Tuesday through Saturday

THE NEXT MAYOR



Sarasota's 'Wall of Mayors' has a portrait of every one since the city's inception. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

ANALYSIS: WITH SNYDER JOINING CARAGIULO IN THE RACE FOR COUNTY COMMISSION, THE GUESSING GAME PROVES EVEN MORE INTRIGUING

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

The Sarasota City Charter demands an annual election of the mayor, and it requires the outgoing mayor to deliver a “State of the City address.” It does not say how long the speech should be, nor does it say what should be covered, only that it shall be given.

The election and address are scheduled for Friday, May 16, at noon; first the speech and then the election of the mayor and vice mayor, followed by commissioners’ remarks. For this “statutory meeting,” no public comment is allowed.

In his three years on the commission, Shannon Snyder has been the resident pessimist. His

suspensions of chicanery led to the ouster of former City Manager Bob Bartolotta. No evidence of any wrongdoing emerged despite a “forensic analysis” of city staff computers. Between the cost of the analysis and the expenses of contract awards for staff dismissals without cause and the search for a new manager, the incident cost the city nearly \$500,000.

Then Snyder feared the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) would hold the city liable for millions in damages after an audit of the local [Man Up](#) organization found misuse of HUD money. No



City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo is running for County Commission. Photo by Norman Schimmel

such action materialized, though the culprit was convicted.

Snyder has consistently voted against the annual city budget, seldom saying why. And last month, he voted against the city's first "clean" audit in several years, refusing at the time to explain his decision. He said at a later meeting that the auditors "didn't present the financials." Despite the city's having one of the lowest ad valorem tax rates in Florida, Snyder has vocally attacked any suggestion of a rate increase because he fears downtown condominium residents would "flee the area."

Snyder also has consistently voted to support creation of a come-as-you-are shelter for homeless people and vagrants in Newtown, saying he fears the U.S. Department of Justice is planning to hold the city in contempt of a Miami federal judge's decision regarding lack of appropriate designated facilities for homeless people to use restrooms in downtown Sarasota, for example.

And he helped to ban the city police from engaging in outreach efforts in vagrants' camps, saying officers should enter such areas only if called to them to investigate crimes.

Normally, the State of the City address is a virtual bouquet of good deeds and prideful accomplishments. It has even been a video production, providing a tour in color of those deeds and accomplishments.

This year Snyder has the bully pulpit. His opinion of the state of the city could be something very different from what the public has seen in the past.

Perhaps all that explains why Shannon Snyder does not want to be a city commissioner any



A new mayor will be elected in Sarasota on Friday, May 16. Photo by Norman Schimmel



The mayor's term is for one year. It took 50 weeks to get Mayor Shannon Snyder's portrait included in the group at City Hall. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

more. On Wednesday, May 14, he filed papers to run for the District 2 seat on the Sarasota County Commission being vacated by Joe Barbetta because of term limits. It is the same seat City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo is seeking. A third Republican candidate also has filed for it, Pete Theisen. All will face off in the Republican primary on Aug. 26.

WHO WILL BE THE NEXT MAYOR?

Following whatever Snyder says on Friday will come the always surprising mayoral election. This year it will be a real doozy. In reality, this involves the selection of a chairman of the five-member body, but the city charter calls the position “mayor,” and so it must be.



City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell has made it plain how much she enjoys the ceremonial aspects of being mayor. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Last year was another time of surprise, when then-Vice Mayor Willie Shaw was skipped over for the top post. Some saw that as a snub, for often the vice mayor moves up. The vote foretold the next 12 months of subsequent votes, with Shaw and Commissioner Susan Chapman always in the minority on 3-2 decisions. Chapman was the only one to support Shaw for mayor last year.

Caragiulo announced his candidacy months ago. Both he and Snyder must step aside later this year under Florida's resign-to-run rule. But does that disqualify them as candidates to be the next city mayor?

Apparently not. A quick check with Sarasota County Elections Supervisor Kathy Dent shows state law requires them to give notice of their resignations by June 6, but the resignations do not take effect until Nov. 18. Before that date, both candidates will retain their full rights, responsibilities and powers as sitting city commissioners, which presumably means they can be candidates for mayor and vote on the position.

Should Snyder or Caragiulo be picked as the next mayor, he could run for the higher office by touting himself as the mayor of Sarasota, which could influence a few votes along the campaign trail. Some county voters will have a less than perfect understanding of what a Sarasota mayor really does.

The evening before the vote, Caragiulo is holding a political fundraiser at his family's seafood restaurant in Burns Square. As of May 6, he had raised \$29,215 for his County Commission candidacy.

Having two city commissioners resign in the same year to run against each other for an open county commission seat is unprecedented. And having both of them eligible to be mayor in the interim is also a rarity.

Will one or the other seek to hold the title and gavel? Or will one or both back off, citing the inability to fulfill the one-year term? If both decline to be considered for mayor, that would leave three contenders.

One is Suzanne Atwell, who clearly loves being mayor. The ribbon-cutting and ceremonial aspects of the job delight her. If she gets the gavel again, she would serve as mayor for an unprecedented third time in four years.

Susan Chapman is locked in a lawsuit defending the city's and her personal integrity in a Sunshine lawsuit. She has been left to handle her own financing of the legal defense, after a 3-2 vote to deny her further city support. If the 3-2 vote pattern holds true, she is not a contender for mayor.

It could be Shaw, if Atwell changes her vote.

This will be live political theater, starting at noon in Sarasota City Hall. No abstentions are allowed.

And a footnote: Anybody who has been to City Hall knows there is a wall of photographs of all the city's mayors. Snyder's face has been absent for months; it finally appeared last week, 50 weeks after he was elected.

I'll use the same word again, even though you will be used to it by now: unprecedented. 



Herrmann's Royal Lipizzan Stallions

Witness the beauty and grace of the Original Lipizzan Stallions of Austria.
See the rare and beautiful "Airs Above the Ground,"
as seen in Walt Disney's "Miracle of the White Stallions"

Special Dress Rehearsal Performance on Saturday, May 17 at 9 a.m.
Call to reserve groups of 15 or more

Weddings • Events & Clinics • Riding Lessons • Breeding



[Click To Watch The Video](#)



[Click For Interactive Map](#)

(941) 322-1501

32755 Singletary Road • Myakka City, Florida 34251
www.hlipizzans.com

A portrait of Karen Rushing, a woman with long dark hair, smiling and wearing a blue blazer. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a path.

GENERALLY SPEAKING

Sarasota Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller Karen Rushing. Photo via sarasotaclerk.com

COULD A NEW INSPECTOR GENERAL ACCREDITATION BUILD MORE FAITH IN COUNTY GOVERNMENT?

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

As controversy over the firing of Sarasota County's ethics and compliance officer continues to swirl, and with an active complaint now filed against one county commissioner, could a new inspector general position in the Sarasota County Clerk of Court's Office help restore trust in local government?

According to Sarasota Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller Karen Rushing, the idea for the inspector general (I.G.) accreditation

came after violations of the county's procurement and purchasing rules were made public and after citizen outcry over the process that led to contracts to renovate Ed Smith Stadium. Rushing's office has always had audit authority, but the I.G. certification sets new

standards for auditors and investigators and creates a peer review process, with auditors actually auditing the audit process.

Rushing's office is working with the Commission for

“*It's hard for anybody to legitimately say the people working in that office are not qualified to do fraud investigations.*”

Karen Rushing
Clerk of Court and County Comptroller
Sarasota County

Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation to get I.G. status, and she has designated Director of Internal Audit Jeanette Phillips as the office's I.G. The required training and documentation should be completed by 2015. According to Rushing, it's all part of building "confidence with the public."

"We have highly credentialed people," Rushing tells *The Sarasota News Leader*. "And we have other people from the outside coming in and saying, 'We've looked at it, certified it and said it's OK.'"

"It's hard for anybody to legitimately say the people working in that office are not qualified to do fraud investigations," she says.

But will the new I.G. really quell unease over the state of county ethics?

Members of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations made their mistrust clear Monday evening, May 12, when the organization devoted an hour-long forum to a discussion with Integrity Florida Co-Founder and Executive Director Dan Krassner. Krassner's organization is dedicated to researching ethics issues in Florida and issuing recommendations on how to improve rules and regulations for public officials.

Several attendees Monday mentioned County Administrator Tom Harmer's decision last



Steve Uebelacker was hired by then-Interim County Administrator Terry Lewis in 2011 to be the county's ethics and compliance officer. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

month to fire Ethics and Compliance Officer Steve Uebelacker as particularly worrisome.

Uebelacker clashed with County Commissioner Joe Barbetta last year over allegations made to Uebelacker that Barbetta had been seen fraternizing with representatives from companies with which the county does business. According to information provided to the *News Leader* by county spokesperson Jamie Carson last year, Uebelacker never considered the allegations warranted an investigation, but he did meet with Barbetta to give the commissioner “an informal heads-up, as a courtesy.”

That launched a war of words between Barbetta and Uebelacker, with Barbetta charging that the employee who made the allegations should have been identified and fired. But Uebelacker declined to do that, telling the *News Leader* in a statement, “It’s imperative to me that employees know they can come to me in confidence.”

After Uebelacker was fired last month, former County Administrator Randy Reid **told**

the Sarasota Herald-Tribune Barbetta had pressured him to terminate Uebelacker’s employment. In an email sent in February, Harmer, who took over as county administrator after Reid was fired last fall, wrote that “the Ethics and Compliance Office is not the appropriate vehicle to accept or investigate ethical allegations or complaints against the public or elected officials.”

Krassner said Monday night that county commissioners “should not be off-limits” when it comes to internal investigations. “If you’re going to have an ethics officer or an inspector general, that should be for the entire government body,” he added.

More than one of the attendees Monday said they were troubled by the Uebelacker firing. “I think there ought to be an investigation of the firing of the ethics officer,” Friends of Warm Mineral Springs activist Juliette Jones said. Others asked how an ethics officer could really be expected to properly investigate his or her own employers.



Cathy Antunes, vice president of the Sarasota County Coalition of Neighborhood Associations, addressed the County Commission last fall on the day it fired County Administrator Randall Reid. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Krassner ran through a variety of possible solutions, including an ethics commission or an ethics officer position that is completely independent of local government. “If you can get to the most independent level of hiring and firing and the most protected pool of funding, that combination is really the best practice,” he said.

County Commissioner Nora Patterson emphasized that the county’s ethics officer position wasn’t eliminated — Uebelacker was replaced by Steve Olmstead — and that Rushing’s office is pursuing the new inspector general accreditation.


Council of Neighborhood Associations Vice President Cathy Antunes, who hosted Monday’s meeting, tells the *News Leader* the inspector general accreditation doesn’t give her more confidence in county government. She and local activist Pat Rounds met with Rushing years ago to bring up problems they saw in Rushing’s audit of the baseball stadium contract process. Antunes says some of Rushing’s justifications for her office’s actions were “cockamamie.”

“Her audit said everything was fine and it absolutely wasn’t,” Antunes adds.

“Having looked at a lot of the same information as the county clerk, my assessment as to whether there were violations or not was very different from theirs,” says Rounds, who declined to speak more on the record.

Another reason Antunes doesn’t feel the inspector general will have much impact: the lack of public engagement. “There’s been no public process around this inspector general,” Antunes says. “There’s been no public hearing, no actual engaging of the public.”

True enough, Rushing concedes, which is why she’s planning to deliver an update on the inspector general process to the County Commission next Tuesday. She says there’s been a lot of “miscommunication” about the accreditation and what authority it does and doesn’t convey. Even the I.G. will still face limitations on what she can investigate. She won’t be looking into voting conflicts of interest, for example. Allegations along those lines will be forwarded to the county administration or the state ethics commission.

After speaking to the commission next week, Rushing is planning additional public outreach to explain more about the I.G. and her office’s audit process. “I understand how frustrated people are.” 

Someone you know needs Planned Parenthood

- Lifesaving cancer screenings
- Parent & teen education
- Annual GYN exams
- Birth control



Planned Parenthood Of Southwest And Central Florida • Sarasota 941-953-4060 • MyPlannedParenthood.org



**Open:
Mon-Sat
11:30am
to
9:00pm**

nancy'sTM **BAR-B-Q**

**Catering
Across
The
Suncoast
Since
2005**

Pulled Pork • Ribs • Chicken • Beef Brisket

Sides Made Fresh From Scratch

Big salad • Chilled Salmon

Beer & Wine • Homemade Desserts • Kid Friendly

301 S Pineapple Ave • Sarasota, FL



**Click For Driving
Directions**

**Click To View Our
Video Online**

941-366-2271 (BBQ1) • nancysbarbq.com



DOING THE MOST GOOD*

DONATE

SEARCH



WAYS WE HELP

WAYS YOU CAN HELP

ABOUT US

ZIP OR CITY, ST SEARCH



PATHWAY OF HOPE

NEW INITIATIVE PROVIDES LONG-TERM, ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT FOR STRUGGLING FAMILIES THAT WANT TO START THRIVING.

READ MORE

SUMMER STRAINS



The website for The Salvation Army has detailed information about the organization's services. Image from the [website](#)

VIOLENCE AMONG THE HOMELESS ANOTHER CHALLENGE, SALVATION ARMY COMMANDER SAYS

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

Since Maj. Ethan Frizzell arrived last summer to take command of The Salvation Army in Sarasota, he has held monthly town hall-style meetings. On May 14, the 10th time he had conducted one, he provided information about how the organization is evolving in the face of the increasing need to help vagrants and the homeless.

While shelter is part of the organization's mission, Frizzell said the true ambition is to help people "to get home," a place defined as one tailored to the needs of a family. That can take one or two years in

the aftermath of a "life event" that put someone on the streets.

The City and County of Sarasota are researching the creation of a "come-as-you-are" shelter based on the proposal of consultant Robert Marbut, but it is unclear how that facility and the shelter operation provided by The Salvation Army might best operate together.

Frizzell says he does not worry overmuch about that. "Looking at Marbut's plan, it's 18, 24 months out. What do we do today?" he asked.

Summer in Sarasota is a tough time to be homeless. "The



We cannot deal with the summer challenge on our own without police presence or some other authority.

Maj. Ethan Frizzell
The Salvation Army
Sarasota



violence, the disruptions increase the hotter it gets,” he pointed out. “We cannot deal with the summer challenge on our own without police presence or some other authority.”

Each night, he said, there is a gathering of homeless people at Ninth Street and Central Avenue in Sarasota. “We have 50 to 70 people partying every night.”

Two of the five city commissioners are not convinced the Marbut plan is the correct answer. Both of them — Vice Mayor Willie Shaw and Commissioner Susan Chapman — attended the May 14 Salvation Army meeting. Their attendance was advertised to the public. A deputy city clerk took minutes, acting in the wake of the city, Chapman and Commissioner Suzanne Atwell having been sued for an alleged violation of the Open Meetings Law after an earlier meeting about homelessness.

Shaw told Frizzell, “You’re here doing what others are offering down the road.

I believe you are the vehicle we should be using.”

Shaw asked why The Salvation Army had so far not participated in the discussion of establishing the come-as-you-are shelter. Frizzell replied, “We’re getting to the right time. But The Salvation Army cannot do it all. The Point in Time [annual homeless] census shows 85 percent of the people staying in a homeless shelter were in The Salvation Army [facility].”

Frizzell also challenged the city and county to make a pledge that no veteran should be homeless on the streets. He noted the homeless census in January showed 320 people were not being served by a shelter, and 120 of them were veterans. “No Sarasota vet should be homeless in Sarasota County,” he said.

Sarasota is one of the most expensive places to live in the nation, he added. “Until we address the affordability of housing, we’ll need to have more shelter beds,” he said. **SNL**



A flag marks the intersection of Ninth Street and Central Avenue in Sarasota, where The Salvation Army staff sees regular nighttime parties involving homeless people. Image from Google Maps



My Sunday Paper...

...two days early!

One of my favorite things to do is spend all day Sunday relaxing with the Sunday newspaper, reading it from cover to cover. Unfortunately, my old Sunday paper is mostly classified ads, real estate ads, ad inserts and very little in the way of real, informative news.

That's why I love the award-winning *Sarasota News Leader*. It is so full of news and features that relate to Sarasota County that I need a whole day to read it all ... perfect for a lazy Sunday afternoon. And reading it on my iPad means no trip to the recycling bin.

The Sarasota News Leader access e-mail is delivered to my inbox every Friday morning. Of course, I'm tempted to read some of it right away. Who could resist? But I know I have all day Sunday - in fact, all week - to read the No. 1 digital news weekly in Sarasota County.

The Sarasota News Leader - Your New Sunday Treat

SarasotaNewsLeader.com • Old school journalism. 21st century delivery.

DENSITY BOOST GETS THUMBS UP

“*There are now 386 units in the area, and the cap is 1,775. The applicant proposes a 450-unit apartment complex, so there are about 1,000 [units] left.*”

David Smith
Planner
City of Sarasota

”



The Rosemary District is marked by a sign on a pillar erected by the City of Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

pushing it is Bruce Weiner with Rosalyne Holdings LLC of Pittsburgh, PA. It cost his firm nearly \$7,000 to get the amendment considered. Rosalyne Holdings wants to erect two buildings with a total of 450 rental apartments.

A couple of issues did raise concerns among Planning Board members. The density increase will not affect the total number of dwelling units allowed in the overlay district. That is fixed at 1,775, the product of 71 acres times 25 units per acre. The triple-density bonus is first-come, first-served, and that concerned Planning Board member Robert Lindsay.

“This scheme sets up a horse race. Whoever gets there first gets the density,” he said. “It strikes me not as an incentive to the entire neighborhood but only for those who are ready to act now.”

David Smith is the city planner responsible for shepherding comprehensive plan amendments through the paperwork maze. “There are now 386 units in the area, and the cap is 1,775. The applicant proposes a 450-unit apartment complex, so there are about 1,000 [units] left,” said Smith.

A second issue is the length of time the R-ROD is available. Staff suggested it “sunset” in three years. Rosalyne’s attorney, Bill Merrill, suggested five years. Then it was time for the public to weigh in.

COMING TO A DECISION

Representatives from the two large condominium complexes west of the R-ROD came to testify. Both suggested Rosalyne conduct a study to determine if 450 units are economically viable in the Rosemary District. “Other cities are requiring developers to demonstrate

there is demand and [that] they have the financial capacity to build the project, respond to change and have viability over time,” said Susan Payne. “Be aware of overbuilding and resulting vacancies.”

A representative from the Renaissance condominiums told the Planning Board, “I support the R-ROD, but we want a supply-and-demand analysis. If they can’t fill it, we don’t want them to build it.”

Lauren Wood, who called herself “your Rosemary District poster child,” said, “I think this project is the boon we desperately need. I survived the recession in the Rosemary while many of my counterparts did not. The overtaking of the district by the homeless has made it an unattractive place to do commerce and to live.” She supported the density bonus as a way to put more eyes and shoes on the street.

After the public hearing closed, Planning Board member Vald Svekis made a motion to approve the comprehensive plan amendment allowing the Rosemary Residential Overlay District for a three-year period. It died for lack of a second.

Member Lindsay made the same motion, but with a five-year sunset. It was defeated 2-2, with member Mort Siegel absent. Svekis then made another motion to approve the amendment with a four-year sunset, splitting the difference. It passed unanimously.

The comprehensive plan amendment now moves to the City Commission for consideration. Since that board approved by resolution to put the amendment on a fast-track approval process, it is doubtful it will toss any roadblocks in the way. 



RAZING THE WAY FOR WALMART

Demolition of the River's Edge Community Church began last week to make way for a new Walmart Neighborhood Market. Photo by Roger Drouin

DEMOLITION CLEARS SITE FOR 24-HOUR WALMART NEIGHBORHOOD MARKET AT SOUTHWEST CORNER OF BEE RIDGE AND BENEVA ROADS

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

Demolition of the River's Edge Community Church structures began last week on the southwest corner of Beneva and Bee Ridge roads in Sarasota, clearing the way for a new Walmart Neighborhood Market scheduled to open in the fall.

The 24-hour store at one of the county's busiest intersections will become the second Walmart Neighborhood Market in the community; the other is on North

Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. The stores are about one-quarter the size of the retailer's typical Supercenters.

The sight of a front-end loader ripping off the roof of the old church has been seen by some as a sign of forthcoming economic growth; by others, as a vision of traffic nightmares to come.

The church tear-down — combined with the reappearance of construction projects

“*In my opinion, it provides the residents of the area another option for shopping for grocery and pharmaceutical products.*”

Jim Bridges
Developer
Jebco Ventures Inc.



downtown — is an indication of progress after several years of little economic growth, Jim Bridges of Jebco Ventures Inc. in Sarasota told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week. He pointed out that the new Walmart will serve local residents.

His firm purchased the 4.033-acre site and, in turn, leased it to the Arkansas-based retailer.

“In my opinion, it provides the residents of the area another option for shopping for grocery and pharmaceutical products,” said Bridges, who is also developing a \$40-million downtown hotel, located at 202 N. Tamiami Trail.

“Sarasota is very fortunate to have companies and developers that are willing to invest

in the economy for the area,” Bridges added. “We finally have a new crane that has commenced work on Palm Avenue [at [The Jewel](#) condominium tower site] after several years of little or no growth. I am hopeful that this is just the beginning.”

But fears of even more traffic intensity and the fact the Walmart store will be open 24 hours a day raised concerns among neighboring residents when the project was proposed. All but four of the 22 speakers who addressed the County Commission about the project in April 2013 spoke in opposition to the request for a rezoning and comprehensive plan change to allow the Walmart to be built.



Construction fencing surrounded the property at the southwestern corner of Bee Ridge and Beneva roads in Sarasota as equipment began removing the church roof. Photo by Roger Drouin

Paul Tuttle of the Anti-Walmart Sarasota Direct Action Committee does not feel the traffic concerns received the necessary attention from the board. He also worries about the impact of the store's all-day operation on the neighborhood directly bordering it.

"The traffic in that area is going to be one of the biggest issues," Tuttle said. "That area is already congested. I'm not sure if it is the most dangerous intersection in Sarasota County, but it is one of the worst."

A rezone that allowed the project to proceed, however, won County Commission approval on a 4-1 vote in April 2013.

Commissioner Nora Patterson was in the minority, voicing displeasure that under a "proportionate fair share" agreement, the

developer would have to pay only \$31,822 of an estimated \$528,012 in expenses for the traffic improvements needed once the store has been completed at the Bee Ridge/Beneva intersection.

During the County Commission meeting, Commissioner Joe Barbetta offered support for the project, saying the store is proposed for an area that is already a "commercial corridor." It would draw a lot of its business from residents who live nearby, he maintained, thus easing some of the traffic concerns.

"We hope to open the store in the fall," Bill Wertz, spokesman for Walmart, told the *News Leader* this week.

"This is our smaller grocery and pharmacy, about a quarter a size of the Walmart



A Walmart Neighborhood Market was welcomed when it opened on North Tamiami Trail in September 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Supercenter,” Wertz pointed out. “They have been very popular with our customers.”

The retailer recently announced plans to open more of these neighborhood markets across the country.

Wertz said Walmart plans to hire approximately 95 employees for the 41,180-square-foot Bee Ridge store, most of whom will have full-time positions.

“We will start hiring in the summer,” Wertz added, though he said anyone interested in a job there can apply online at any time.

263 PEAK-HOUR TRIPS

Sarasota County Transportation Planning Manager Paula Wiggins told the *News Leader* no money is available right now for the changes needed to ameliorate the traffic situation around the store.

“*The traffic in that area is going to be one of the biggest issues.*”

Paul Tuttle
Community Activist
Sarasota

”

The River's Edge Community Church is visible through trees on the property in April 2013. Photo by Robert Hackney

“There will be no big improvements to the intersection,” Wiggins said. “We don’t have any funding in our budget — any additional funds — to do any construction at this intersection.”

Meanwhile, after the store opens, an average of 263 extra vehicles are expected to traverse the intersection each hour during peak traffic times, according to Wiggins.

Walmart is responsible for providing access to the development, which includes adding a right turn lane on Bee Ridge Road so cars can enter the store parking lot. Another turn lane will be added on Beneva Road at a second entrance. Altogether, plans call for three entrances into the Walmart property, Wiggins said.

A separate Florida Department of Transportation-funded project is in the works to add pedestrian refuge islands to a 3.6-mile stretch of Bee Ridge Road, from U.S. 41 to Dunn Road near McIntosh Road.

A TALE OF TWO WALMART PROPOSALS


The County Commission may have approved the Bee Ridge Walmart, but the City

Commission turned down an earlier Walmart proposal to build a small Supercenter on Ringling Boulevard just outside downtown Sarasota.

Tuttle, the community activist, said that although some residents of the area surrounding the Bee Ridge store site argued against the project, their opposition was not as well-organized as the protest involving the proposed Walmart on Ringling Boulevard. With the latter site, there was also a question about the legality of rezoning the property to make a big-box store permissible at the site — another concern that helped sway the city board.

“There was a lot more community support” in the fight against the Ringling Walmart, noted Tuttle, who also helped organize that action.

Tuttle added that he would have preferred to see something other than a Walmart replace River’s Edge Church at 3560 Bee Ridge Road.

The razing of the church and the removal of old oaks on the property is “hard to see,” he said. 



A panoramic view shows the River’s Edge Community Church at the southwest intersection of Bee Ridge and Beneva roads in April 2013. Photo by Robert Hackney

AT PLANNED PARENTHOOD, CARE IS MUCH MORE THAN THE SERVICES WE PROVIDE; IT'S THE WAY WE APPROACH OUR WORLD.

WE CARE.

DEEPLY. WITH RESPECT. WITHOUT JUDGMENT.

WE ARE UNWAVERING IN OUR BELIEF THAT ALL PEOPLE DESERVE HIGH QUALITY, AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE. WE ARE TIRELESS IN OUR EFFORTS TO PROVIDE EDUCATION AND INFORMATION SO PEOPLE CAN MAKE THEIR OWN HEALTH DECISIONS. WE PROUDLY FIGHT FOR WOMEN TO BE ABLE TO GET THE REPRODUCTIVE SERVICES THEY NEED. WE DO ALL OF THIS BECAUSE

WE CARE PASSIONATELY ABOUT HELPING WOMEN, MEN, AND YOUNG PEOPLE
LEAD HEALTHY LIVES.

NO MATTER WHO THEY ARE. NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE. WE WILL DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO GET THEM THE CARE THEY NEED. BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT WHEN PEOPLE ARE TRULY CARED FOR, THEY WILL MAKE THEIR LIVES, THEIR FAMILIES – AND EVEN THE WORLD – BETTER AND HEALTHIER.
PLANNED PARENTHOOD. CARE. NO MATTER WHAT.



**Planned Parenthood Of
Southwest And Central Florida**

**941-953-4060
MyPlannedParenthood.org**



Foxfire Golf Club

Pine Golf Course

Sarasota, Florida

Overall Member Rating: ★★★★★ (0 member reviews)

Like

Be the first of your friends to like this.

Record a Round

Add a Review

Add to Wishlist

Add to Played Courses

OVERVIEW

TEE TIMES

REVIEWS

TRAVEL

CLUBHOUSE

FLYOVER

NEW! YARDAGE MAPS



3D course map

7200 Proctor Rd
Sarasota, FL 34241-9397
United States

This location is closed for business.
<http://www.golf-foxfire.com>

Book Tee Times

Input Score

Information about the former Foxfire Golf Course was provided on the Golf Link [website](#). Image from the website

A DEVELOPER PROPOSES A 202-HOME CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT AT A CLOSED GOLF COURSE THAT ONCE WAS THE HOME OF TWO LANDFILLS

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

A developer has submitted plans to build a single-family home subdivision on the former grounds of defunct landfills that were transformed into Foxfire Golf Course, now also defunct.

At the Thursday, May 15, Sarasota County Development Review Committee meeting, Land Experts Inc. representatives presented pre-application plans for a 202-home, gated cluster development on the property north of Clark Road

and west of Proctor Road. Land Experts, which is part of Bradenton-based developer Carlos Beruff’s Medallion Home, has the 193-acre property under contract.

The developer wants to rezone the property so the proposed Foxtrot Meadows can be built.

“All classes and types of debris as well as construction materials were likely discarded at the site.”

Report on Proctor Road Landfill Site
Florida Department of Health
2008

The Foxfire Golf Course was closed abruptly in 2006 after Foxfire Properties LLC purchased the land. At that time, the company cited

environmental contamination on the site and economic losses that had plagued the golf course for years, according to a 2006 *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* article.

The golf course was built over two former landfills, where trash was burned as late as the 1960s, according to the Florida Department of Health, which tested on-site and off-site soil samples in 2008. Sarasota County burned trash there until 1967 and buried garbage at the site until the landfills closed in 1972.

“All classes and types of debris as well as construction materials were likely discarded at the site,” according to the 2008 Health Department report. (See the link to the PDF.)

After the landfills on Proctor Road were closed, the Foxfire golf course was built.

Beruff hired a consultant to conduct two recent rounds of soil tests. Both were reviewed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, which found “no public safety concerns or chemicals leaking out of the landfills.”

“I am the guy who builds these houses and the people I build these homes for will hang me out to dry if it doesn’t work,” Beruff told county planners at the meeting Thursday.

DOWNLOAD THE PDF



Read the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report.



The former Foxfire Golf Course, at 7200 Proctor Road, could become the site of new single-family homes. Image from Google Maps

“I need to live with the product,” Beruff said. “It’s a good location, and we had two rounds of tests and those have come back with no public safety concerns.”

“We had two rounds of tests and those have come back with no public safety concerns.”

Carlos Beruff
Developer

Red Hawk and Ashley, are already located in the area.

If environmental concerns do come up, Beruff said he would reconsider his plans. “There is plenty of

land in Florida,” he noted.

After county planners heard Beruff’s proposal, the developer told *The Sarasota News Leader* he was reassured by the recent tests and that making certain there are no contamination problems on the property is his “biggest concern.” The subdivision would be constructed next to, not on top of, the former landfills, Beruff pointed out. Two other subdivisions,

In February 2013, the County Commission rejected a previous development proposal for the old Foxfire Golf Course property. Residents then voiced concerns to the commissioners about the former landfills.



MEDALLION HOME

BUILDING TRUST SINCE 1984

Home Buyer/Owner Login

Home

Communities ▾

New Homes ▾

Design Center ▾

About Us ▾

Medallion Signature Home

Contact Us

MOVE-IN READY HOMES AVAILABLE NOW



CLICK HERE
TO VIEW OUR INVENTORY PAGE

FIND YOUR NEW HOME TODAY!

Medallion Home encompasses Land Experts Inc., which proposes the new subdivision on the former grounds of the Foxfire Golf Course in Sarasota County. Image from the [website](#)

The Foxtrot Meadows development would have to be considered by both the Planning Commission and the County Commission. The county could also stipulate that water quality testing be conducted on the site before people move into the homes.

Preliminary plans call for the subdivision's primary access to be on Proctor Road, said Beruff. The project would be located next to the Red Hawk development.

FORMER LANDFILLS

According to the Health Department report, arsenic and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons have been detected at the former landfill sites.

Department staff concluded that "surface soil at the former Proctor Road Landfill and in the nearby Ashley neighborhood [posed] 'No Apparent Public Health Hazard.'" Yet, the department issued some recommendations when it issued the 2008 report, including the following:

- As a best public health practice, keep children out of the ditch on the former Proctor Road Landfill to minimize exposure to arsenic-contaminated soil. In addition, site access should be restricted.
- As a best public health practice to reduce exposure to contaminated soil, institute engineering controls that prevent runoff from the former landfill/golf course into the backyards of the Ashley Subdivision.

- If, in the future, land use on the former Proctor Road Landfill/Foxfire Golf Club site changes, conduct further assessment of on-site contaminant levels. In addition, the data should be reviewed to determine the public health threat.
- If future land use on the former Proctor Landfill site changes, on-site contaminant levels should be further reviewed.

SARABAY

On Thursday, the county planners at the Development Review Committee meeting also heard details about a project called Sarabay, a 21-acre gated development planned to replace a trailer home community located at U.S. 41 and Happy Haven Avenue, just north of Blackburn Point Road in Osprey.

The applicant is planning to build a 49-unit subdivision, said Stoney Pope, the engineer representing the developer.

The community would have a waterfront dock and gazebo as its central focal points.

The developer will need to provide a landscape buffer plan, county staff said.

There is one grand tree, a pine tree, right on the property line, so representatives of the developer said they would preserve it.

Several historic buildings also are on the property, as well as a Civil War-era gravesite that county planners want to investigate before approving the project. 



STAYING UP OR COMING DOWN?

Gretchen Schneider of the city's Planning and Development Services Department briefs the DID on the paperwork status of the tower approved at the old DeMarcay Hotel. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

THE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT BOARD VOICES CONCERNS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE HISTORIC DEMARCAY HOTEL PROPERTY AND HAS TO BACKTRACK ON A LETTER OPPOSING PARKING METERS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The Downtown Improvement District (DID) meeting drew a crowd Tuesday morning, May 13. A bevy of downtown residents showed up to hear a report on the status and future of the historic DeMarcay Hotel on Palm Avenue. They found, as did the DID board members, a lot of uncertainty surrounding the old building.

To add poignancy, DID member Dr. Mark Kauffman brought along a framed photo of the building from its better days. Also in the frame was a scrap

of paper he found in the two-story structure. It listed the room rates: \$7 per week for a single person; \$10 for two.

The building now stands empty and gutted. A recent sale got rid of the interior furnishings, including architectural elements. The future is uncertain.

“We’re concerned about the sudden demolition of the building.”

Dr. Mark Kauffman
Member
Downtown Improvement District

Gretchen Schneider, general manager of planning and development services for the city, said that in 2007, the City Commission

gave its approval to a plan to build an 18-story structure on the 50-foot-wide lot, with 39 units above retail space. Kauffman recalled the audience's opposition to the proposal at the time. Perhaps to soothe the crowd, the commissioners demanded the front of the two-story building be preserved.

It is a small piece of Palm Avenue with major entitlements. This is one of the few projects allowed to go to 18 stories, the highest elevation permitted under the old city zoning code. Current regulations allow only 10 stories.

And the DeMarcay property is one of only three permitted to have quadruple density under a now-lapsed plan called the Downtown Redevelopment Overlay District. The other two are the 1350 Main St. condominium complex and the United Way property on First Street that entrepreneur Jesse Biter is trying

to develop into a residential structure. That overlay allows 200 units per acre, not the 50 permitted by "Downtown Core" zoning.

The owners of the DeMarcay have a time problem. When the city approved the 18-story condominium project in 2007, the board agreed that the permission would expire in two years unless work began. This was the era of the bursting of the real estate bubble.

The 50-foot lot cost Palm Avenue Partners LLC \$2.75 million.

The Florida Legislature gave all development agreements a sweeping extension in 2009, adding four years before all the approvals and entitlements would become moot. In 2013, a local representative of the DeMarcay owners — Bruce Franklin — asked for and received one final extension from the city; it was for



About **DeMarcay Hotel**

Landmark

Address Sarasota, Florida

The **DeMarcay Hotel** is a historic hotel in Sarasota, Florida. It is located at 27 South Palm Avenue. On March 22, 1984, it was added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

External links

[Sarasota County listings at National Register of Historic Places](#)

[Florida's Office of Cultural and Historical Programs](#)
[Saraso...](#)

Continue Reading

[From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#) · [Edit on Wikipedia](#)



*The condominium complex at 1350 Main St. was approved with a higher density in effect at the time.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

two more years. That pushes the expiration date to Oct. 16, 2015.

“That is the last and final extension they are able to get,” said Schneider on May 13.

“We’re concerned about the sudden demolition of the building,” Kauffman told her. “Do they have that right?”

“Yes,” replied Schneider. “But they have not applied for a demolition permit. And they have not gone to the Historic Preservation Board to ask for approval of a demolition permit.” Kauffman and other downtown residents are antsy because the “everything must go” sale cleared the interior of the building.

The city letter granting the final extension says the owners must apply for a building permit “no later than ninety (90) days prior to the expiration date.” That date is now 16 months away.

But permitting takes time. Schneider estimated it could take a month or two for staff to evaluate the plans for an 18-story high-rise structure. And before those plans could be drawn up, the fate of the existing historic structure would need to be examined by the Historic Preservation Board. Getting on that agenda and satisfying the board’s requirements could take another couple of months.



The DeMarcay Hotel structure stands at 27 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Ebyabe via Wikimedia Commons



The DeMarcay Hotel is shown in better days, when Palm Avenue had palm trees. Photo by Stan Zimmerman of image provided by Dr. Mark Kauffman

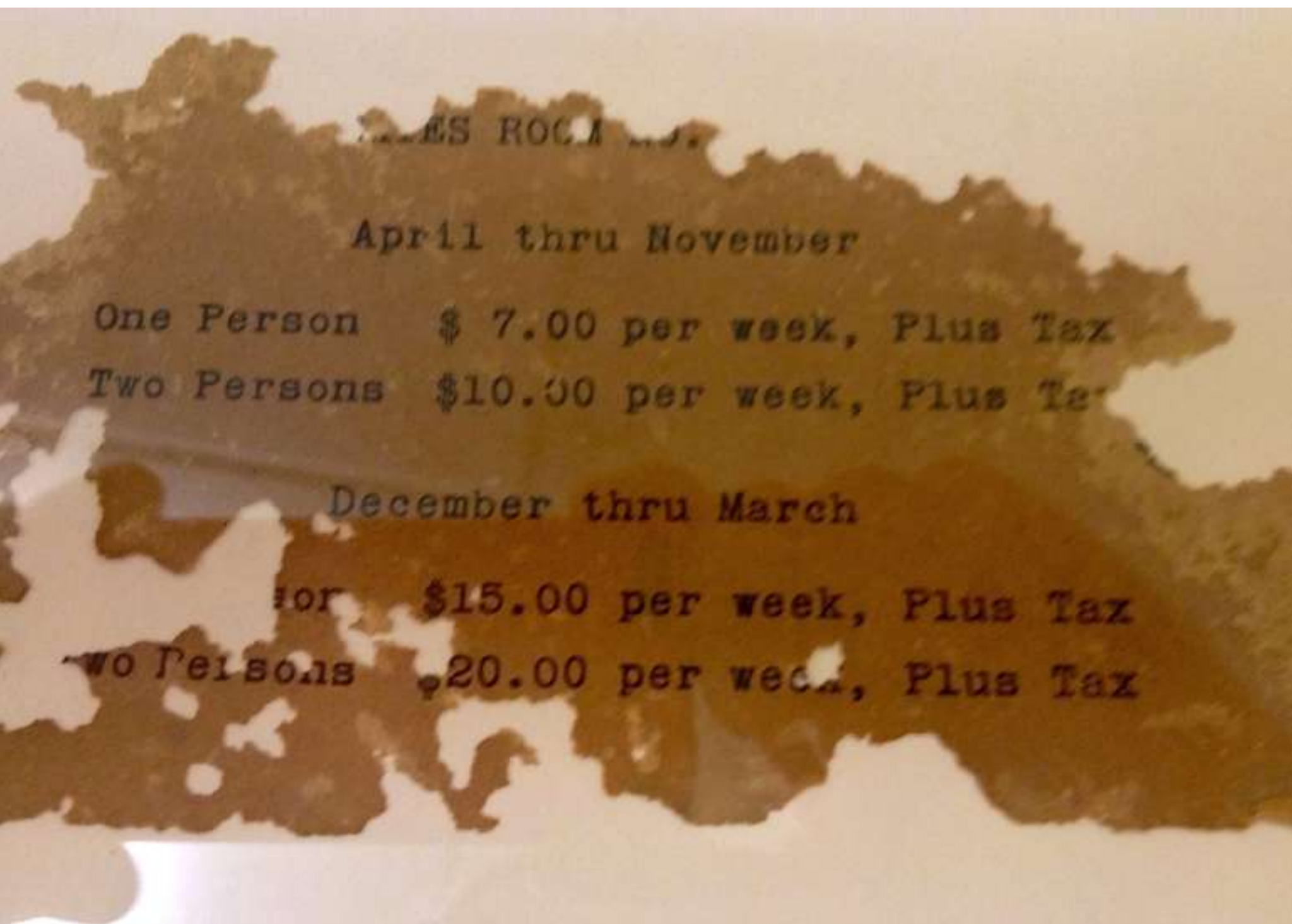
While the audience Tuesday was in favor of keeping the old building, the chairman of the DID was not. "I see this as a matter of property rights. They've got \$3 million invested," Ernie Ritz pointed out. "He has every right to build this building. If we try to stop him, we could get sued, and rightfully so."

Schneider said Franklin, the owners' representative, recently had an informal conversation with city staffers about recreating the old hotel's facade instead of preserving the original. "I said it would be difficult to do that, and staff would not support elimination of it from

the plans. This [project] was approved by the Historic Preservation Board," Schneider told the audience.

In seeking the final extension, the owners demonstrated their financing remains intact for the project and "that over \$660,000 has been incurred in financing expense," according to documentation.

The DID board has no power to approve or disapprove any formal action concerning the DeMarcay property, but it is concerned about the loss of one of downtown's few remaining buildings from the 1920s.



When a good cigar cost a nickel, \$7 per week was not cheap rent for one person, especially during off season. Image courtesy Dr. Mark Kauffman

ABOUT FACE ON PARKING

During the April 29 meeting, the DID board — by a 3-1 vote — authorized a letter suggesting any consideration of paid parking downtown by the City Commission should be postponed for two years. At the suggestion of the city attorney, on May 13, it voted to rescind the motion and schedule more discussion at its May 27 meeting.

There was some grumbling in City Hall about the DID's earlier action because it came without any staff or citizen input. It occurred during the "director's comments" section of the meeting, when DID board member Eileen Hampshire reported on discussions of the Parking Advisory Committee, on which she represents the DID.

DID Operations Manager John Moran told the group on May 13, "We made an error at the last meeting. The state passed a bill on random motions made by boards that are not on the agenda. The public is not able to participate in the discussion or even be aware. The 3-1 vote on delaying paid parking — under Senate Bill 50, the motion was unlawful."

Hampshire was the member in the minority when that vote was taken, but she was not pleased with the undoing of the vote. "It was a noticed meeting. I was giving a report to this

board about another I sit on representing this board. If we can only discuss topics on the agenda, it doesn't seem right," she said.


"You can always listen, but not decide," Moran replied.

GEARING UP FOR MORE GUARDS

The Downtown Improvement District board is thinking of joining a growing number of organizations hiring private security. At the next meeting, the members will hear proposals regarding employing off-duty city police officers for \$33 per hour each or private security guards at \$20 per hour.

[Pineapple Square](#) already uses guards around its property. Last week, the Downtown Merchants Association voted to test the waters and devote \$2,000 for a trial period. DID Chairman Ritz says he has hired guards after waking up on Mother's Day to find two vagrants sleeping on his porch downtown.

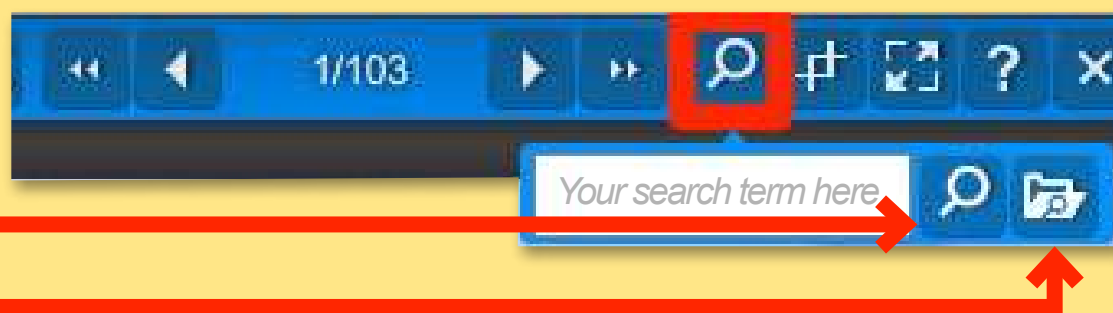
"We want to get it started now," said Ron Soto, DID member and president of the Downtown merchants group.

There is growing concern among merchants and restaurateurs that downtown is saturated with vagrants and homeless people and that that situation is driving customers away. 

QUICK TIP

Search Only The Issue You Are Viewing

Search All Issues

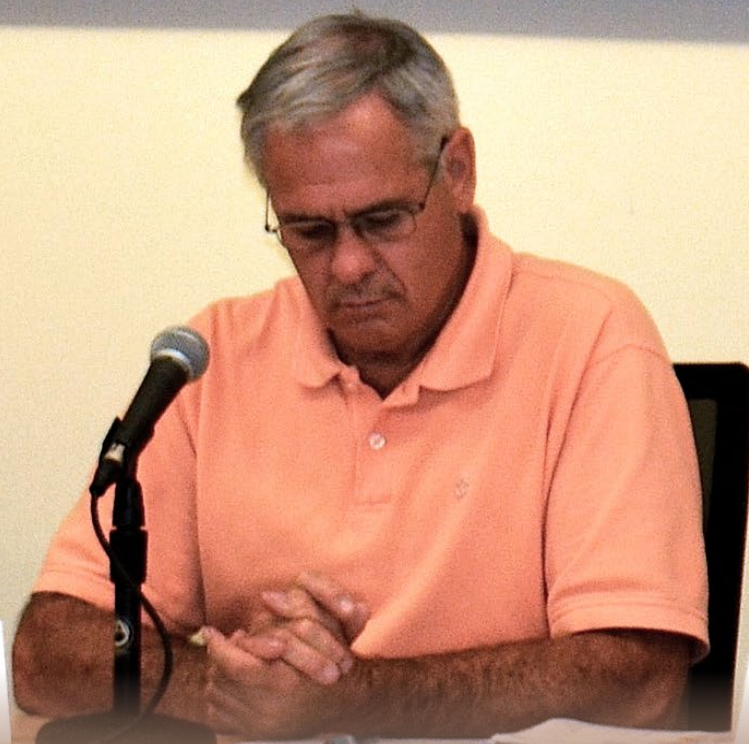


Search for text in stories by clicking the  icon in the menubar and entering a search term. Search the current edition or all editions.

STILL WORKING ON THE DETAILS



ROBERT GARLAND
PROJECT MANAGER



STEVE TOPOVSKI
PROJECT MANAGER

MITT TIDWELL
UTILITIES DIRECTOR

“All the key components — the variable-frequency drives and such — all of that equipment will be gone over and installed as new equipment.”

Steve Topovski
Project Manager
Lift Station 87
City of Sarasota

”

Robert Garland (left) of McKim & Creed and Steve Topovski, the city's project manager, prepare for the start of another community meeting on Lift Station 87. Photo by Norman Schimmel

EXTENDED WARRANTIES AND STORM SURGE PROTECTION FOCUS OF LATEST LIFT STATION 87 DISCUSSIONS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

There was an atmosphere of Stanley-finding-Livingston on Monday, May 12, in the City Hall Annex. After months of slog, the man hired to rescue the city's most important civic project from ruin and disaster had fought his way free to propose a solution.

Robert Garland, a design engineer with [McKim & Creed](#), has been trying for months to remedy a plan that could have left one-third of the city without sewer service for months after a hit from a Category 2 hurricane. City Utilities Director Mitt Tidwell was stuck with a design he inherited that did not work, was vastly over budget and, worst of all, completely stalled.

The plan was the legacy of AECOM, another engineering design company that nearly destroyed the Osprey Avenue bridge crossing Hudson Bayou, almost injected drilling lubricant into the waterway and failed to dig deep enough to let the sewage flow downhill. And it used a design neither Garland nor Tidwell had ever seen — a totally underground sewer lift station incorporating seven underground facilities.

While AECOM and the city are in court over the professionalism of the original work, actual building of anything is at a halt, leaving an abandoned construction site in the middle of Luke Wood Park at the junction of U.S. 41 and U.S. 301 just south of downtown



Former Mayor Mollie Cardamone (second row, left) and City Commissioner Susan Chapman (second row, center) were among attendees at the May 12 meeting on Lift Station 87. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Sarasota. The facility is known as Lift Station Number 87, LS 87 for short.

On Monday all the bad news was behind them. The Sarasota City Commission on April 25 gave its permission to the team to look at new options for the project, and on May 5, it agreed to wipe the slate clean and go with a fresh start.

The May 12 meeting with engineers and architects from the city and McKim & Creed began to fill in a new slate, focusing on a return to an aboveground design that could be as tall as 34 feet.

This time the city is not blindly trusting another engineering design company. Every step is being peer-reviewed by a global engineering company simply called Atkins.

HOW MUCH HURRICANE PROTECTION?

The failed plan had another flaw. It was designed to comply with a Florida Department of Environmental Protection requirement to withstand a 100-year flood event. After Garland decided to see what that meant for hurricane protection, he found one critical facility in the original plan would not withstand the expected storm surge from a Category 2 hurricane.

Because the station would consist of underground “silos,” enough surge on their “lids” could collapse the roofs and fill the facility with water. “When some of these structures collapse, the motor control structure is lost, and it can take six months to replace,” said Garland.



*A sign for the original Lift Station 87 project still stood outside Luke Wood Park in November 2012.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Building aboveground — elevating the structures to a point higher than expected storm surges would flow — eliminates that problem. The city's primary wastewater treatment center on 12th Street is protected from a Category 3 hurricane surge, as is the biggest facility that will be serviced by LS 87 — Sarasota Memorial Hospital. Garland suggested taking the station high enough so it also could withstand a Category 3 storm.

“Atkins agreed to taking it to Category 3 protection as well,” said Garland. In the coming weeks, the Utilities Department will hold public meetings to help determine the overall appearance of the 6,000-square-foot building in the park that will house the lift station. One of the “silos” will be retained to serve as an underground tank for diesel fuel to supply

back-up generators to keep the pumps working in the event of an electrical outage.

The deepest silo will be the “influent structure,” more commonly known as the “wet well,” where sewage under the pull of gravity will move to the lowest location in the system. From there it will be pumped (“lifted”) to a higher level to continue its flow to the 12th Street facility. Unfortunately, the AECOM-designed wet well is too shallow; it needs to be 12 feet deeper at its floor (meaning the actual hole must go 14 or more feet lower to make room for a new floor).

Garland earlier proposed a new wet well, instead of trying to retrofit the old one, and he appears increasingly to favor that solution. Tidwell on Monday said city staff would look at costs, but he, too, thought a new wet



Materials for the lift station project remain in Luke Wood Park. Photo by Norman Schimmel

well adjacent to the one on which construction already began would probably be the best solution. All of the existing underground structures (except one for the fuel tank) will be loaded with fill and abandoned.

Should the engineers consider a higher standard? Clay Tappan, himself an engineer, asked on Monday, “Have you looked at the incremental costs to go to Category 4 or 5 [protection]?” Garland replied that the city will be doing a vulnerability estimate. Tidwell said standard projections say a Category 2 storm produces 15 feet of storm surge, a Category 3 produces 26 feet, a Category 4 brings 33 feet and a Category 5 produces 35 feet of storm surge above sea level. The site at Luke Wood Park is already about 12 feet above sea level.

Height, however, is an issue with the neighbors, so the limiting factor may not be engineering but popular opinion.

AND THE WARRANTIES?


The project is now about eight years old. It began when Lift Station 7 (which LS 87 will replace) failed repeatedly. “It was 2005 when we awoke to the sound of great pumping trucks outside our house on Yale Avenue,” said

former Sarasota Mayor Mollie Cardamone. “In the early days of this spill, it was appalling to learn everything from the hospital was going through our streets.”

She was one of several members of the public to speak to the engineers during the May 12 meeting. One asked about the warranties on the pumps, generators, electronics and all the other equipment already purchased for the lift station.

“All the key components — the variable-frequency drives and such — all of that equipment will be gone over and installed as new equipment,” said the city’s project manager, Steve Topovski.

“The city is looking at an extended warranty,” Garland added.

With an all-new design yet to be created, and the public to weigh in on building styles, work on LS 87 is not going to be starting soon. However, work will resume on another part of the project in September, when new sewer lines will be installed south of Hudson Bayou. This will cause traffic delays and possibly the closing of the Hudson Bayou bridge. 



The original design for the lift station would have damaged the bridge over Hudson Bayou on Osprey Avenue. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

ANOTHER DELAY AND POLICY QUESTIONS



Big Pass is smooth as glass as seen from Siesta Key's Beach Access 1 on a recent morning. Photo by Rachel Hackney

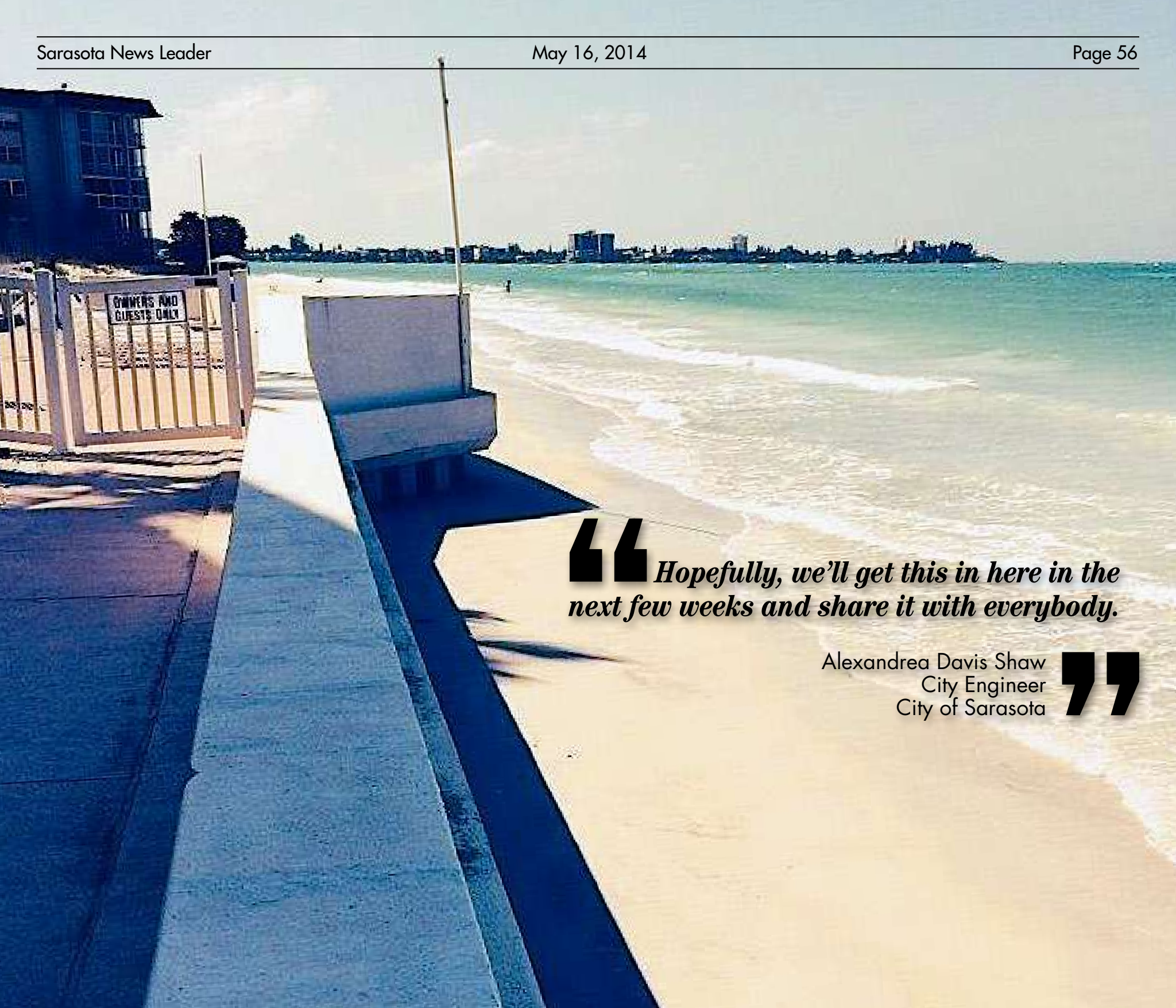
THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS EXPECTS TO RELEASE ITS LIDO RENOURISHMENT PROJECT MATERIAL JUNE 11, BUT A TAMPA LAW FIRM WANTS AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT, TOO

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' models and report regarding the Lido Beach Renourishment Project should be available to the City of Sarasota by June 11, City Engineer Alex DavisShaw confirmed this week.

Because Sarasota County staff has asked for sufficient time to review the material prior to discussing it with the County Commission, county staff members informed their board this week that the agenda item would be pushed back from June 10 to Sept. 19, though they cautioned the latter date is tentative.

In the meantime, a May 14 letter to the Corps of Engineers' district office in Jacksonville from a Tampa attorney representing owners of the Best Western Plus-Siesta Key hotel on South Tamiami Trail in Sarasota questions whether the Corps of Engineers has complied with federal policy in planning the renourishment project. The attorney, who is also representing the nonprofit organization [Save Our Siesta Sand 2](#), the [Suncoast Waterkeeper](#) and Siesta Key residents Rich Schineller and Peter van Roekens, has requested the Corps of Engineers prepare an environmental impact statement on the project.



“Hopefully, we’ll get this in here in the next few weeks and share it with everybody.

Alexandrea Davis Shaw
City Engineer
City of Sarasota

”

That letter said, “I would like to emphasize that we do not oppose renourishment at Lido Key, but we insist that any renourishment does not jeopardize Siesta Key in any way or impair navigation and alternatives to obtaining sand from Big Pass be appropriately explored and used.”

Corps of Engineers project managers have called for the dredging of Big Sarasota Pass to provide the majority of the approximately

1.2 million cubic yards of sand needed for the first renourishment of Lido Key under a [50-year plan](#). The pass, which separates Lido and Siesta keys, never has been dredged. Opponents of the plan fear such action will lead to impairment not only of the navigational channel but also of Siesta’s beaches.

On May 14, Susan J. Jackson, a spokeswoman for the Corps of Engineers in its Jacksonville office, told *The Sarasota News Leader* in an

(Above) The tide in the Gulf of Mexico almost reaches the First Lido Condominium complex at 1900 Benjamin Franklin Drive on Lido Key. Image courtesy Lido Key Residents Association

email that Project Engineer Milan Mora “says our modeling is telling us there [will be] no adverse impacts to Siesta Key.” She added that the benefits to Lido Key would be tremendous “in helping protect upland structures, including the [hurricane] evacuation route.”

THE LATEST TIMELINE

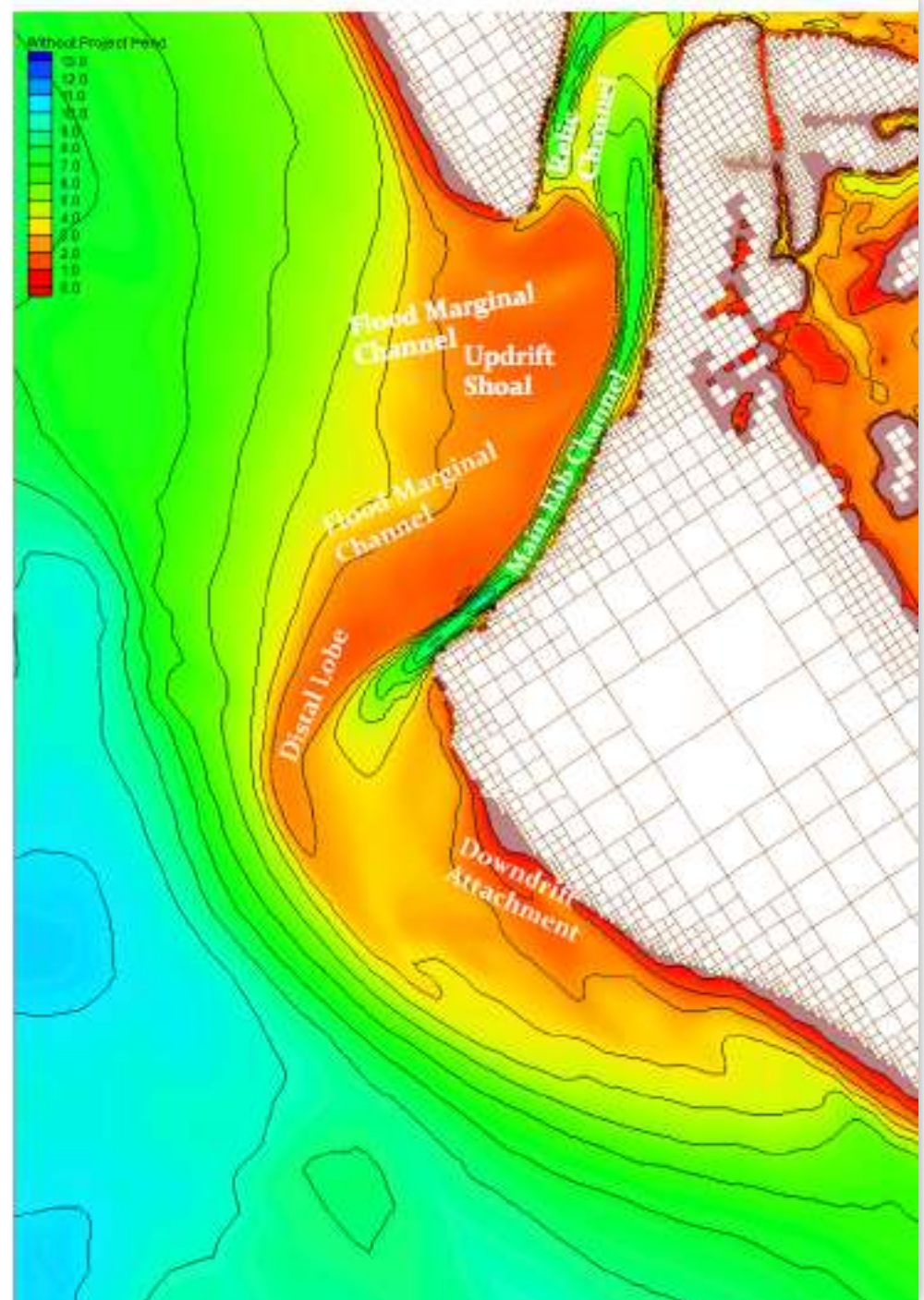
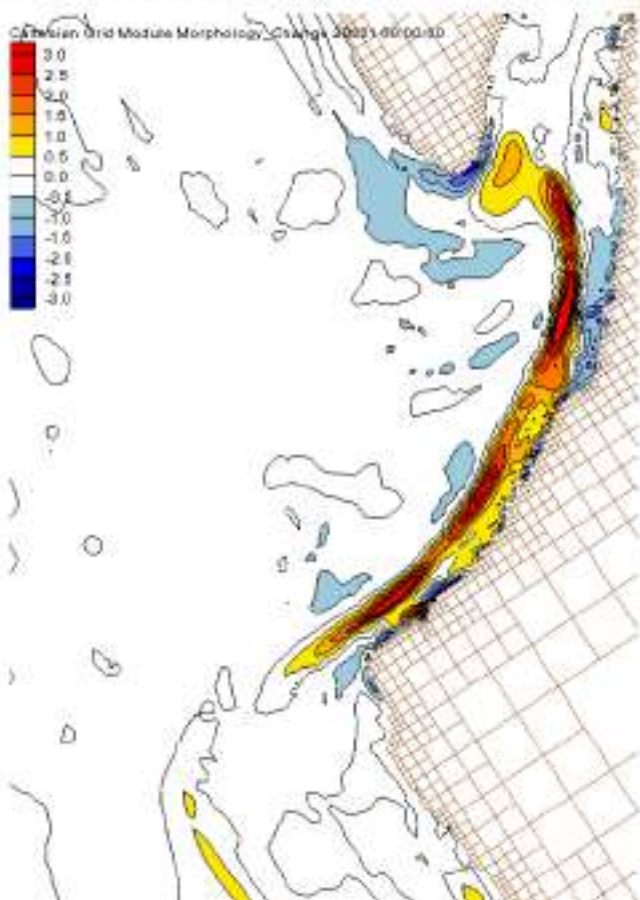
In response to a query from the Lido Key Residents Association, City Engineer DavisShaw wrote in a May 9 email that the Corps of Engineers has been finalizing the modeling work required for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection

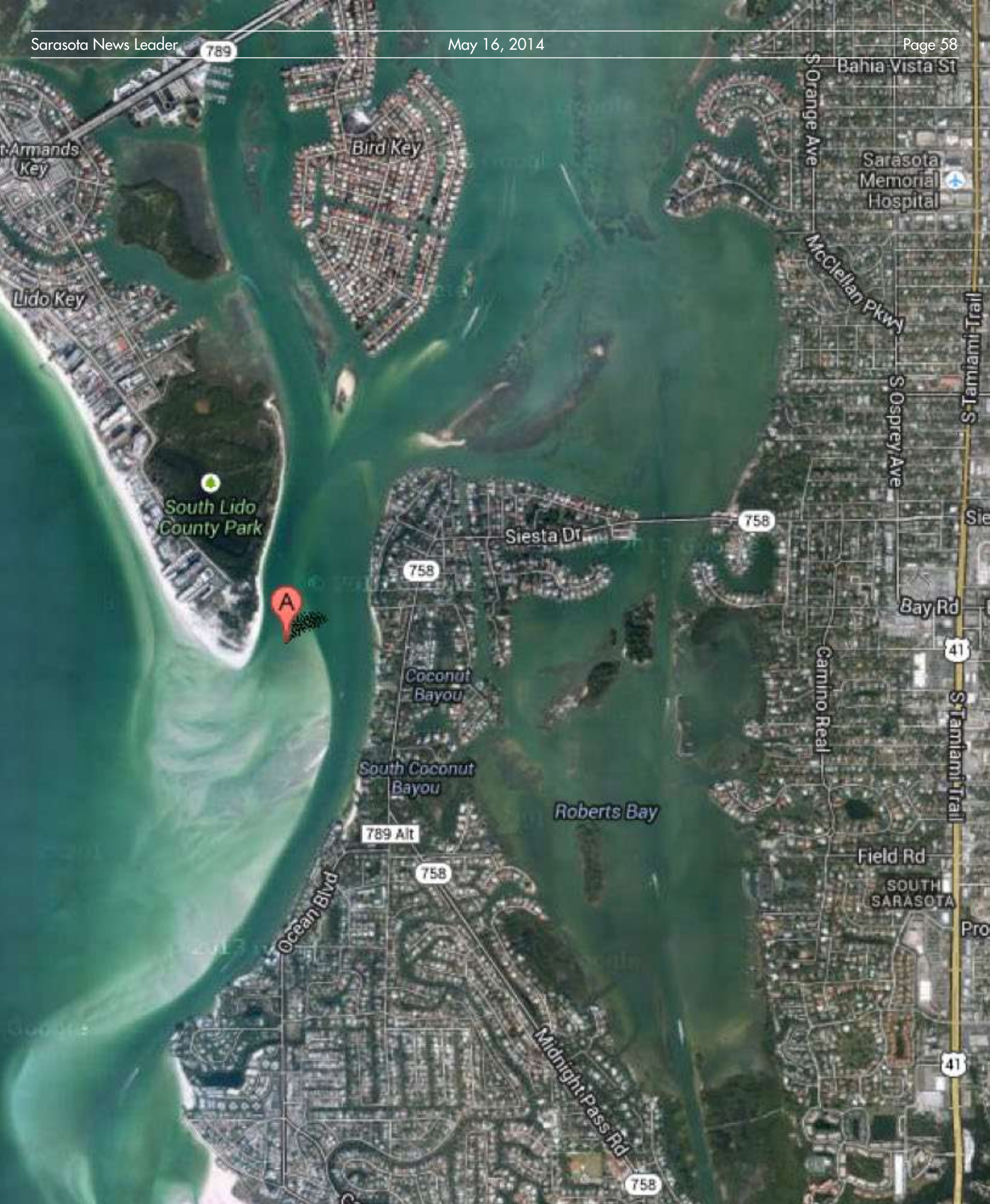
(FDEP) permit that must be obtained for the project. She noted that the agency is “adding additional modeling and research to address comments and questions the public provided to the Corps during community meetings in December.”

The Corps of Engineers had expected to complete its modeling by May 15, she continued, expecting to be able to submit one document for both FDEP permitting purposes and peer review.

“However,” she continued, “as the modeling data was completed and reviewed internally by the Corps and by Coastal Planning &

- Southern Lido Beaches/North Flood Marginal Channel
- General Deflation of the Updrift Shoal
- Infilling of the Main Ebb Channel
- Slight accretion of the Distal Lobe
- “clockwise rotation” – updrift shoal to main ebb channel to distal lobe





An aerial view shows Lido Key north of Big Pass, with Siesta Key to the south. Image from Google Maps

Engineering (CBI) [a consultant employed by the city], both determined that the format used for the permit isn't appropriate [for] use as a standalone project study."

She told the *News Leader* on May 14 that CBI employees handle a lot of similar documentation, so they understand what is necessary for the material "to be able to be digested by those of us who don't do [this type of work] every day."

Representatives of CBI's Boca Raton office have been working with the city on Lido Beach issues over the past decade, she pointed out.

In her May 9 email to members of the Lido Key Residents Association, she said she expected the Corps of Engineers would complete the reformatting of the material by May 29. The federal agency's final sign-off is scheduled for June 11, she added, at which time the city would receive all the materials.

She confirmed for the *News Leader* that Cliff Truitt of Coastal Technology Corp. (CTC) then will undertake a peer review of the models and report for the city. CTC's [website](#) says it specializes "in coastal engineering, coastal zone management, coastal geology and environmental permitting services." It is based in Sarasota.

DavisShaw explained to the *News Leader* in late April that Truitt worked on past versions of the county's Inlet Management Plan for Big Sarasota Pass and New Pass, "so he is familiar with the characteristics of both passes. ... He has not participated in any of the work the Corps has done."

DavisShaw said this week that she has been communicating with the Army Corps of Engineers about the Lido project on a weekly basis. Asked if she foresaw any further delay regarding the release of the material, she

In examining the actual results vs. the predicted results of dredged inlets in the area, (Johns Pass, Longboat Pass, New Pass and Stump Pass), it has been shown that shallow water conditions follow the dredging, and it is not uncommon to have five years or more where controlling depths are less than four feet. Contrast this with Big Pass and Redfish Pass which have never been dredged and have controlling depths of 5.5 feet to 6 feet. There are significant marine interests that depend on Big Pass being navigable, beyond skiffs with outboards. The proposed groins will have a negative impact on South Lido Park and will cause irreparable harm to this public beach. Without exception, the published coastal technical papers and professional studies have found that rock groins create downdrift erosion. The Project proposes to mitigate downdrift erosion through a constant and predictable re-nourishment schedule. However, that schedule is dependent upon consistent and reliable Federal funding that is impossible to guarantee. Also, it assumes that no major storms will impact the project area to the extent that the groins will be exposed to wave action. Again, this assumption is not supported by a review of recent storm activity in the area.

A section of a letter sent to the Army Corps of Engineers on May 14 on behalf of Siesta residents and business owners addresses concerns about the proposed dredging of Big Pass and construction of three groins on South Lido Key. Image courtesy SOSS2

replied, “I don’t see anything at this point. ... Hopefully, we’ll get this in here in the next few weeks and share it with everybody.”

COUNTY REACTION

After learning of the new timeline from the Lido Key Residents Association, county commissioners asked their staff whether the scheduled June 10 presentation on the project still would be appropriate.

Dianne Robertson, assistant to County Administrator Tom Harmer, sent the board members a May 14 email from Matt Osterhoudt, acting director of the county’s Natural Resources Department. Based on the information from DavisShaw, he wrote, “Rescheduling to a later date will allow time for the report to be submitted, be reviewed by staff, and better position us to prepare a more complete report for the Commission to consider.”

Because the board’s agendas are fully booked before its summer recess begins in July and immediately after it returns in August, Robertson pointed out, “Staff has scheduled a discussion item for your workshop on Sept. 19.”

CARLTON FIELDS LETTER


In his May 14 letter to the Army Corps of Engineers, Donald E. Hemke of Carlton Fields Jorden Burt in Tampa referenced the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act and the Water

Resources Development Act of 1999 in questioning whether the Corps of Engineers has complied with all necessary federal policy in its approach to the renourishment plan.

For example, he says the National Environmental Policy Act “requires that an agency critically examine the environmental impacts of and alternatives to any federal action ‘significantly affecting the quality of the human environment’ and to study, develop and describe appropriate alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal which involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.”

Hemke requested not only “written discussion of the [Army Corps’ of Engineers’] analysis of all reasonable alternatives” to dredging Big Pass but also the preparation of an environmental impact statement on obtaining sand from Big Pass.

In his conclusion, Hemke wrote, “It appears that there is a lack of cooperation and understanding between and amongst the various agencies, stakeholders and the public concerning the project purpose, scope, potential impacts and alternatives. In light of the significant concerns and questions raised in this letter we believe that a thorough evaluation of this costly project is required, with adequate public and agency input, particularly analyzing those alternatives which would avoid obtaining renourishment sand from Big Pass.”

Therefore, Hemke continued, “we ask the Corps to hold a formal public hearing on this matter” 



\$964,257 AND COUNTING

People head out on Siesta Public Beach in early March, ready to claim their spots. Deputies reported the parking lot full most days by 9:30 a.m. during season. Photo by Rachel Hackney

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX REVENUE CONTINUES TO CLIMB AT THE SAME TIME OTHER COUNTY REVENUE DATA PROVES STRONG

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Sgt. Scott Osborne of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office stood before members of the Siesta Key Association on May 1 and said, "It's my favorite time of year; spring break is over."

Osborne heads up the Sheriff's Office's Community Policing Station on the island, which was inundated with visitors during season, businesses and residents have agreed.

"April was extremely busy for us," he added,

noting that the Sheriff's Office assigned more than 38 deputies to Siesta that month just to deal with the extra crowds.

"Every year," he continued, "you hear more and more people are coming, but I think it's true. More and more people are coming here."

“Every year, you hear more and more people are coming, but I think it's true. More and more people are coming here.”

Sgt. Scott Osborne
Siesta Key Community Policing Station
Sarasota County Sheriff's Office

Osborne's observation is borne out by the latest Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue data from the Sarasota

County Tax Collector's Office. Through the month of March, revenue was up \$964,257.33 over the same period in the 2013 fiscal year. From Oct. 1, 2013 through March 31, 2013, data shows the county collected \$8,776,628.85. Through March of this year, the total is \$9,757,129.68.

The busiest month so far has been February, which saw collections totaling \$2,203,693.18, according to the Tax Collector's Office report through April 30. (Revenue figures sometimes are adjusted later, because businesses may have to meet the filing deadline before they have finalized their financial reports for a particular month, Tax Collector's Office staff has explained to *The Sarasota News Leader*.)

This year's February figure represents an increase of almost 13 percent from the February 2013 number, which was \$1,956,336.11.

Siesta Key continues to lead all reporting locations so far, with 30.79 percent of the TDT revenue collected, or \$3,004,492.78. The City of Sarasota remains in second place with 28.02 percent of the take, or \$2,734,231.95 through the April 30 reporting deadline.

The second quarter statistics for the 2014 fiscal year that Visit Sarasota County provided to the county's Tourist Development Council in advance of its May 15 meeting underscored the TDT figures.



As traffic snaked past on Ocean Boulevard, diners enjoyed the outdoor seating area of Gilligan's Island Bar & Grill in Siesta Village in early April. Photo by Rachel Hackney

SARASOTA COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX

Revenue Comparison of Fiscal Years 2012, 2013 and 2014

Collections through 4/30/2014

	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2013/2014 Difference
October	666,168.23	705,953.62	755,790.09	49,836.47
November	727,775.91	766,615.00	814,942.82	48,327.82
December	858,023.10	1,011,304.27	1,216,044.29	204,740.02
January	1,538,482.96	1,634,488.05	1,862,073.03	227,584.98
February	1,882,072.67	1,956,336.11	2,203,693.18	247,357.07
March	2,550,143.98	2,718,175.30	2,904,586.27	186,410.97
April	1,392,639.31	1,300,043.79		
May	903,309.12	984,686.91		
June	1,069,378.72	1,165,843.86		
July	1,085,579.30	1,200,830.88		
August	741,431.16	836,024.62		
September	564,303.32	586,315.02		
Totals	13,979,307.78	14,866,617.43	9,757,129.68	964,257.33

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

***Sarasota County Tax Collector
Barbara Ford-Coates***

That quarter continued “to show good increases in the number of visitors and even stronger growth in their spending,” Visit Sarasota County President Virginia Haley wrote. “We saw a dip in European visitation which would be expected because our lodging businesses are reducing the inventory available for discount or value tour operators, instead focusing on higher income producing operators,” Haley added.

The average daily occupancy rate for hotels/motels/condos in January was up 6.5 percent

over the same month in 2013; it increased 7.1 percent for February of this year compared to February 2013; and it was up 7.8 percent month-over-month for March, according to the figures Visit Sarasota County provided.

Direct spending was up 9.37 percent for the first half of this year in comparison to the first two quarters of the 2013 fiscal year, with the FY 2014 total at \$511,392,600 from Oct. 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014.

Regarding visitor originations for the second quarter of this fiscal year, the Midwest

SARASOTA COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX

COLLECTIONS BY LOCATION

Collections through 4/30/2014

	CONSOLIDATED	LONGBOAT KEY	NORTH PORT	SARASOTA	SARASOTA COUNTY	SIESTA KEY	VENICE	TOTAL
October 2013	17,308.97	85,693.27	3,037.25	295,618.79	123,213.98	197,439.97	33,477.86	755,790.09
November 2013	22,434.20	91,971.41	3,131.14	307,802.69	141,152.39	207,820.31	40,630.68	814,942.82
December 2013	48,456.76	153,720.70	6,719.93	384,440.81	229,013.74	325,881.05	67,811.30	1,216,044.29
January 2014	141,844.36	187,658.28	7,213.32	426,477.66	372,683.58	508,746.78	217,449.05	1,862,073.03
February 2014	80,759.46	218,748.10	8,690.76	569,458.33	410,450.26	761,211.54	154,374.73	2,203,693.18
March 2014	67,294.73	317,999.44	15,488.57	750,433.67	577,480.36	1,003,393.13	172,496.37	2,904,586.27
April 2014								
May 2014								
June 2014								
July 2014								
August 2014								
September 2014								
Grand Totals	376,098.48	1,055,791.20	44,280.97	2,734,231.95	1,853,994.31	3,004,492.78	686,239.99	9,757,129.68
Percentage of Total (%)	3.88%	10.82%	0.45%	28.02%	19.00%	30.79%	7.03%	100.00%

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

Sarasota County Tax Collector
Barbara Ford-Coates

As of April 30, Siesta Key continued to hold the lead for the amount of Tourist Development Tax revenue collected during the current fiscal year. Image courtesy Tax Collector's Office

provided the biggest spike, 9.3 percent, followed by the Northeast with 7 percent.

Fewer tourists from Canada (down 3.2 percent) and Florida (also down 3.2 percent) came to Sarasota County in January through March of this year compared to the same months in 2013.


Still, the total number of visitors for the second quarter was up 4.9 percent, with a total of 507,200.

OTHER REVENUE FIGURES

Along with good news on the tourism front, Sarasota County's April financial report shows the county's Building Department issued 141 permits in March, compared to 80 during that month in 2013, a 76.25 percent increase. The

value of those projects reflected in the March 2014 permits is \$23.8 million, up 137.35 percent from the March 2013 figure.

Single-family home sales in March totaled 698, compared to 628 in March 2013, according to the Sarasota Association of Realtors. The average number of days a home spent on the market was 83 by the time a home was sold in March this year, while the number was 146 for units sold in March 2013. Further, the median price of single-family homes sold in March this year was \$188,000, up 4.44 percent from the \$180,000 figure of March 2013.

Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport also reported a 6.94 percent increase in its passenger figures for March of this year over the March 2013 figure — 149,373 versus 139,677. 

THE SARASOTA News Leader

Old school journalism. 21st century delivery.

Available for FREE every Friday

The most comprehensive, unbiased
coverage of local news and government
in the Sarasota County area.

*Read it on your iPad, iPhone, Kindle, Nook, Android, Laptop,
Computer or other Smartphones*

The award-winning Sarasota News Leader
Sarasota County's #1 digital news weekly!

Read it online today at SarasotaNewsLeader.com/webapp





TWO CITY COMMISSION MEETINGS

Possible sale of the former community garden property on Boulevard of the Arts is on the City Commission's May 19 agenda. Photo by Norman Schimmel

SALE OF THE FORMER COMMUNITY GARDEN SITE, THE LIDO POOL'S FUTURE AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS ARE ON BOARD AGENDAS NEXT WEEK

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The Sarasota City Commission will meet twice during the week of May 19. The first time will be for its regular biweekly session on Monday. The second will be for a Tuesday afternoon workshop to look at capital improvements and stormwater management.

A big item on the Monday agenda is the possible sale of the former community garden property on Boulevard of the Arts (aka Sixth Street) in the Rosemary District. Almost a year ago, the city asked for proposals from private industry to see what might be built there. City planners were seeking what they called “a catalyst project.”

Only one developer responded. Rosemary Square LLC is a company headed by local developer, Dr. Mark Kauffman. Its proposal calls for 40 rental units; 34,000 square feet of commercial, arts or office space; a 10,000-square-foot “boutique theater” and a 7,000-square-foot public square. Kauffman is offering slightly more than \$1 million for the property.

Another piece of city property is about to follow the same pattern. The Lido Key Pool was threatened with closure when Sarasota County maintained it; not enough people were using it, the county said. The pool was

then “returned” to the city when the two governments severed their interlocal agreement on parks maintenance.

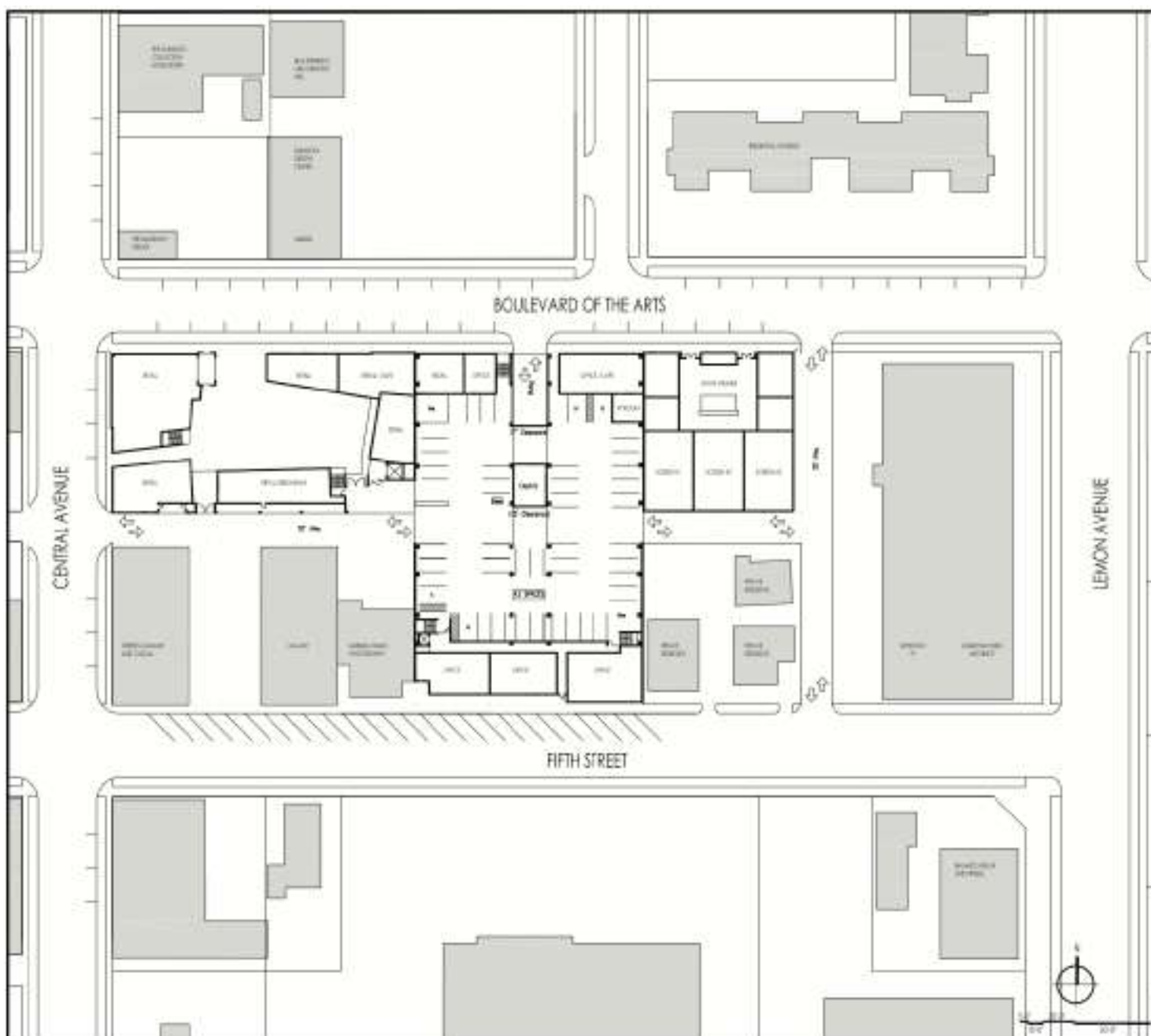
After city staff worked with the Lido Key Residents Association on future plans, a strategic vision was established and later approved by the City Commission. It calls for seeking a vendor to take over the operation of the pool and concession areas and the construction of a \$2.9 million upgrade in five phases over time.

“The city’s objective is to identify an individual/firm who can propose and implement a business plan that is advantageous to the city,”

the plan says. The city commissioners will be asked if they approve releasing an “invitation to negotiate” for a deal.

Work on the city’s plan to swap the county’s road impact fee for a city “multimodal transportation impact fee” will continue with a public hearing Monday evening. The monetary amount of the impact fee will remain in the same general range, but it can be used for purposes other than expanding road capacity according to the revised ordinance.

Also on Monday, city staffers will propose cutting the hours of operation at the Payne Park circus-themed playground. This follows in the wake of the city paying thousands of dollars



ROSEMARY SQUARE
TYPICAL LOWER LEVEL
CONCEPTUAL PLAN

A development group has proposed a project called Rosemary Square on the former community garden site. Image courtesy City of Sarasota



to repair damage from vandalism. Hours for park are now 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. Staffers would like to change that schedule to 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. to deter vandalism and illegitimate use of the playground equipment.

Both the city's Parks, Recreation and Environmental Protection Advisory Board and the Alta Vista Neighborhood Association

endorsed the cutback in hours, which police say will make it easier to control activity in that part of the park.


The Tuesday workshop will start with the annual report by county staff on stormwater management in the city limits. Under a 1998 interlocal agreement, the county has sole responsibility for stormwater.

The second topic at the workshop will be an update on \$149 million in scheduled capital improvement projects in the next five years. The total does not include Utilities Department capital projects, which will be presented at a later time. The effort is part of the city's annual budget process, as revenues can be variable (including the penny sales tax, impact fees, user fees and others).

Staff is suggesting reapportioning \$1.2 million, mostly from tax-increment financing funds, to support improvements to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way from U.S. 301 to Cocoanut Avenue and along Orange Avenue from 19th to 32nd streets. "Economic development" is given as the reason.

An additional \$1 million in proposed new projects includes about \$300,000 for Information

Technology Department infrastructure, \$125,000 for sidewalk repairs between Orange and Lemon avenues along Main Street and \$90,000 for additional sidewalk repairs throughout the city.

Because capital improvement initiatives entail long-range planning, this budget process projects city needs over the next five years. It includes new sources of funding. For example, the "multimodal impact fee" is assumed to be implemented in it. Funds from that source show up in the Fiscal Year 2015-2016 capital plan, including \$200,000 for improvements on Alderman Street between Palm and Orange avenues. More than \$800,000 is budgeted for maintenance and improvements at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall over the next five years. 



The future of the Lido Pool will be discussed Monday. Photo by Norman Schimmel



SNOWY PLOVERS AND LEAST TERNS ARE BUSY NESTING ON THE BEACH; NIGHTTIME WORK IS UNDER WAY ON THE STICKNEY POINT ROAD BRIDGE; AND A SWIMMER IS RESCUED AT THE BEACH



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

May 12 was an exciting day on Siesta Public Beach, Allan Worms, a wildlife biologist, told me late that afternoon. One new Snowy Plover nest was discovered the previous night, while a second one was reported that morning, he said.

Worms and another Sarasota Audubon volunteer, Dick Miles, were out on the beach about 6:15 a.m. Monday — “as soon as it was light enough to see” — to help set up stakes and string around the nest to protect it and its solitary egg from people.



A sign explains that buffering of an area near Access 5 on Siesta Public Beach is designed to protect beach nesting birds. All photos by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

The buffer design, he noted, has the approval of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

The volunteer who called about the first nest, Claire Herzog, said she actually saw a Snowy Plover hen laying an egg on the beach, Worms told me.

After he and Miles completed the buffering Monday, four beach walkers approached them, saying “they had found a nest on the beach sand,” Worms wrote in an email. “We assumed they were referring to an established buffer within which we had previously lost a nest due to human trespass, but they insisted it was a new nest,” he added. “To our happy surprise it *was* a new nest with three (3) eggs!”

Even more exciting news, Worms told me on May 12, is the fact that one Snowy Plover

chick already has hatched, and he and other Sarasota Audubon volunteers are keeping their eyes on a second nest, which they hope will produce chicks in the next couple of weeks.

He added in his email, “Now the task is to encourage beach users to avoid crossing into the buffers, to keep dogs off the beach and to limit the impact of natural predators.”

On Tuesday morning, visitors and regular beach walkers generally were making wide berths around the buffered areas, which include signs explaining about the endangered Plovers. A buffered area on the western end of the public beach also has a number of Least Tern nests in it. In fact, I was thrilled to see a couple of those birds that appeared to be sitting on nests.



The beach nesting bird buffer zones are marked by stakes, string and signage.

Siesta Seen

Regarding the Least Terns, Worms reported four of their nests have been discovered altogether in recent weeks. Those are also rare birds, he pointed out in his email, “and we are working to encourage safe nesting for them.”

Worms summed up the excitement: “So now we have a new Snowy Plover chick, four nesting Least Terns, and three (3) Snowy Plover nests on Siesta Key. Considering the rarity of the ‘threatened’ Snowy Plovers and also the Least Terns this was a really good day.”

Worms has reported that only about 200 Snowy Plovers have been documented in recent years in Florida; Siesta has about 10 percent of that total count.

Worms did offer one other interesting comment on May 12: “[I]ncidentally, the Least Terns and Snowy Plovers get along very well

and when nesting near each other (such as on Siesta Key Beach now) the pugnacious Least Terns are very good at driving off both natural and human trespassers. Lesson: don’t get dive bombed by a Least Tern!”

While I was taking photographs Tuesday morning, I ended up chatting briefly with a woman who was visiting from Ohio. One of the Least Terns dive-bombed her moments later.

Sarasota Audubon President Jeanne Dubi will be leading an informational walk on the beach Saturday morning to talk about the Plovers, Least Terns and other birds. Details are in our *News Briefs* this week.

EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS

During the May 1 Siesta Key Association (SKA) meeting, Vice President Catherine



An adult Snowy Plover pauses not far from one of the nesting areas on the morning of May 13.

Siesta Seen

Luckner — whose husband, Bob, coordinates the Sarasota Audubon volunteer efforts on the beach — talked about efforts to keep people from interfering with the nesting birds.

Plans were under way, she said, to distribute Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission brochures about the birds to the condominium complexes on the key. “A lot of people do rent [units],” she pointed out, “and they’re not familiar with our [Sarasota County] Parks and Recreation [Department] regulations.”

In other popular tourist destinations, she noted — Hilton Head, S.C., among them

— wildlife protection efforts are “very aggressive.” On Hilton Head, she said, signs are even posted in elevators of visitor accommodations to alert people to wildlife on the beaches and to explain what people should do to protect the creatures. People seem to abide by the rules, she noted. “So I think we can go a little further” with the Siesta Key Condominium Council.”

SKA Director Helen Clifford, who is the secretary of the Condo Council, pointed out that that organization’s next meeting included an agenda item about beach nesting birds. “Then we’ll be there,” Luckner responded.



Least Terns sit on nests in a buffered area near Beach Access 4 on Siesta Public Beach.

Siesta Seen

When SKA Secretary Joyce Kouba asked whether the county provides information about wildlife regulations to local hotels and condominium complexes, County Commissioner Nora Patterson — a guest at the meeting — said she did not believe so, though she was unsure. “It’s a good idea,” Patterson added.

“I think it’s something that we will look into in conjunction with the [Siesta Key] Chamber [of Commerce],” President Michael Shay told the audience.

The Chamber has numerous brochures available on a wide range of topics, he noted; he

would find out whether any of that material relates to wildlife on the beaches.

SKA member Katherine Zimmerman also urged the erection of signage in the new parking lot under construction at Siesta Public Beach to educate visitors about the local wildlife. “It’s the masses who come [through] the parking lots” at the beach, without ever stopping in Siesta Village, who most need to learn about the birds and turtles, which also nest on the county beaches, Zimmerman said.

The county has erected informational kiosks at the beach accesses, Luckner pointed out.



A ‘watering hole’ near Beach Access 4 on Siesta Public Beach is a popular place with a wide variety of birds.

Siesta Seen

However, Zimmerman reiterated the need to inform visitors who go to the beach via the public parking areas there.

“It wouldn’t be that hard to put up a couple of informational signs,” Patterson said.

BRIDGE WORK

A contractor of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is working this week on improvements to the deck and steel sections of the Stickney Point Road bridge, the department announced on May 9.

Weather permitting, the notice said, work is expected to be completed by May 16.

Crews with L&S Concrete are handling the project between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., an FDOT news release said.

SWIMMER IN DISTRESS

The Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office responded to Siesta Key Beach around noon on May 12 regarding a report of a swimmer in distress, the office announced.

Witnesses said “the woman appeared to be struggling in the water and was pulled to shore by several beachgoers and lifeguards who performed CPR,” a news release said. “The woman was unconscious when Sarasota County EMS arrived and began advanced life support measures,” it added.

The victim was transported to Sarasota Memorial Hospital and placed in the Intensive Care Unit, the release continued. She was identified as 54-year-old Julie M. Jergens of Miamisburg, OH. “Her family says they arrived



Work proceeded May 13 on the construction of the new east concession at Siesta Public Beach. It is scheduled to be completed by November.

Siesta Seen


in town [May 11] and reports that Julie has a history of medical issues,” the release noted.

“At this time, the incident appears to be medical-related and not a swimming accident,” the release said.

THE STORMWATER PROJECT

The last update I had on the Siesta stormwater project — officially, the Beach Road Drainage Project — is that it is proceeding on schedule.

In late April, Isaac Brownman, the county’s director of public works, reported that the foundation had been poured for the pump house and the modular structure itself was due on site by April 23. He also notified the commissioners that it would take about three to four weeks for the pump house to be set up and wired into the pump station.

The pump house work and the construction of the new parking lot for Siesta Public Beach are the most visible activities to passersby. 



The Florida Department of Transportation has a contractor working this week on improvements to the Stickney Point Road bridge.

Sarasota County is seeking public comments about rental and use of stand-up paddleboards at county beaches. Image courtesy Sarasota County

COUNTY SEEKING COMMUNITY VIEWS ON PADDLEBOARD RENTALS

Sarasota County Parks and Recreation staff members are seeking community comments on a proposal to allow the rental and use of stand-up paddleboards at county-owned beaches, the county has announced.

Residents and visitors may participate in an online survey at scgov.net (keyword search: Paddleboard). The online survey will be available until May 26, a news release says.

“Stand-up paddleboarding (SUP), an offshoot of surfing, is a sport that originated in Hawaii,” the release explains. It enables a surfer to paddle while either standing on the board or sitting and using the paddleboard like a kayak. “Users range from the casual recreational participant to serious athletic competitors,” the release adds.

“The proposal to offer stand-up paddleboard rentals at county beaches was initiated by local vendors who are experiencing an increased demand for them,” said Tricia Wisner, business development coordinator for Sarasota County Parks and Recreation, in the release. “Currently, we only allow swimming-related activities at the beaches, so we want to know what the community thinks about the idea of expanding recreation opportunities.”

The Sarasota County Commission [heard the proposal March 5](#) and directed staff to bring back a report on public safety, regulation and the feasibility of offering stand-up paddleboard rentals through a third-party vendor at Siesta Beach, the release points out. During

the meeting, commissioners talked about the possibility of reducing the size of the swim zone to create a corridor where watercraft could be launched and maneuvered out into the Gulf of Mexico beyond the swim zone.

Sarasota County has 35 miles of coastline with only 6 miles of county-owned beaches that are patrolled by lifeguards,” the release adds.

“Right now anyone can launch a kayak or stand-up paddleboard in hundreds of places around Sarasota County,” noted Wisner in the release. “We just want to know what people think about reducing a small portion of designated swim zones for this use.”

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

FREE GOLF BOOT CAMP SET FOR EVENT PARTICIPANTS AT CITY COURSE

Youth golfers who plan to participate in the PGA Drive, Chip & Putt Championship at Bobby Jones Golf Club in Sarasota next month are invited to attend a free boot camp in May to sharpen their skills, the City of Sarasota has announced.

The camp will be held at Bobby Jones Golf Club on Saturday, May 24, and Saturday, May 31, from 9 to 10:30 a.m., a city news release says. (If necessary, a second session may be added from 1 to 2:30 p.m. each of those days.) The camp is limited to children ages 7 to 15, with a maximum number of 45 participants, the release points out.

“The boot camp is specifically designed to help youth golfers prepare for the local qualifying competition for the PGA Drive, Chip & Putt Championship,” which will be held Saturday, June 7, at the Bobby Jones course, the release explains.

“This will be a great opportunity for kids to practice their individual skills with PGA professionals in a setting that will be similar to the

Drive, Chip & Putt competition,” said Bobby Jones Golf Club Manager Sue Martin in the release. “This is the first time we’ve hosted a skill based boot camp, and we look forward to the kids getting a lot out of it.”

Students will be divided into groups based on age, and they will be instructed by a PGA professional on the three basic golf skills: driving, chipping and putting, the release adds. Skill stations will be set up, and participants will spend 30 minutes at each one before rotating to the next one, it notes. Both the American Course and British Course will be used for the skill stations.

Children may be registered via email at BJGC@SarasotaGov.com or by calling the golf shop at 954-4163.

The boot camp is being offered at no charge, thanks to the generosity of Friends of Bobby Jones Golf Club, a nonprofit organization, which is underwriting the cost of range balls, refreshments, and staff time, the release points out.

Bobby Jones is one of just 10 courses in Florida selected to host a local qualifying competition for the PGA Drive, Chip and Putt Championship, the release says. Participants will accumulate points with each skill. The top two overall point earners in each of the boys' and girls' age divisions will advance to the regional qualifying round, the release explains. The champion from each division will win a free trip to play in the finals at Augusta National Golf Club on Sunday, April 5, 2015, just prior to the Masters. The competition is free.

"One of the Drive, Chip and Putt reigning national champions, Bryson Bianco from Tallahassee, started his road to Augusta last year by winning the local qualifying competition at Bobby Jones Golf Club," the release notes. He won the boys' category for ages 12 to 13.

To learn more about the PGA Drive, Chip & Putt Championship visit DriveChipAndPutt.com.

Bobby Jones Golf Club is owned and operated by the City of Sarasota and offers three courses with a total of 45 holes.

English | Español (Spanish)

**DRIVE CHIP & PUTT**
CHAMPIONSHIP

HOME REGISTRATION SCORES NEWS PHOTOS VIDEOS TICKETS RULES PARTNERS Q

WELCOME TO THE

DRIVE CHIP & PUTT CHAMPIONSHIP



Register your family today!



Learn the rules

The PGA Drive, Chip & Putt Championship website offers detailed information about the national competition. Image courtesy of the [website](http://DriveChipAndPutt.com)

SARASOTA AUDUBON TO OFFER BEACH NESTING BIRDS WALK ON SIESTA

Beach nesting birds, including the endangered Snowy Plovers on Siesta Key, “are beset with challenges during the nesting months of March through August,” Sarasota Audubon points out in a news release. Because they lay their eggs directly on the sand, they are vulnerable to bicyclists, walkers and joggers.”

Snowy Plover chicks are especially vulnerable to being stepped on, it points out. “When they hatch, they are the size of an average human thumb and the color of sand.” (See the related news in *Siesta Seen* this week.)

On Saturday, May 17, at 8 a.m., the Sarasota Audubon Society will host its second Beach Nesting Birds Walk on Siesta Key for residents, county visitors and beachgoers, the release notes. The walk will begin at the north end of the parking lot near the beach pavilion at Siesta Public Beach.

Audubon President Jeanne Dubi will lead the informational excursion, focusing on “how to help out these feathered residents of Siesta Key,” the release continues. Audubon members Bob Luckner, the Beach Nesting Birds Program coordinator, and Allen Worms, a wildlife biologist, will also be on hand to answer questions, the release adds.

While Sarasota County is home to Least Terns, Black Skimmers, American Oystercatchers and Wilson Plovers, the walk will put the Snowy Plovers of Siesta Key in the spotlight, the release points out. The species’ average number of 20 on Siesta represents about 10 percent of the total population in the state, the release adds. “They are also an indicator species — where Snowy Plovers thrive, the habitat is considered healthy,” it points out.



“It’s very clear that the more people we have keeping an eye on our beach nesting birds, the more protection they have,” said Dubi in the release.

Participants will also have the opportunity to become Beach Stewards, an Audubon program designed to protect the birds, the release notes. Beach Stewards, who self-schedule themselves using a Google Calendar set up by Audubon, are asked to spend some time each week on Siesta Key, Lido Key or Longboat Key, checking on the birds. ID tags and information brochures are provided along with training, the release adds.

Sarasota Audubon also reminds members of the public that they can take three simple steps to protect beach nesting bird areas: Keep a distance of 30 to 50 feet from those parts of

the beach (dunes and buffered areas); do not chase or let your children chase beach birds, especially when the birds are feeding; and look out for chicks, particularly Snowy Plover chicks, which have been likened to cotton balls on Q-tips. "They run all over the beach looking for food within a few hours of hatching," the release explains.

"One final tip: Leave your dogs at home," the release says. Sarasota County Sheriff's

deputies on Siesta Key have joined Audubon volunteers in past years to remind the public that a county ordinance forbids dogs on the beach.

Find out more about the Beach Nesting Bird Program or donate to the program at saraso-taudubon.org. To attend the informational beach walk and/or sign up as a volunteer, send an email to sksnpl@gmail.com.

HARMER RECEIVES OUTSTANDING ALUMNI AWARD FROM UCF

Sarasota County Administrator Tom Harmer, who has a master's degree in public administration from the University of Central Florida, received the inaugural Outstanding Alumni Award from the university's School of Public Administration program, Sarasota County has announced.

Harmer was honored during a Public Service Recognition Week Celebration on May 7 in Orlando, a news release says.

In September, Harmer will be among eight people given the university's Outstanding Alumni Award, the release points out.

"It's an honor to be part of a profession that focuses on public service," said Harmer in the release. "I am grateful for my experiences at the University of Central Florida and how [they have] helped me become a better public administrator."

He has served as chairman of the school's Public Administration Advisory Board and as an adjunct instructor of local government and emergency management, the release notes.

Awardees may receive the school's award only once, noted Mary Ann Feldheim, director

of the UCF School of Public Administration, in the release.

Feldheim, who has known Harmer for more than 17 years and at one point was his professor, nominated him for the award.

"Tom Harmer is an outstanding public servant who has served Floridians around the state," she added in the release.

As a part-time UCF student, Harmer balanced course studies while serving as the fire chief for Titusville, the release explains. At one point, he was excused from class by then-Florida Gov. Lawton Chiles because he was coordinating the state response to massive wildfires.

Whether as a firefighter, a Marine or a county administrator, Harmer said in the release that one primary reason he has enjoyed all of his government jobs is because he is a strong believer in the importance of public service.

"Sarasota County is a great place to work for many reasons, one of which is the caliber of the staff. I'm fortunate to be part of a group of employees that understand how important 'customer service' is in public service," added Harmer in the release.



Sarasota County Administrator Tom Harmer receives the University of Central Florida School of Public Administration program's Outstanding Alumni Award from Mary Ann Feldheim, the school's director. Contributed image

REDFISH TOURNAMENT AND FREE KIDS FISHING DERBY PLANNED

The Gator Wilderness Camp has announced that its Sixth Annual Redfish Spot Tournament and Free Kids Fishing Derby will be held on Saturday, May 24, at Ken Thompson Park on Lido Key (1700 Ken Thompson Parkway) from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Registration for the adult tournament will be conducted from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Friday, May 23, at Der Dutchman Restaurant (3713 Bahia Vista St., Sarasota). The Captains Meeting will at 6:45 p.m. with dinner provided, a news release says. Anglers will be released from City Island in Ken Thompson Park early on the morning of May 24, the release notes.

The redfish with the most spots will win, the release points out. More than \$5,000 in cash and prizes will be distributed.

All proceeds from the tournament will go directly to The Gator Wilderness Camp, the release says.

Also on May 24, the organization's Second Annual Free Kids Fishing Derby will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. in Ken Thompson Park. Free fishing poles will be provided for the first 100 children, the release notes.

Gator Camp's mission statement points out that it supports boys ages 10 to 15 "who wrestle with broken and dysfunctional issues within their families, schools and communities."

For more information visit gatorwilderness-camp.com/fishing.html.

6th Annual

Sarasota REDFISH SPOT TOURNAMENT





WINNING RODEO RIDERS

Two members of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Motor Unit brought home awards after participating in the 25th Annual South East Police Motorcycle Rodeo Seminar and Safety Trials, the office has announced. The event, held earlier this month in Hollywood, included "three days of intense training followed by a practical skills test and a timed skills test which put riders under considerable stress," a news release says. Out of the 163 riders competing in the event, Deputy Chuck Flint (left) took first place in the Novice Class and Deputy Jim Klay (right) was named the Most Improved Novice Rider from 2013 to 2014. Contributed photo

FIRST STEP RECOGNIZES WELCH BY NAMING ROOM IN HIS HONOR

For the past decade, Paul Welch has been supporting [First Step of Sarasota](#) fundraising events, making Santa Claus gifts possible for clients at Christmas and providing many other private financial donations, a news release says.

“Initially, his gifts were anonymous, as he did not want to generate fanfare,” the release continues. More recently, he has allowed First Step to recognize him as an event sponsor, and he was honored as the 2011 Caring Heart of the Year at the organization’s Caring Hearts Luncheon, the release explains.

When First Step constructed a new building a couple of years ago on Northgate Court in Sarasota, “Welch stepped up to provide

assistance,” the release points out. On May 9, First Step honored him by naming the community room in that new facility for him, the release says. The Welch Family Foundation Community Room is used for client meals and group activities, alumni events and AA meetings, and it is also available for other public functions, the release adds.

“Welch’s generosity in Sarasota does not start and end with First Step,” the release notes. “Since moving to Sarasota in 1989, he has also supported the Sarasota YMCA Teen Theater, the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, The Salvation Army, the Sarasota Opera and many more organizations.”



Paul Welch (fourth from right) receives recognition from representatives of First Step of Sarasota in appreciation of his years of generosity. Contributed photo

During the May 9 event, “Welch spoke briefly about his past and what led him to being so generous today,” the release continues. As a teen growing up in Detroit, MI, he was known as a rambunctious troublemaker, he explained. He struggled through school and, years later, was diagnosed as being severely dyslexic. An organization in Chelsea, MI, provided him some help “and years later, when he was able to give back, he did,” the release adds.

After a stint in the Army, Welch returned to Detroit and began his career unloading boxcars at a lumber company. “He caught the attention of management after working so hard and being quite outspoken,” the release says. Shortly thereafter, he was given an opportunity to begin selling and delivering lumber,” asking for the addresses and memorizing them “because he still couldn’t read well,” the release adds. “Hard work and promotions continued for Paul until he went out

on his own and successfully bought, sold and started several lumber businesses and eventually added real estate development to his active business portfolio,” it points out. “His hard work and people skills made him very successful.”

Welch’s decision to support First Step came after he needed to find help for someone he knew, the release explains. “It was a positive experience,” the release says, “and since that time, Paul has recommended First Step to many others in need of substance abuse treatment.”

First Step of Sarasota was established in 1968 to help those who suffered from alcohol abuse, the release notes. “Today, we’ve grown to more than 20 different programs and treat those suffering from all forms of substance abuse,” it adds. First Step offers detox, residential and outpatient treatment and serves Sarasota, Manatee and DeSoto counties.

COUNTY STUDENT TO REPRESENT STATE IN NATIONAL CHEMISTRY EVENT

Mannie Saint-Amand, an eighth-grader at Heron Creek Middle School in North Port, bested 14 other students to become the Sarasota County *You Be The Chemist* Challenge® champion and win the right to represent the state of Florida at the 10th annual *You Be The Chemist* Challenge® national event in June, the Sarasota County School District has announced.

Developed by the Chemical Educational Foundation® (CEF), “the Challenge is an exciting question-and-answer competition” that allows students in fifth through eighth grades “to test their knowledge of chemistry concepts, scientific theories and laboratory

safety, a news release explains. The Challenge program relies on partnerships among various community members to foster student engagement with science, the release adds.

The 2014 Sarasota County Challenge was held at Heron Creek Middle School in North Port; it was sponsored by Brenntag (based in Tampa) and J. Tech Sales (Boca Raton), the release continues. Heron Creek teachers Melissa Varlas and Laura Lundberg organized the event and hosted it with Suzette Bucher from CEF and Ken Moyer from Brenntag, the release adds.

While Mannie was declared the winner, Eddie Smith, a student at Woodland Middle School;

Joseph Kim, a student at Laurel Nokomis School; and Lucas Ponte, also a student at Woodland Middle School earned the titles of first, second and third runners-up, respectively, the release notes.

Mannie and his science teacher, Varlas, will head to the *You Be The Chemist Challenge*® in Philadelphia on June 23, the release says. There, each participant will receive prizes, including chemistry kits. The first- through fourth-place winners will also receive


scholarships totaling \$15,000, the release points out.

In addition, participants, chaperones and a nominated educator from each state will be treated to various activities in historic Philadelphia, such as a *Day of Science Discovery* at The Franklin Institute (an interactive science museum) and a celebration dinner at the National Constitution Center, the release says.



(From left) Mia Montgomery, assistant principal of Heron Creek Middle School; Melissa Varlas, physical science teacher; Mannie Saint-Amand; Candace Dearing, interim principal; and Laura Lundberg, physical science teacher. Contributed photo

TRUE COMMUNITY SPIRIT

The Brazilian Ladies of Sarasota and Manatee Counties, a group established in 2008 by Sarasota resident Vera Neumann-Wood, recently collected 150 pounds of toiletries and \$130 in checks for [Resurrection House](#), the organization has announced. The undertaking was conducted in conjunction with the group's biannual luncheon, which had 98 participants, Neumann-Wood told *The Sarasota News Leader*. The contributions were presented to Bill Wilson (right), director of development at Resurrection House. The Brazilian Ladies, which numbers more than 700 members, has made donations in the past to All Faiths Food Bank and the Humane Society of Sarasota County. Contributed photos 



CRIME BLOTTER



Pawn shop owner James Smith was served on May 14 with an administrative complaint from the state. Video shot on the scene is available at this [link](#). Video courtesy of the Sheriff's Office

PAWN SHOP LICENSE REVOKED BY THE STATE AFTER INVESTIGATION

On May 14, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services notified Jim Smith, owner of Jim's Pawn at 6526 B, S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, that his pawnbroker's license was being revoked following an investigation by the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, the office has reported.

"Smith was the central figure in Operation Recommit, an investigation that resulted in the arrest of six members of an organized crime ring," a news release explains. "Smith knowingly bought stolen property through his pawn shop and directed crime ring members to bring products to him by giving them itemized lists," the release continues.

In its Administrative Complaint, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services noted Smith had "admitted to this illicit activity" as well as to "providing cash to known drug users in exchange for sexual favors," the release points out.

"Smith can no longer conduct new transactions and must contact current customers to give them the opportunity to either pick up their items or advise him if they relinquish ownership," the release says. Any Jim's Pawn customers who need to contact Smith can do so by calling 923-7171, the release adds. Smith has 21 days to request an administrative hearing with the Department of Agriculture and

Consumer Services to dispute the revocation, it notes.

“This collaborative effort between our two agencies is designed to address root causes of crime,” said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. “Because of our [intelligence-to-action] philosophy of using intelligence to prevent and disrupt crime, we expect that targeting things like a lucrative market for stolen property will correlate into a reduction in crime numbers,” he added in the release.

Smith will not be eligible for further licensure for five years, the release says. He is charged with two felony counts of Organized Dealing in Stolen Property and one misdemeanor count of Pawn Broking Violation. If convicted of a felony, Smith would face three years in prison, and he would be ineligible for a state license for 10 years, the release adds.



James Smith/Contributed photo

SUSPECT ARRESTED WHILE BREAKING INTO VEHICLES IN SARASOTA



David Rathburn/Contributed photo

On Saturday, May 10, off-duty Sarasota Police Department officers working a detail at the Municipal Auditorium caught a suspect who allegedly was breaking into vehicles in the parking lot, the department has announced.

An individual attending the event in the auditorium, which is located at 801 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, approached the officers and told them a man was walking up to vehicles in the parking lot and pulling on all the door handles to see whether the vehicles were locked, a news release says.

When Sgt. Eric Bolden walked out to the lot, the release continues, he saw a suspect matching the description the individual had provided the officers. The man was leaning into a red pickup truck, the release notes, apparently rifling through the center console.

“The glove box was already open with papers disheveled,” the release adds.

Bolden detained the suspect until officers could locate the owner of the vehicle, who told the officers he accidentally left his truck unlocked, the release continues. David Rathburn, 44, of 507 Kumquat Court, Sarasota, was arrested and charged with felony Burglary of a Vehicle. Rathburn is also a suspect in three other vehicle burglaries reported over the weekend, the release points out.

Rathburn is a prolific offender with 19 felony convictions on his record, the release says.

He has been charged with Burglary 28 times and has served 11 prison sentences, it notes. He was released most recently on March 3.

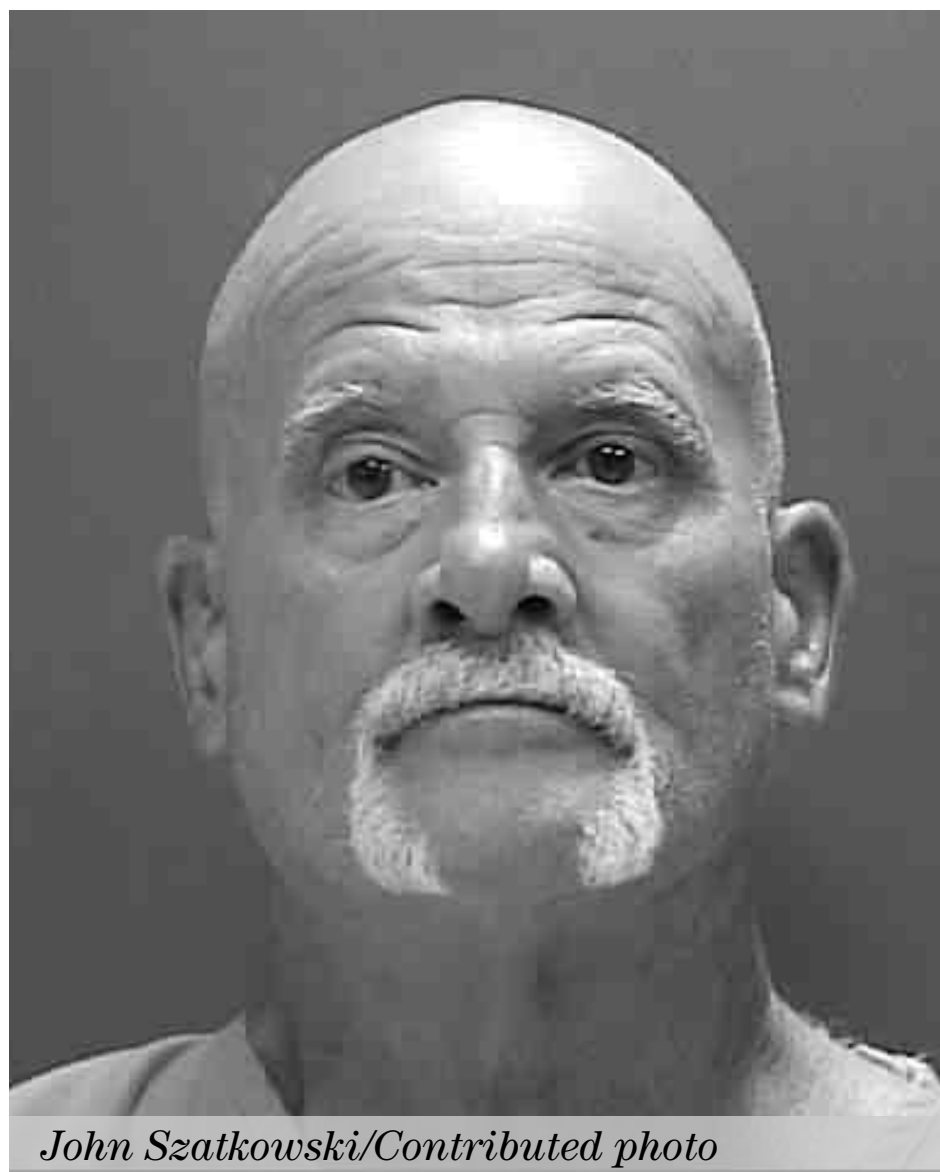
“We want to remind residents and visitors to lock your vehicle doors and do not leave valuables in plain sight,” said Capt. Pat Robinson, commander of the Police Department’s Patrol Division, in the release. “More than 60 percent of vehicle burglaries in the City of Sarasota happen to vehicles that are left unlocked. Hide your valuables, or take them with you, and don’t forget to lock your vehicle no matter where it is parked.”

DNA CONNECTS HOMELESS MAN TO SARASOTA CRIME

The Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office has arrested a homeless man whose DNA connected him to an unusual crime, the office has announced.

In February, a man reported that someone was inside his son’s home in the 2500 block of Pinebrook Hollow in Sarasota, a news release says. The man found dishes in the sink, and it appeared someone had been in the house for several days, the release adds. The man called deputies after he thought he heard noises from inside a locked spare bedroom, it continues. The suspect was not located at the time, but the victim said two flat screen televisions and household items were missing, the release notes.

Crime Scene Technicians recovered sneakers and other belongings that were submitted to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) for testing, the release says. Analysis determined the DNA was that of John Szatkowski, 58. Detectives obtained an arrest warrant for Burglary of a Dwelling and Szatkowski was located in late April.



John Szatkowski/Contributed photo

Szatkowski’s DNA was in the FDLE database from more than a dozen arrests in Brevard County for crimes such as drug possession, theft and fraud, the release points out.

SIX ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH 'DESIGNER DRUG' DEALS

On Friday, May 9, the Sarasota Police Department Narcotics Unit, with the assistance of the Street Crimes Unit, arrested six people after conducting an undercover operation in downtown Sarasota targeting the sale and possession of "designer drugs," the department has announced.

The six individuals were arrested in the southwest parking lot of Sarasota City Hall, located at 1565 First St., a news release notes.

"These substances are not safe alternatives to illicit drugs," said Lt. Pat Ledwith of the Criminal Investigation Division in the release. "Many times, they can cause serious harm and can even cause death. These are very dangerous substances and not manufactured for human consumption. Who knows where this stuff is made?" Ledwith continued in the release.

"It could be made in someone's garage or bathroom. Do you want that in your body?" he added.

Those arrested and the charges follow:

- Ryan M. Jarecki, 28, a transient; Possession of a Designer Drug.
- James E. Valentin, 24, of 2430 Huntington Ave., Sarasota; Sale of a Designer Drug and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia.
- Anthony Dilozenzo, 30, of 507 Kumquat Court, Sarasota; Possession of a Designer Drug.
- Jack L. Cook Jr., 44, of 507 Kumquat Court, Sarasota; Possession of a Designer Drug.
- Donald Gould, 50, a transient; Possession of a Designer Drug.
- John W. Whitney, 44, a transient; Possession of a Legend Drug and Trespass After Warning.



James Valentin/Contributed photo



John Whitney/Contributed photo



About two weeks ago, a News Leader reporter discovered this apparently stolen Publix shopping basket with a packet of 'spice' in the same City Hall parking lot where six people were arrested May 9 during a Sarasota Police Department undercover operation. Photo by Stan Zimmerman



Jack Cook/Contributed photo



Anthony DiLorenzo/Contributed photo



Donald Gould/Contributed photo



Ryan Jarecki/Contributed photo

TWO PENNSYLVANIA PEOPLE ARRESTED AFTER NEIGHBORHOOD HUNT

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested two residents of Boswell, PA, on charges resulting from the attempted theft of a bicycle and one suspect's subsequent attempt to run over deputies, the office has announced.

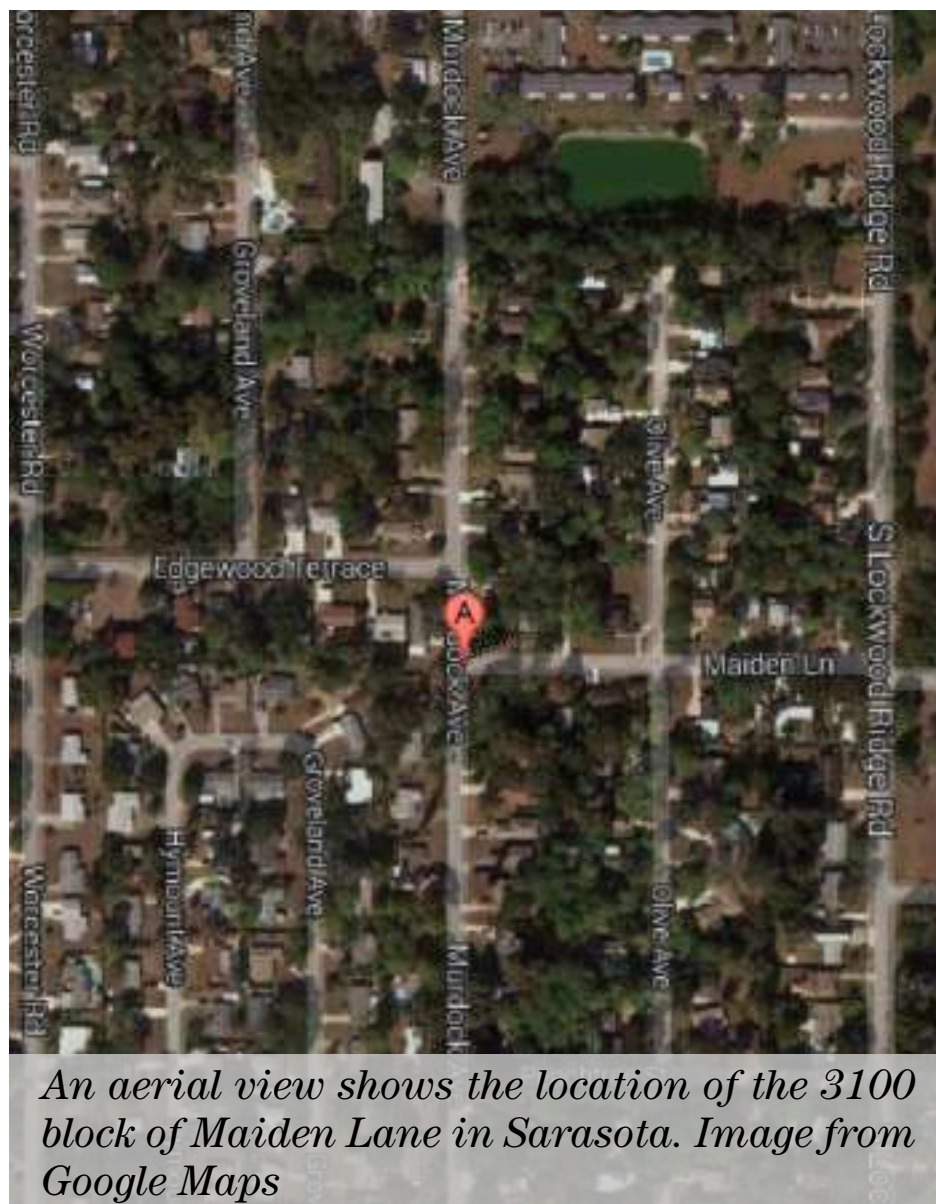
About 2:15 p.m. on May 8, a deputy responded to a call from a resident in the 3100 block of Maiden Lane in Sarasota. When the homeowner spotted a man and woman in the process of stealing his bicycle, the homeowner attempted to detain the man, resulting in the man punching the homeowner, a news release explains.

When a deputy arrived on the scene, the release says, he separated the suspect and the homeowner. The female suspect fled on foot, the release notes. Then the male suspect ran to the couple's vehicle and left the area, the release continues.

As deputies began pursuing the male suspect, the female suspect was apprehended a short distance from the Maiden Lane home, the release adds.


At the intersection of Tuttle Avenue and Webber Street, it says, the suspect's vehicle was stopped in traffic, so deputies approached it and ordered the suspect out of the vehicle. When he refused their commands, the release continues, the deputies reached inside the vehicle in an attempt to arrest him, but the suspect accelerated through the intersection, resulting in the deputies having to jump out of the way to avoid being struck.

Deputies continued to search the area, finally locating the suspect's vehicle abandoned

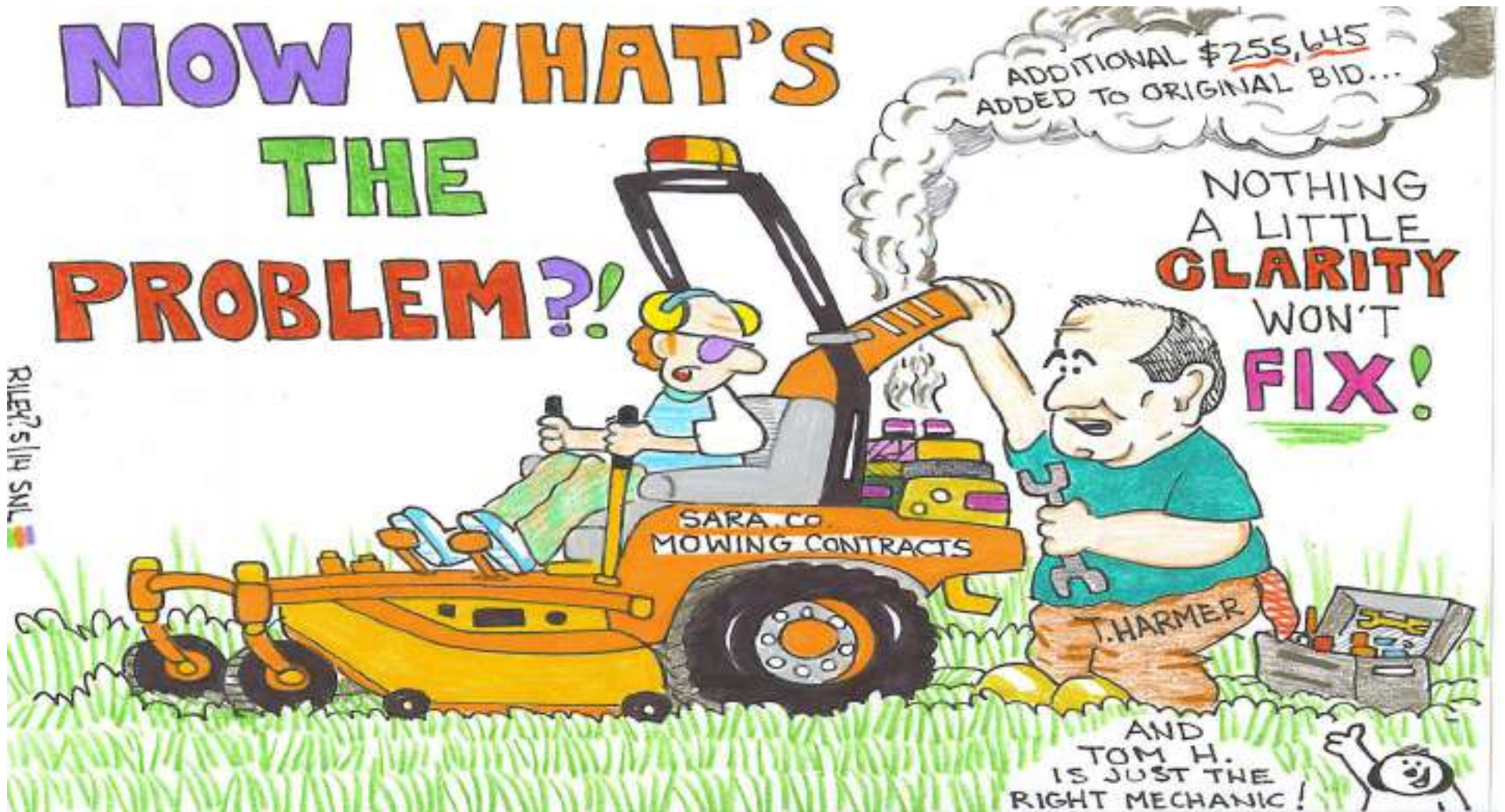


in the 1700 block of Jefferson Avenue, the release notes

Sheriff's Office TAC, Patrol and K-9 units, along with Sarasota Police officers and K-9 units, set up a perimeter and continued to look for the suspect, the release says. After an extensive search of the area, officers discovered the suspect hiding near a residence, the release adds.

After interviewing both suspects, detectives charged the man, Mark A. Suter, 46, with one count of Residential Burglary, one count of Misdemeanor Battery, one count of Fleeing to Elude and two counts of Aggravated Assault on a Law Enforcement Officer. The woman, Pamela J. Adkins, 33, was charged with one count of Residential Burglary. 

OPINION



THANKS TO THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR, THE END OF THE COUNTY'S MOWING CONTRACTS ORDEAL MAY BE IN SIGHT

EDITORIAL

Sarasota County Administrator Tom Harmer deserved a medal last week for doing what no one else has seemed to come close to doing over the past two-and-a-half years: He translated into easy-to-understand English two gigantic reasons for the county's mowing contract morass and presented a way to come to terms with them once and for all.

Based on Harmer's May 7 comments to the County Commission, we have high hopes that the mowing woes saga will be a thing of the past in about six months. That is when staff will come back to the commission for a thorough discussion of findings after reviewing acreage in all eight of the county's mowing zones. The presentation will include comparisons of

mowing expenses for the past eight years and information about how comparable counties handle their mowing contracts.

Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Christine Robinson were absolutely on target when they pulled a mowing contract renewal from the board's May 6 consent agenda to ask why the board should spend \$255,645 more than the original bid amount to renew the contract for another year.

With no satisfactory explanation after about 20 minutes of discussion, the commissioners asked for more details from staff. That led to about 45 minutes of exchanges the following morning. Spencer Anderson, who heads up the department that handles mowing, might

OPINION

as well have been speaking Greek for the lack of clarity in his responses to the board. He did not have a look of abject terror, but his entire interaction with the commissioners reminded us of a child being confronted by a parent over something very naughty the child has done. We feel sure almost every parent has been through that type of scenario, with the child trying very hard not to 'fess up in a timely fashion. After all, the child figures the longer it takes for the parent to get to the root of the problem, the longer the child staves off punishment.

Thankfully — mercifully — Harmer must have been as frustrated as we were. After the commissioners returned from their lunch break, the board took one item on its agenda before Chairman Charles Hines gave Harmer the floor. That was when we learned that Harmer had spent 90 minutes — practically the entire lunch break — in a session with employees to get that much-needed translation of what Anderson had spent almost 45 minutes trying not to say.

And what was the summation? For years, apparently, Sarasota County has been putting out bid solicitation packages for mowing without knowing for sure how many acres are in each of its zones. However, because of a provision in the mowing contract process, the

owners of a company who suddenly realized their employees were covering far more area than the contract specified could go back to county staff, point out the situation and have their contract amounts adjusted accordingly.

To their credit, the commissioners kept their jaws in place instead of allowing them to drop in unison as Harmer went through those facts.

Last June, when the commissioners logged

an earlier round with Anderson over failed mowing contracts, he never mentioned anything about the acreage errors or contract clauses. When pressed about why contracts kept failing, his response was that too many of the firms bidding on them seemed unprepared for the level of mowing required by the county in its zones.

No one pointed that out last week. Yet, Anderson conceded he knew about the acreage and contract problems in June 2013.

We were a little surprised, frankly, that several board members took pains to tell Anderson things were much better since he had taken over the mowing responsibilities. Yes, they are, and perhaps that is why they did not want to scare him off.

Still, it was with obvious and considerable angst four of the commissioners — Barbetta remained in opposition — felt they had no

Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Christine Robinson were absolutely on target when they pulled a mowing contract renewal from the board's May 6 consent agenda to ask why the board should spend \$255,645 more than the original bid amount to renew the contract for another year.


OPINION

choice but to agree to the recommendation Harmer proposed. That was to go ahead and renew the contract that sparked the latest discussions and let staff come back with the detailed presentation in six months.

Barbetta has maintained for some time that the county did itself a disservice by selling mowing equipment during the recession and outsourcing the service. He also has pointed on several occasions to lengthy emails from owners of a mowing company that went out of business, referencing the owners' long list of frustrations regarding the way the county has been structuring its mowing contracts and specifications. The numbers Barbetta has requested should provide insights about those concerns, too.

Many times over the past couple of years, commissioners have alluded to staff

members' wariness about appearing before them, especially when they start asking a lot of questions. That situation seems to have improved immensely since Harmer has been in charge of Sarasota County government.

Still, it was disappointing that Anderson could not have spared the commissioners a lot of discourse last week by laying out the answers they wanted when he first stepped to the podium on May 7. Within six months, we not only expect to see hard data about the mowing acreage, we also expect to see staff members modeling their behavior after Harmer's on May 7. They cannot expect the commissioners to be happy with their explanations all the time, but providing the truth in clear concise fashion is always the best practice, regardless of how painful it might be. 

LOVE IS IN THE AIR



By Harriet Cuthbert
Contributing Writer

COMMENTARY

Did you ever go to a party and wish it would never end?

Did you ever wish your stomach were larger so you could keep enjoying the taste of exquisite food that was practically melting in your mouth, going down oh so smoothly with the accompaniment of the perfect cabernet or Malbec?

And did you ever wish you had the stamina to dance just one more time to *Hot, Hot, Hot*?

Barbra Streisand put it eloquently and memorably when she sang, "I wanted the music to go on forever." She captured every one of my thoughts from a recent Saturday night.

The story of "Bob" and "Betty" (names changed by request) began more than 50 years ago in New York. Bob was beginning his career, working for a major entertainment network, when he met Betty, who was working in office management. They fell in love

OPINION

and were married in a modest ceremony followed by a small reception.

Bob's career escalated; he became a senior executive with the company. Betty, always acting like first mate on a ship, maintained the house in fine order, making it comfortable for both of them.

Flash forward to about 18 years ago. Bob took early retirement, they discovered stunning Sarasota and they moved to Siesta Key.

We who live in Siesta Isles on that island are very fortunate for many reasons: The properties are beautiful and well kept; we are within walking distance of Siesta Beach; and, most importantly, our neighborhood is an extraordinarily friendly one. Most of us live here year-round because we want to do so. Neighbors become friends very easily, and getting together for social occasions is quite common.

I met Bob about 15 years ago when I was walking Pauly, my son's dog. I stopped to chat and admire work being done on his house. That single incident initiated what was to become a very close friendship between my husband and me and Bob and Betty. Our neighborhood's monthly gatherings for cocktails and appetizers, hosted in homes on a rotating basis, also paved the way for all of us to connect.

When you first meet Bob and Betty, you register many different facets of their personalities, though they are both outgoing, friendly, warm, compassionate, smart and

funny. Each of them has the essence of what constitutes a good person and a good friend.

WHAT AN OCCASION!

As their 50th wedding anniversary approached, they decided to renew their vows and then host a great celebration with their Sarasota friends. I like to refer to the occasion as their second wedding.

The invitation to the event arrived about a month ahead of time, featuring their original wedding photo. It provided details of a soiree in a well-regarded, intimate Sarasota setting. I was thrilled. I had never been to a 50th anniversary party before, but I knew Bob and Betty's would be the best ... and it was.

Cocktails were served at 6:30 p.m. followed by the vow renewal ceremony at 7:30, with dinner afterwards. It was a perfect Sarasota evening — blazing sun, low humidity and a gentle breeze. As we walked into the venue, we were greeted by the sounds of a DJ playing Sinatra tunes and then welcomed with hugs and kisses by the wedding couple. Practically before I could exhale, I had a glass of red wine in one hand and an incredible hors d'oeuvre in the other. On and on the scene repeated itself, with about 60 guests arriving. As more people showed up, more hugging ensued, with all of us saying how happy we were to be part of Bob and Betty's special occasion.

By the time the DJ switched to bossa nova and played *The Girl from Ipanema*, I was totally in party mode.

OPINION

Suddenly, it was time for the ceremony. Judge Debra Riva called Bob and Betty to the front. We guests stood in a circle, silent and rapt, as the judge read beautiful remarks. I caught myself mostly focusing on the way Betty kept looking at Bob, who had his arms wrapped tightly around her.


Luckily, the ceremony was short enough to prevent a group cry. Instead, we all happily applauded in recognition of our dear friends' joy.

As we took our seats, dinner followed — a magnificent display of culinary genius. I remember potato pancakes, chicken saté, stuffed mushrooms with zucchini, baby lamb chops and, especially — practically hiding in the corner of the room in its own special spot, the *piece de resistance* — a perfectly cooked

beef tenderloin offered with salad and horse-radish sauce.

How many glasses of Malbec did I have? I do not know and I do not care. I worked it off by dancing the Twist.

As we savored the meal, it was hard to believe members of the cooking staff would be able to outdo themselves. When they wheeled in the desserts and set them among beautiful candles and glass plates on the tables, I felt I was having an out-of-body experience. Mini French fruit tarts and crème brûlée were all I could consume. (I wonder if there were any leftovers.)

Here is a final toast to our dear friends, Bob and Betty: Thanks for everything — and we cannot wait for your next wedding. 



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*.

FREE SUBSCRIPTION

Don't have your own subscription to *The Sarasota News Leader*?

Subscribe for FREE and receive a weekly notification when the latest issue is available online.

SUBSCRIBE



IS FOR BUTTERFLY



Monarch in Brooklyn

LEPIDOPTERA MAY BE A COMMON SIGHT, BUT YOU CAN DO MORE TO ATTRACT THEM

Story and Photos

By Fran Palmeri

Contributing Writer

Editor's note: This is the author's second article in a series about the many creatures found in Florida.

I am in Brooklyn at my daughter's apartment, sitting by a window overlooking the garden. A Monarch butterfly floats by. I grab my camera and rush down the stairs.

In Florida, all the world's a butterfly garden. The state's north/south orientation — more temperate in the north, subtropical in the south — attracts a wide variety of *Lepidoptera*, the group that includes butterflies and moths. Marc and Maria Minno in their wonderful

book *Florida Butterfly Gardening* list 164 species of butterflies that breed in Florida.

It has to be a dark rainy day not to see at least one. Usually, I run into a dozen when I am out hiking. A Swallowtail swoops past, most likely a male in search of a mate. At a more leisurely pace, Zebra Longwings nectar on wildflowers. Tiny Satyrs and Skippers flutter at my feet.

Native plant nurseries are Meccas for butterflies. They are around all year at Florida Native Plants in Sarasota. At Sweet Bay Nursery in Parrish, Tom Heitzman sees

Sulfurs, Swallowtails, Skippers, Buckeyes, Peacocks, Red Admirals, Monarchs, Queens and Viceroy, along with the occasional American Painted Lady.

It is fun to watch them. Male butterflies “puddle” in wet areas, siphoning up minerals. One evening at Curry Creek Preserve, a dainty Sulfur circled ‘round and ‘round me. I wondered why it was expending so much energy, but then it landed on a sprig of dried grass and fell fast asleep.

In fall, I look for migrations of Cloudless Sulphurs, Gulf Fritillaries and Skippers around the state.

It is easier to photograph butterflies early in the day before they get too frisky. Because they are cold-blooded, they have to bask in the sun to raise their body temperature. Once in winter, I found a Painted Lady stoking up on a metal tank cover at a service station, absorbing the heat from both sides.

Invite them to your yard. Put in a few native plants and they will appear like magic. Zebra Longwings love my wild coffee, a shrub that flowers in spring. (The red berries in fall are a favorite of birds.) Or do nothing. Allow frog fruit, thistle or Spanish needles — all butterfly fare — to grow in an out-of-the-way place.



Lis Hanson Sundberg with a Swallowtail caterpillar.

“*They were so beautiful, that was the thing ... She and Preston together gazed up at their spindly butterfly tree.*

Barbara Kingsolver
In Flight Behavior

”



Cloudless Sulphur on Spanish needles.

In the fall, millions of Monarch butterflies travel 2,000 miles from the Eastern U.S. to a 50-acre pine forest in southern Mexico. In spring, they return, stopping along the Gulf Coasts of Texas and Florida to lay eggs on milkweed. After they hatch, the young butterflies continue their migration north through several generations before the cycle starts all over again. Mechanized agriculture has largely eliminated milkweed along the edges of fields. That, along with problems related to parasites, threatens the very existence of these beautiful creatures. You can create a “Monarch way station” by planting native milkweed. [Monarch Watch](#), a nonprofit, will provide free plants to qualifying schools and other nonprofits.

In *The Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin wrote, “[F]rom so simple a beginning, endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.” Butterflies insist on being beautiful.



Painted Lady at the service station



Zebra Longwing on butterfly weed.



Great Southern White on golden dewdrop.

PLANTING FOR BUTTERFLIES IS NOT DIFFICULT

By Laurel Schiller

Contributing Writer

To attract butterflies, put in a variety of plants with different heights and growth habits, so they will bloom at various times. Use a mixture of flower colors, shapes and sizes, but group members of the same species together. Plant them in full sun or partial shade. Check the sunlight, water and soil needs of each plant to determine the best location.

Use both larval host plants and nectar sources for butterflies at all stages of their lives. Hold the pesticides.

Numerous native plants attract butterflies:


- Shrubs: coral bean, firebush, native lantana, wild coffee and blue prostrate porterweed.
- Wildflowers: mistflower, Tampa verbena, beach verbena, tropical sage, goldenrod, scorpion's tail, giant ironweed, blazing star and starry rosinweed.
- Vines: coral honeysuckle, climbing aster, trumpet creeper and wild allamanda.

A variety of native plants attract caterpillars:

- Trees: Florida red bay, wild lime, sweet bay magnolia, sweet acacia and native tamarind.
- Shrubs: senna, aka cassia.
- Herbs: fennel, parsley and mock bishop's weed.
- Wildflowers: twinflower, milkweed, false nettle, partridge pea, frog fruit, pencil flowers and water hyssop.
- Vines: corky stem passion vine, maypop passion vine and white twinevine.



Long-tailed Skipper on pickerel weed.

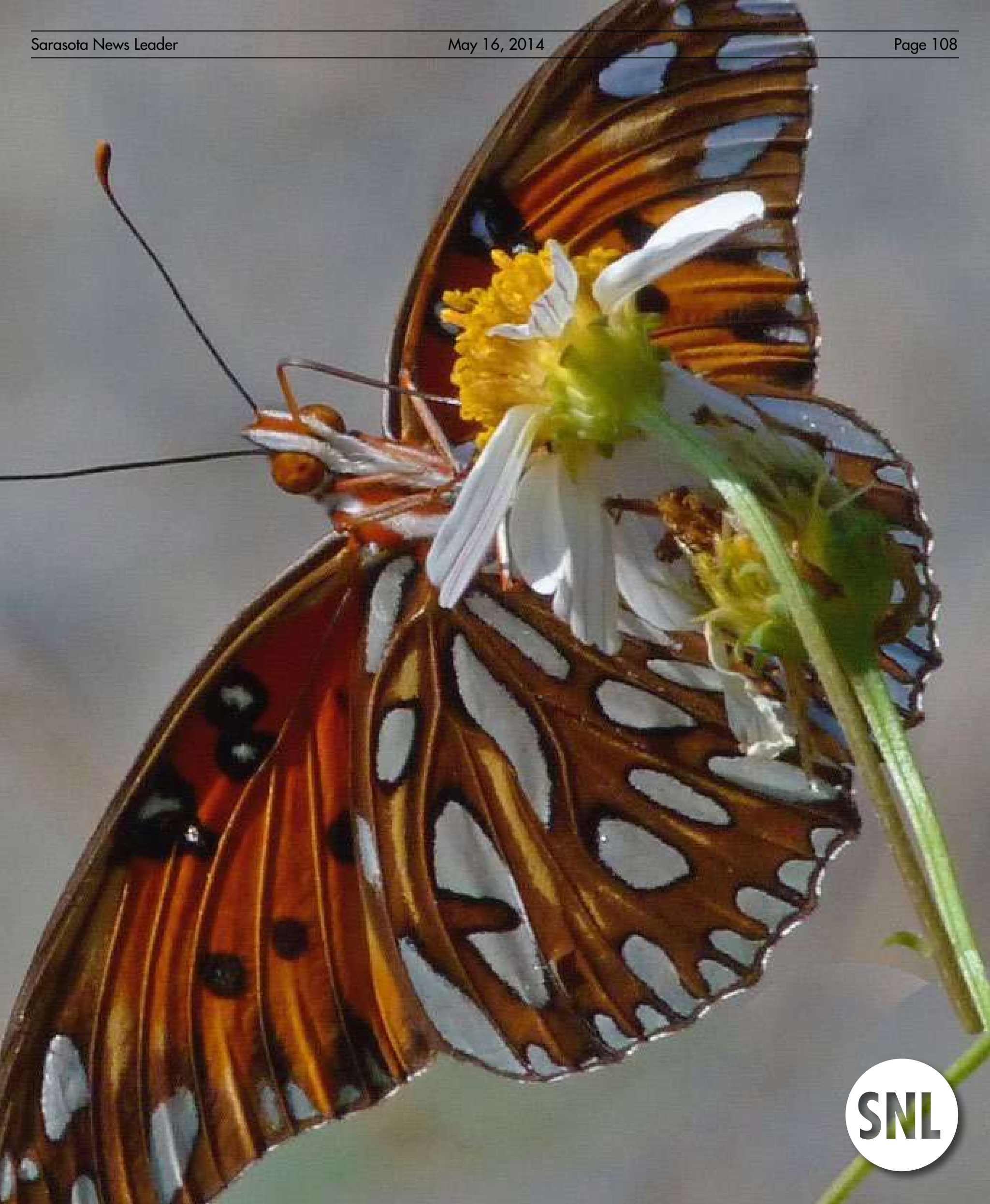
Non-native nectar plants also draw butterflies: old fashioned red penta, upright purple porterweed, Caribbean firebush, golden dew-drop, firespike, pineland lantana, jatropha, Mexican flame vine, yellow buttercup and white buttercup. 



Common Buckeye on frog fruit.



Swallowtails on thistle.



Gulf Fritillary on Spanish needles.



A GRAND FINALE

An audience of about 3,000 listens as the Sarasota Orchestra begins its Spirit of America performance Saturday night. All photos by Norman Schimmel

ORIOLES HOST THE SARASOTA ORCHESTRA AT ED SMITH STADIUM

Staff Reports

From a holiday ice show to a celebrity softball game to orchestral arrangements on the diamond, the Baltimore Orioles have presented *Arts in the Ballpark* events this season as a complement to Spring Training.

The finale came Saturday night, May 10, when conductor Andrew Lane led the Sarasota Orchestra through a program titled *Spirit of America*. Appropriately enough, *Casey at the*

Bat was among the selections, which included music from *Pocahontas*, *West Side Story* and the *Star Wars* movies.

Special guest Molly Cherryholmes, a Grammy-nominated performer who has her own eponymous group, joined the orchestra for the program.

Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel was present to capture highlights of the evening. 



Conductor Andrew Lane sports a shirt with the name of the Baltimore Orioles' catcher, Matt Wieters.



Orioles mascot Bird prepares to take his turn at conducting.



Scott Dennis of ABC7 narrates Casey at the Bat.



David Rovine, vice president of the Orioles' Sarasota operations, welcomes the audience to the team's final installment of its Arts in the Ballpark series for this season.



Fireworks fill the sky after the concert.



Molly Cherryholmes (to the left of the conductor), Grammy-nominated violinist with the bluegrass group Cherryholmes, performed vocal numbers and accompanied the orchestra.



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

16 MAY	WSLR presents <i>Chillin' with Dylan</i> May 16, 8 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota. Tickets: \$10 in advance or \$12 at door. Information: 894-6469 or WSLR.org .
16+ MAY	Dabbert Gallery presents <i>Expressions of Spring</i> Through May 31, times vary. 76 S. Palm Avenue, Sarasota. Free Admission. Information: 955-1315 or DabbertGallery.com .
16+ MAY	Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>Tom Jones</i> Through June 1, times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$19 to \$42. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org .
16+ MAY	Asolo Repertory Theatre presents <i>Hero: The Musical</i> Through June 1, times vary. Mertz Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$21 and up. Information: 351-8000 or AsoloRep.org .
16+ MAY	Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>Too Darn Hot</i> Through June 1, times vary. J.C. Court Cabaret, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$18 to \$36. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org .
16+ MAY	Allyn Gallup Gallery presents <i>A Few Great, Big Pictures</i> Through July 28, times vary. 1288 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Information: 366-2454 or AllynGallup.com .
17 MAY	Seventh Annual Singing Sailors Spring Cabaret and Silent Auction May 17, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., Bethel Mennonite Church, 2985 Bethel Lane, Sarasota, featuring Sarasota High School students. Fundraiser portion of event to include dessert. Guests encouraged to dress to reflect the theme, <i>Celebrating a Century of Sailors</i> . Tickets: \$15 for adults, \$10 for students and \$12 for each person in a group of 10 or more. Purchase tickets at the school, 1000 S. School Ave., Sarasota, with cash or checks made out to SHS Chorus Boosters. Information: 955-0181, Ext. 64599.
18 MAY	Redeemer presents Solemn Evensong with <i>Five Mystical Songs</i> May 18, 5:15 p.m., Church of the Redeemer, 222 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Information: 955-4263 or RedeemerSarasota.org .



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

21+ MAY	Asolo Repertory Theatre presents <i>I Loved, I Lost, I Made Spaghetti</i> May 21 through June 15, times vary. Cook Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$25 and up. Information: 351-8000 or AsoloRep.org .
22 MAY	Sarasota High Choral Department's Final Bow/End of the Year Concert May 22, 7 p.m., school auditorium, 1000 S. School Ave., Sarasota. Free. Information: 955-0181, Ext. 64599.
24 MAY	Redeemer presents recital with Gonzalez, Evans and Ross May 24, 7:30 p.m., Church of the Redeemer, 222 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Reception in Gillespie Hall after the concert. Information: 955-4263 or visit redeemersarasota.org .
31+ MAY	Artists Series Concerts presents <i>Opera and More!</i> May 31 through June 1, 7:30 p.m., Historic Asolo Theater, 5401 Bay Shore Road, Sarasota. Tickets: \$25 to \$45. Information: 360-7399 or ArtistSeriesConcerts.org .
01+ JUNE	UUCS Presents <i>Jane Shannon: Works in Fabric</i> June 1 through Sept. 4, Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, Lexow Wing Gallery, 3975 Fruitville Road, Sarasota. Free. Artist's reception: 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., June 1. Information: 371-4974 or the church website .
03 JUNE	Tikkun Liel Shavuot Commemoration June 3, 7:30 p.m., hosted by Congregation Kol HaNeshama. Southgate Community Center, on the Tuttle Avenue traffic circle between Bee Ridge Road and Webber Street, Sarasota. Event to include a service, study session and Yizkor service. Information: 244-2042, email at office@conghk.org or conghk.org .
04+ JUNE	Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>Pump Boys and Dinettes</i> June 4-29, times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$34 to \$44. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org .
12+ JUNE	Players Theatre presents <i>The Dixie Swim Club</i> June 12 through 22, times vary. 838 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$18. Information: 365-2494 or ThePlayers.org .



PRESS



Norman Schimmel
Photographer
The Sarasota News Leader
BORN 04/10/1942
Creative 10/15/2000

**SCHIMMEL
SIGHTINGS**

THE LONG, LONG WAIT TILL SPRING

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.