

THE SARASOTA

Vol. 2, No. 36 — May 23, 2014

News Leader

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A.K.A. HELP

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Welcome

This is another issue with more than a little of that “déjà vu all over again” flavor, but our staff managed to find a number of new topics to sprinkle in among the continuing “soap operas.”

Bee Ridge Road is at the center of two of those fresher stories. Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker covered the County Commission discussion involving what board members cited as lack of sufficient engagement with neighbors of a proposed project. Little controversy arose with the County Commission agenda item I covered, which regarded the long-desired widening of one part of Bee Ridge and improvements to a two-lane segment.

To my knowledge, City Editor Stan Zimmerman was the only reporter in the right place at the right time to learn that The Vue had passed its city administrative review so it can proceed on to the building permit stage. Talk about controversy! That project has alarmed many downtown residents, who fear it will fuel even worse traffic problems than the height of season brings.

County Editor Roger Drouin and Stan both worked on the homeless shelter “front” again this week. And while some of you may be tired of reading such articles, I believe everyone who has an opinion about the handling of our community’s homeless population needs to keep track of every step the city and county are taking on that matter.

Finally, I encourage all of you to take a look not only at our *News Briefs* but also at our expanded *Community Calendar*. Lots of interesting items go into both. You might be surprised at what you will find.

Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor and Publisher





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SIGNING OFF ON THE VUE

A corner of the parcel where The Vue will stand is visible (left) at the intersection of U.S. 41 and Gulfstream Avenue in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL FROM CITY STAFF MEANS THE DEVELOPER OF THE HOTEL/CONDOMINIUM PROJECT CAN PROCEED TO SEEK A BUILDING PERMIT

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The 394-unit hotel and condominium complex slated for the northwest corner of U.S. 41 and Gulfstream Avenue, The Vue, received the blessings of City of Sarasota staff on May 16. That means the project will move to the building permit stage.

It needed only “administrative approval” of its site plan to take that step forward; no public hearing before either the Planning Board or City Commission was required.

The land where the project will stand is zoned Downtown Bayfront, with a street address of 1 N. Tamiami Trail. Neighbors pushed back

against The Vue because of traffic congestion fears. An additional traffic study was conducted and shared with neighbors.

The city approval does call for KPC Sarasota Development of West Palm Beach to provide “a revised traffic queuing analysis including any required traffic counts for Ritz-Carlton Drive and Sunset Drive.” (The Ritz-Carlton and the One Watergate condominium complex are just west of The Vue’s parcel.) But that analysis will come only after the project has been completed. City staff agrees the study will cost no more than \$10,000. In other words, after The Vue is part of the bayfront

landscape, a traffic engineer will determine if it has created any problems at one of the city's busiest intersections.


"If any required actions are determined as a result of the study, the city, developer, or any impacted parties shall develop an action plan for implementation," the approval letter says.

During meetings between staff and the developer's representatives, additional concerns were raised about pedestrian safety in the area of the new complex. The letter calls for KPC to "participate in any future pedestrian

crossing analysis undertaken by the City ..."

That participation "may include assistance in funding a project based on the benefit it would provide to both hotel guests and residents of the project."

The applicant is also required to post signs at Ritz-Carlton Drive and the access to First Street saying, "Do Not Block Intersection."

The site plan approval is good for two years, and it can be extended two more with a timely application. 



The Vue will combine hotel rooms and condominiums in a complex on a busy Sarasota corner. Image from the [website](#)

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'UGLY FEELING' FROM BEE RIDGE PROJECT

According to plans, the Bee Ridge Park of Commerce would be located behind a new RaceTrac service station on Bee Ridge Road. Photo by Joe Goldberg, via Flickr

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS BLAST DEVELOPERS FOR BEE RIDGE ROAD PROPOSAL

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Saying they were “disappointed” and left with an “ugly feeling,” the Sarasota county commissioners this week declined to allow a “pretty unappealing” new commercial center to move forward on Bee Ridge Road just east of Interstate 75.

Developer Richard Fischer and Terracap BR Investors’ proposal for seven acres of land on the northeast corner of Bee Ridge and Mauna Loa Boulevard includes a 77,000-square-foot

retail and office building that would wrap around a new RaceTrac service station scheduled to go in nearby. Two smaller buildings that would be located closer to Bee Ridge are also part of the project, dubbed the Bee Ridge Park of Commerce.

“*Usually we just get, ‘Deny it.’ I greatly respect the neighbors for putting the amount of work that you put into this one. I have a bad taste in my mouth over this one.*”

Christine Robinson
Vice Chairwoman
Sarasota County Commission



But for that plan to be realized, the property needs to be rezoned to Commercial Neighborhood, which, according to the county code, includes the “retail sale of food, drugs, hardware, and

similar items and the provision of personal services.” That rezoning request was the subject of discussion on Wednesday, May 21, which didn’t end well for the developers.

The plan has generated backlash from residents of Lake Sarasota, located on the south side of Bee Ridge, directly across from the proposed project. They are concerned about the possibility of daycare centers or bars opening in the new space, and they have criticized the developers for not meeting with neighborhood groups or acknowledging residents’ concerns.

At an April 3 Planning Commission meeting, during which the Terracap plan was approved, Planning Commissioner Michael Moran urged the developers to pay attention to the neighborhood’s feedback, offered at that hearing by Lake Sarasota’s Tom Matrullo.

“I hope you’re listening closely to that and would be agreeable to working closely with

that community there to make sure you’re a good neighbor and listening closely,” Moran told the builders.

That comment came up again this Wednesday, when Peter Dailey, representing Terracap, pushed back on criticism that his team has not fully addressed Lake Sarasota’s concerns. “We were not directed at the Planning Commission to talk to the neighbors,” Dailey said. “We were told to listen carefully.”

That linguistic finessing set off Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson. “I’m disappointed that they didn’t take the advice of the Planning Commission, regardless of how they termed it,” she said. “By wordsmithing them, it kind of gives me an ugly feeling. I’m disappointed. I’m really, really disappointed with this.” She credited neighborhood groups for not simply saying, “No.” They came up with compromises, she pointed out.



An aerial map shows the location of the proposed new development on Bee Ridge Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County

“Usually we just get, ‘Deny it,’” she said. “I greatly respect the neighbors for putting the amount of work that you put into this one. I have a bad taste in my mouth over this one.”

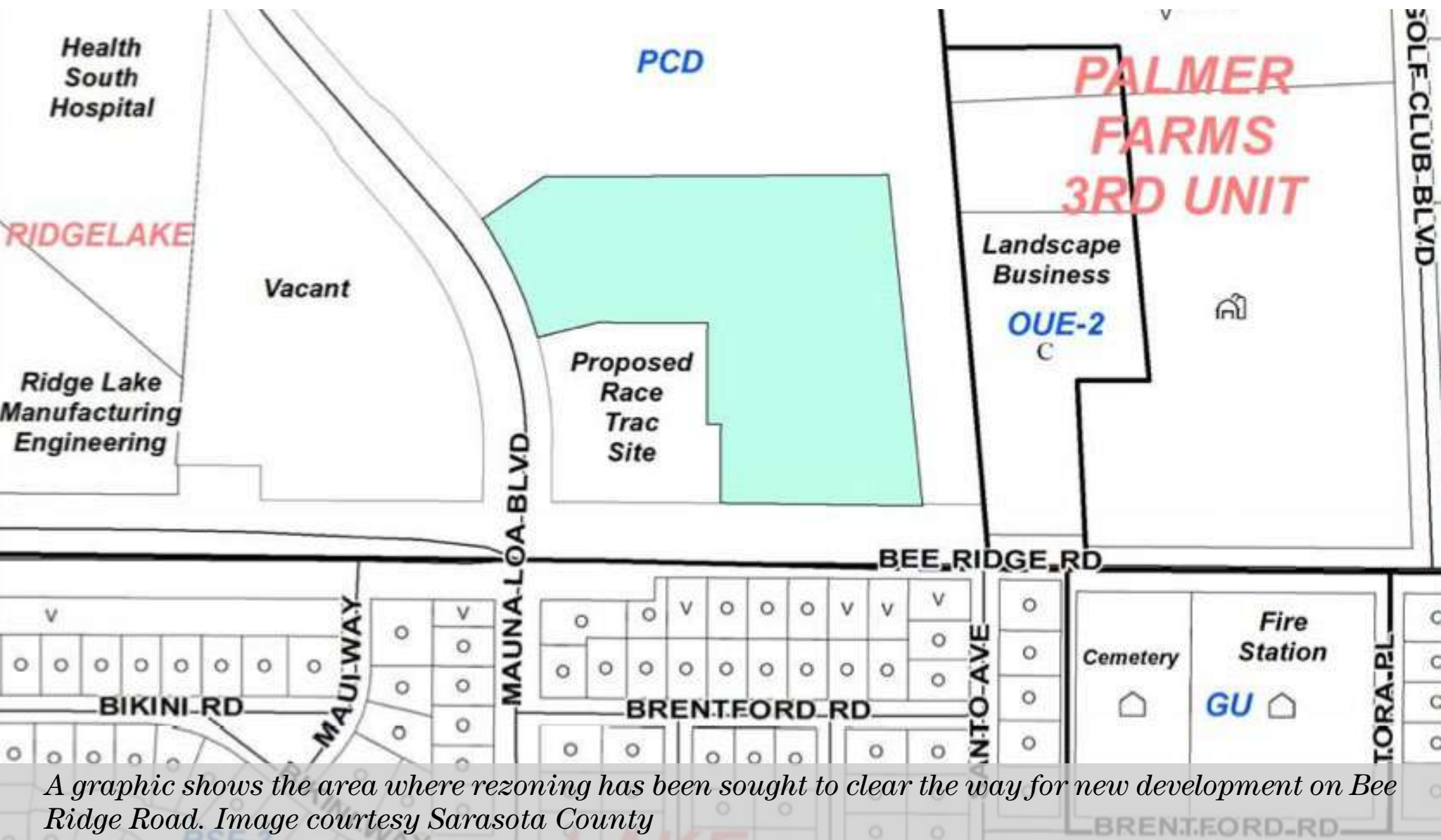
While she was originally tempted to kill the proposal altogether, Robinson eventually moved to delay a decision, giving the developers time to rethink their plan.

She wasn’t alone in her opposition. Commissioner Nora Patterson called the proposal “pretty unappealing,” while Commissioner Joe Barbetta compared the project unfavorably to the Publix plaza east of the property under discussion. There, he said, developers met with neighborhood groups and agreed to a number of stipulations. While skeptical, Barbetta said the proposal remains “salvageable.”

“They were asking some very probing and particular questions regarding the plan that

the developer was presenting,” Matrullo tells *The Sarasota News Leader*, “and there were obviously some gaping holes in that plan.” According to Matrullo, the developer, Fischer, emailed him the morning after the meeting, “wishing to open a dialogue.”

Matrullo says he’s “encouraged” by the board’s decision, but he also points out some of the bigger issues that didn’t come up Wednesday, such as public safety at the Bee Ridge/Mauna Loa intersection, set to be widened, or the broader concept that Sarasota east of I-75 doesn’t have to look just like it does west of I-75. Overall, the entrance to Lake Sarasota could resemble the intersection at Bee Ridge and Cattlemen Road more than the “little backwater place” it is now, Matrullo says. “There’s an intensification that is going from zero to 100.” **SNL**



A graphic shows the area where rezoning has been sought to clear the way for new development on Bee Ridge Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County



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A TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX SHIFT

Rising Tourist Development Tax revenue has led to an excess of funds in an account that is paying back a loan the county took out to renovate Ed Smith Stadium for the Spring Training home of the Baltimore Orioles plus ongoing maintenance there. Photo by Norman Schimmel

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS TAKE STEPS TO SHIFT FUNDING FROM PROMOTION TO CAPITAL PROJECTS

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

The Sarasota County commissioners voted last week to divert some Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue from an account created to pay back a loan for the improvements to Ed Smith Stadium and to cover maintenance projects at the facility.

Starting in the 2015 fiscal year, an estimated \$275,000 will be used for capital projects designed to boost tourism, such as seed money for a convention center. According to county financial staff, the amount should increase to about \$443,000 during the 2019 fiscal year.

In a more controversial decision, the board also voted 4-1 to consider shifting funding from tourism marketing and promotion toward capital projects.

Commissioner Nora Patterson dissented on the latter vote, taken during the May 16 budget workshop. (See the related article in this issue.)

“ *I am leaning towards having this potential money to build things or have it as seed money.*

Charles Hines
Chairman
Sarasota County Commission

”

The action clears the way for public hearings on the subject and more debate, with the board agreeing to put into its advertising of those hearings the highest percentage of

funding diversion proposed in a staff graphic. That number might be reduced as a result of public comments, commissioners noted.

If the change goes through, as much as 3.5 percent of the marketing funding could go toward new projects intended to draw more visitors to the community, based on calculations presented to the commission by staff in the county's Office of Financial Management.

"I am leaning towards having this potential money to build things or have it as seed money," Chairman Charles Hines said.

Tourism boosters protested the change.

On Friday, hoteliers, restaurateurs, Realtors and representatives from marketing firms took to the podium during the "open to the public" portions of the meeting to protest any cuts to promotional funding, which they

said could result in decreased tourism-related activity in the area and, therefore, a negative economic impact.

Michael Klauber, well-known co-owner of Michael's On East — who also is chairman of the board of the county's tourism office, Visit Sarasota County — was among those who spoke. "I believe the growth in our market share [of tourism] is a result of Visit Sarasota's marketing growth," Klauber told the commissioners.

He suggested the board take excess revenue from the stadium fund instead, leaving the promotional funding allocation as it is.

Other tourism supporters pointed out that the share of TDT revenue Sarasota County spends on promotional efforts is lower than the amounts similar counties spend on marketing and advertising.



Commissioner Nora Patterson argued against taking promotional money from Visit Sarasota County. Photo by Norman Schimmel

But not everyone in the business community argued against the proposed change.

“GCBX [Gulf Coast Builders Exchange] appreciates the [Board of County Commissioners’] vision and leadership in looking for new opportunities to maintain, enhance and augment the infrastructure that creates unique experiences for visitors to Sarasota County,” the organization’s executive director, Mary Slapp, wrote in an email to the county commissioners the day before the workshop.

Tourist Development Tax revenue comes from a 5-cent surcharge on every dollar a person spends on a hotel room or seasonal

rental of less than six months in Sarasota County. County financial staff expects the total amount of revenue to hit the \$15.4 million mark in the 2015 fiscal year, with money going toward attractions, support of the arts, beach maintenance and promoting the area in northern, Midwestern and overseas markets. Recently, word spread that the commissioners were considering capping the fund at \$15 million and shifting anything above that to capital improvements.

Commissioners stressed on Friday that as TDT revenue continues to increase, the amount of funding for marketing and promotions also



Sports Stadium option

- Consider reallocating Stadium Revenue in excess of annual Stadium Debt Service and CapX payments to Capital Projects/Events
- Estimate of excess annual Stadium Revenue:

FY15	\$274,991
FY16	\$320,355
FY17	\$342,597
FY18	\$391,847
FY19	\$443,004

A chart shows the excess funds expected over the next several years in the Ed Smith Stadium account. Image courtesy Sarasota County

will rise, based on the funding formula in place.

“There is no cap,” Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson pointed out.


“There is no sinister motive to what we are proposing today,” said Commissioner Joe Barbetta. “No one is trying to slash any budget. We are looking at taking some of this extra money and investing properly in tourism-generating projects.”

Barbetta added that hotels have to promote themselves. “The [Ritz-Carlton] has an advertising budget,” for example, he said in response to some public comments indicating Visit Sarasota County should help market new hotels that are under construction in downtown Sarasota.

Using TDT funding for capital projects is crucial as the county tries to widen its tourism appeal beyond just the beaches, he added.

Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, said she believes the plan the board discussed on May 16 is not as bad as a cap, but she asked that any changes be introduced in phases.

Patterson said she did not want to pull money away from the promotional efforts that have been building momentum over the years. Visit Sarasota has done a good job of marketing the county’s beaches, sports venues and other attractions, Patterson noted.

“I hear what [Haley’s] staff members do in the world that promotes the area,” she added, referencing her position as chairwoman of the county’s Tourist Development Council. 



Promotion Funds 33.5% of TDT

- 17.5% of First Additional 1% Levy (3rd Penny)
100% of Second Additional 1% Levy (4th Penny)
100% of Second Additional 1/2% Levy (1/2 5th Penny)
- Consider reallocating Promotion Revenue within the First Additional 1% Levy (3rd Penny) to Capital Projects and Events
- Promotion Revenue History:

	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	% Change FY09 to FY14
TDT Revenue	\$ 3,064,917	\$ 3,279,552	\$ 4,180,874	\$ 5,015,780	\$ 5,216,136	\$ 4,712,367	54%
VSC Contract	\$ 3,411,935	\$ 3,377,109	\$ 3,789,614	\$ 4,256,532	\$ 4,583,728	\$ 6,360,718	86%

A chart shows how promotional funds are allocated out of the five pennies of the Tourist Development Tax and suggests how part of the funds could be used for capital projects. Image courtesy Sarasota County



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.

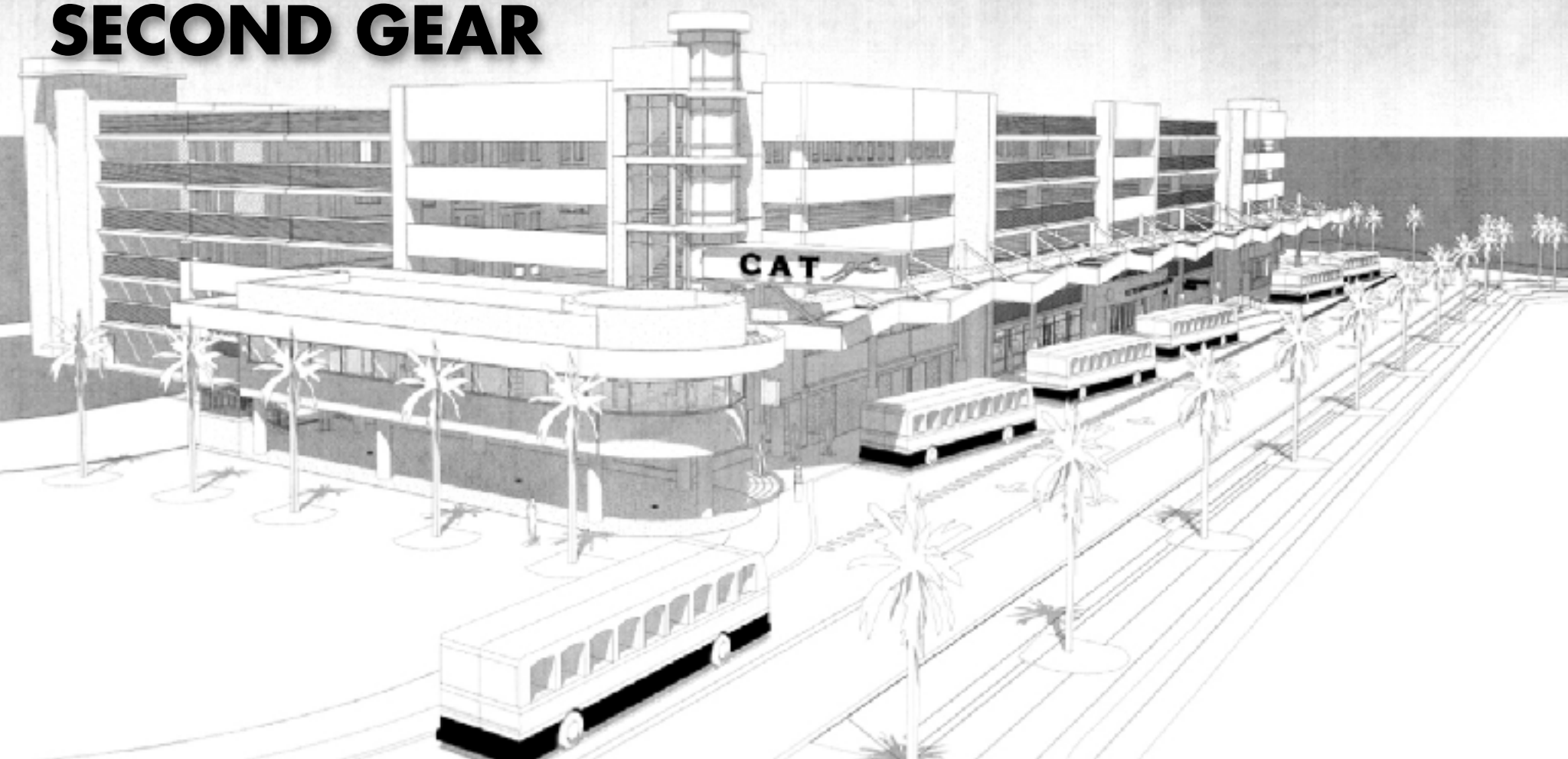
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SECOND GEAR



A bus transfer station built in Collier County borders a parking structure, a design similar to one proposed for a new Sarasota County Area Transit transfer station in downtown Sarasota. The Collier facility's bus lane has room for six vehicles, while the planned Sarasota project would be able to accommodate 10 buses at once. Image courtesy Sarasota County

IN A UNANIMOUS VOTE, THE COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES CONTINUED STUDY OF RELOCATING THE DOWNTOWN SARASOTA COUNTY AREA TRANSIT TRANSFER STATION FROM LEMON AVENUE TO RINGLING BOULEVARD

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

In February, the Sarasota County commissioners asked staff to [draw up preliminary plans](#) showing how buses would circulate if the downtown Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) bus transfer station — located at Lemon Avenue and First Street — were moved to a new site.

During a budget workshop on May 16, the commissioners got a look at those plans, which showed the new station near the

intersection of Ringling Boulevard and School Avenue. Buses would enter the facility from School Avenue, drop off and pick up passengers and then exit from East Avenue onto Ringling, said Ed Gable, the county's director of general services.

“It is almost miraculous the way it is designed. It is really clever.”

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



The commissioners liked what they saw, voting unanimously after some discussion to roll ahead with continued study of the move.

Commissioner Nora Patterson voiced approval that the design would lead to the loss of only 52 public parking spaces amid multiple government facilities, fewer than indicated in the earlier discussion.

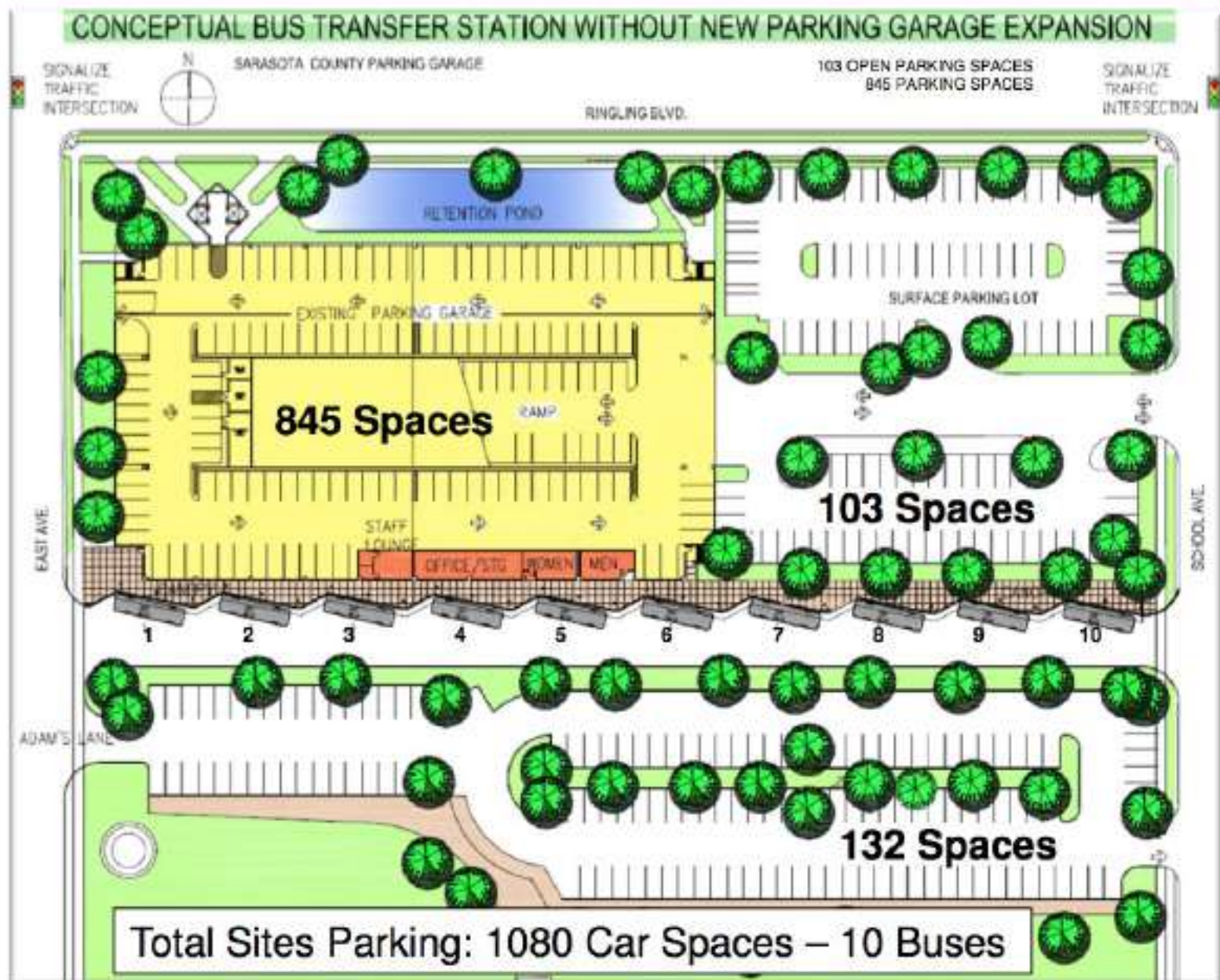
“I started out opposed to this,” Patterson said, adding of the new proposal, “It is almost miraculous the way it is designed. It is really clever.”

Patterson did tell staff, though, that she would like information showing the impact

of the relocation on SCAT’s operating budget. Nonetheless, she called the design “ingenious.”

If constructed, the new transfer station would occupy a portion of county property across the street from the offices of the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County. The land is home to both surface parking and a county parking garage. It borders city property, so the exact siting of the station still has to be worked out between the county and city, Gable pointed out.

Ringling Parking Garage – Site Evaluation New SCAT Transfer Station



Preliminary plans show space for 10 SCAT buses at a single time at a new downtown transfer station. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Some downtown advocates have called for the relocation of the bus station from Lemon Avenue because they say it is not the best use of a prime location across from the Whole Foods market and City Hall.

The downtown station also appears to have outgrown the site: It cannot accommodate the county's longer Express buses. During a February County Commission discussion, Glama Carter, director of SCAT, said of the Lemon Avenue station, "It does work, but it is a very tight site."

The new station, which would cost an estimated \$2.2 million, would accommodate three more buses than the seven that can squeeze into the Lemon Avenue facility at one time. Additionally, a staff lounge and public restrooms would be built inside the garage.

Gable said a similar project was constructed in Collier County next to a parking structure.

(See the image accompanying this article.) The Collier station's bus lane can handle six vehicles at one time.

THE NEXT STEP

Commissioner Joe Barbetta, who has advocated for the move, voiced approval of the preliminary design. He added that the relocation would promote private development in downtown Sarasota.

Barbetta and other proponents of the facility's relocation have pointed out that revenue from the sale of the Downtown Core-zoned property on First Street and Lemon Avenue could be used to partially fund the new station.

"I think it would work great all-around," Barbetta said. "There is no doubt we have outgrown the old location. There was a slight accident there the other day [that] I came upon."

“I would like to see more public input on it and a public workshop.

Scott Whiterell
Chairman
Sarasota County Citizens Advisory
Committee For Public Transportation

”



The downtown Sarasota County Area Transit station is located at the intersection of Lemon Avenue and First Street in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Barbetta noted the potential for even more development on the county's parking-garage site on Ringling Boulevard if the bus station was constructed there.

Chairman Charles Hines said the relocation would be "looking ahead to those future needs" such as an expanded jail and more floors in the county parking garage. "This all ties together really well," Hines noted.

The details have to be worked out, though. Because the bus station would straddle county and city parcels, a property survey is necessary to determine exactly whose land it would sit on, Gable told the commissioners.

Patterson pointed out that an old debate between elected county and city leaders could evolve into a new partnership. She added that previous city commissioners initially did not want the station built on Lemon Avenue.

Therefore, if the county relocated the facility, the city might become a partner in the effort.

Where to put the station "was kind of a dispute between the county and the city," Patterson explained. "[The city commissioners] may be sufficiently pleased so as to not be so very concerned if this ends up [partially] on city property."

The county commissioners directed staff to start work on hiring a design firm that has experience in bus transfer stations.

The firm would look at both the cost of the new station and the expense of any changes in operations, Gable told the board.

UNKNOWN IMPACTS TO RIDERS

Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson and Commissioner Carolyn Mason did voice concern about when residents would be able



The County Commission worked on facilities issues as well as budget matters during its May 16 workshop. Photo by Norman Schimmel

to see the plans and provide comments on the project.


“At what point do we go to the public with this issue?” Robinson asked.

Gable replied that it would be difficult to present plans until a consultant has been able to “fine-tune” some of the operational details.

On May 15, the day before the County Commission workshop, Scott Whiterell, chairman of the county’s Citizens Advisory Committee for Public Transportation (CACPT), sent an email to Hines saying public participation in the process is important. “I would like to see more public input on it and a public workshop,” Whiterell wrote Hines.

It also is unclear how the station’s move a few blocks east would change SCAT’s operations.

During the May 16 workshop, Hines suggested a survey of bus riders to determine where they board and get off the buses and how moving the station would affect them.

Patterson said a downtown circulator running along Main Street — an option that has been revived recently in spite of its failure when it was tried in the past — could help some riders if the bus station is moved further from the downtown core. “That is something we should have had already,” Patterson said of the circulator. 



Charles Hines is chairman of the Sarasota County Commission. Photo by Norman Schimmel

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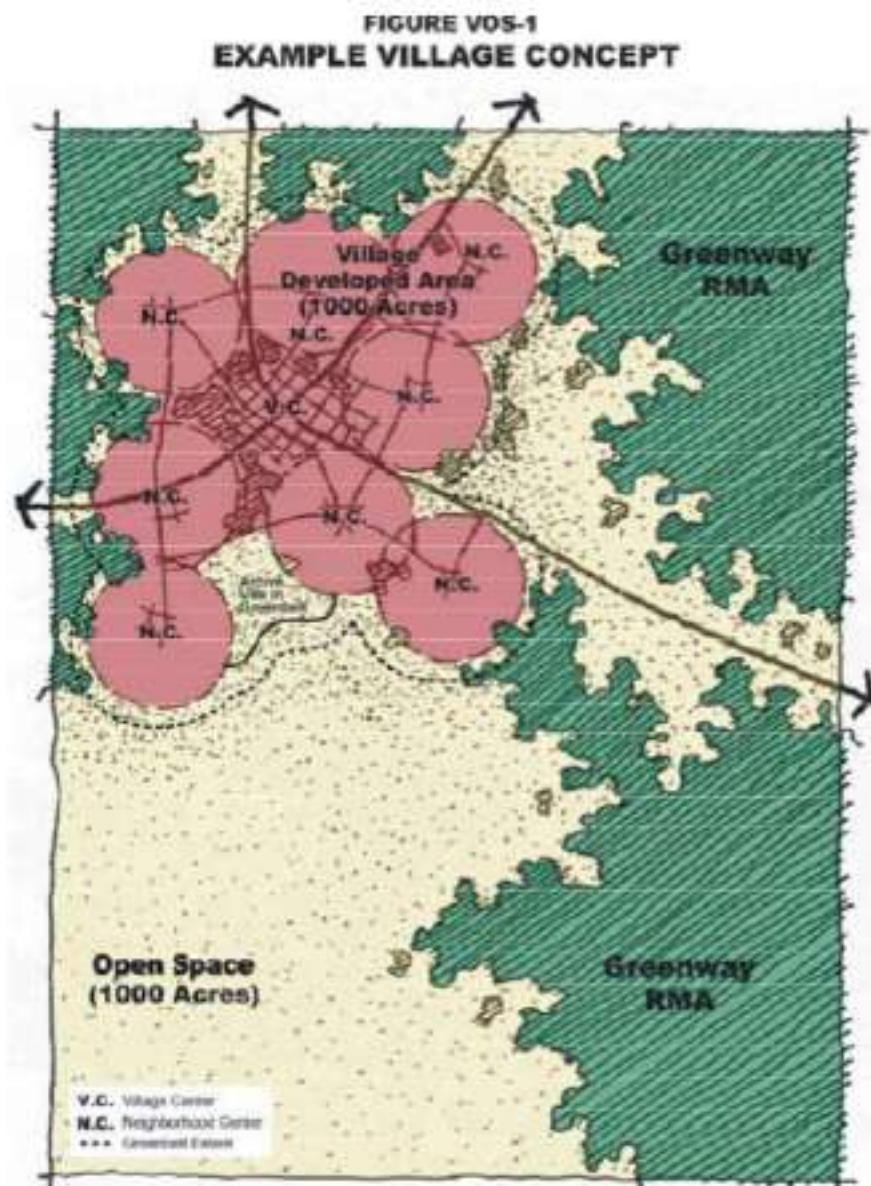


Figure VOS-4
Village Center Prototype

Maximum - 300,000
Minimum - 50,000



'AIN'T NO STOPPIN' US NOW'

A graphic shows village development concepts in the third phase of the Sarasota 2050 revisions. Image courtesy Sarasota County

SARASOTA COUNTY CHUGS ALONG WITH MORE CHANGES TO 2050

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

As part of a process that seems to be growing more predictable with each passing month, the Sarasota County Commission this week pushed forward on a number of further changes to its Sarasota 2050 long-range land-use plan.

Approved a decade ago and intended to encourage the construction of walkable mixed-use, New Urbanist neighborhoods in undeveloped portions of Sarasota County, 2050 has been harshly criticized by developers for its complex web of regulations. They say

the plan's unwieldy rules make it difficult to secure loans for new projects and limit their flexibility when designing neighborhoods. But smart growth supporters and environmentalists charge that any lack of new large-scale developments is attributable to the global recession and the housing bubble, not 2050.

Since early 2011, the county has been moving forward on a plan to rewrite large swaths of 2050, and several changes have already been approved this year. The process has been divided roughly into three phases; county

staff this week presented details of the third phase, which includes some of the most hotly contested provisions, such as fiscal neutrality.

Fiscal neutrality is the principle that development should pay its own way — that any new project should generate enough revenue in the form of impact fees and tax revenue to cover any new burden on county infrastructure.

Last year, the county turned to the hard-right Tennessee consulting firm Laffer Associates to help it reevaluate how it measures fiscal neutrality. The resulting report called for the total elimination of the concept, and it also suggested the county remove all zoning rules and its urban service boundary, generating a mountain of criticism in the process.

According to a May 21 county staff report presented as part of this week's commission

discussion, "staff recommends changes to the *implementation* of the overarching concept of fiscal neutrality for Sarasota 2050 developments and not the concept itself."

The county's long-range planning manager, Allen Parsons, said that, under staff's recommendations, a "demonstration of fiscal neutrality" would still be required for a project to go forward. But the staff plan eliminates the requirement that a developer prove a project's fiscal neutrality "for each phase" of a new neighborhood. However, Parsons explained, if a project's fiscal burdens later "diverge" from predictions, then the board could take action.

Citing the Laffer report, staff wrote that there are "compelling indications" that 2050 development "will be fiscally neutral." Indeed, "to



An aerial map shows the location of the planned Lakewood Ranch South development. Image courtesy Sarasota County

us,” the authors of the Laffer report wrote, “the economics are fairly clear that on average growth does pay for itself.”

Parsons and County Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson also discussed how different timing mechanisms with development can impact a project’s fiscal neutrality. If a developer begins by focusing on affordable housing, a neighborhood is unlikely to come out as fiscally neutral right away, Parsons said. While “rational staff” should be able to adjust for that, the 2050 rules themselves don’t currently offer wiggle room, he added.

County Commissioner Nora Patterson offered the only opposition to staff’s recommendation, arguing that 2050 has the flexibility needed to allow Schroeder-Manatee Ranch to go forward with more than 5,100 residential units at the Villages of Lakewood Ranch South. Revisions to that proposal were in fact approved later the same day.

Those revisions include extending the build-out date for the project to 2034 and accepting an updated fiscal neutrality report, which shows the project is in fact “fiscally positive,” in the words of Todd Pokrywa,



SITE DATA

TOTAL SITE AREA: 5489.7 AC
GREENWAY EXCLUDED AREA: 1620.1 AC
2050 VILLAGE SITE AREA: 3869.6 AC
(DEVELOPMENT AND OPEN SPACE)

EXISTING USE: VACANT/MINING/AGRICULTURAL
EXISTING ZONING: VPD (Village Planned Development) District and OUA with stipulations

DEVELOPMENT

TOTAL DWELLING UNITS: 5,144
TOTAL 2050 DEVELOPED AREA: 1929.9 AC (49.8%)
OPEN SPACE OUTSIDE DEVELOPED AREA: 1942.1 AC (50.1%)

GROSS DEVELOPABLE AREA: 1501.2 AC
(excludes preservation areas and lakes greater than 50 acres)

NET RESIDENTIAL DENSITY: 3.43 DU/AC (3.0 REQUIRED)
(3.0 min, 5.0 max [6.0 max with affordable housing])

COMMERCIAL (OFFICE/RETAIL) DEVELOPMENT

VILLAGE CENTERS: 300,000 SF (TOTAL FOR BOTH VILLAGE CENTERS)
NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS: 90,000 SF

PUBLIC/CIVIC DEVELOPMENT

(to be determined at neighborhood plan stage)

NOTE: INCREASED BUILDING HEIGHT AREA = NEIGHBORHOODS 1, 2 & 3
(SEE MODIFICATIONS NOTE #4 ON MAP 3B AND NEIGHBORHOOD LOCATIONS ON MAP 7A)



THIS MAP CONTAINS NO CHANGES, EXCEPT THE REFLECTION OF A VILLAGE CENTER IN NEIGHBORHOOD 8, FROM THE MAP ADOPTED WITH ORDINANCE 2010-018, DATED 3/04/2010

A graphic shows the concept for village development in Lakewood Ranch South. Image courtesy Sarasota County

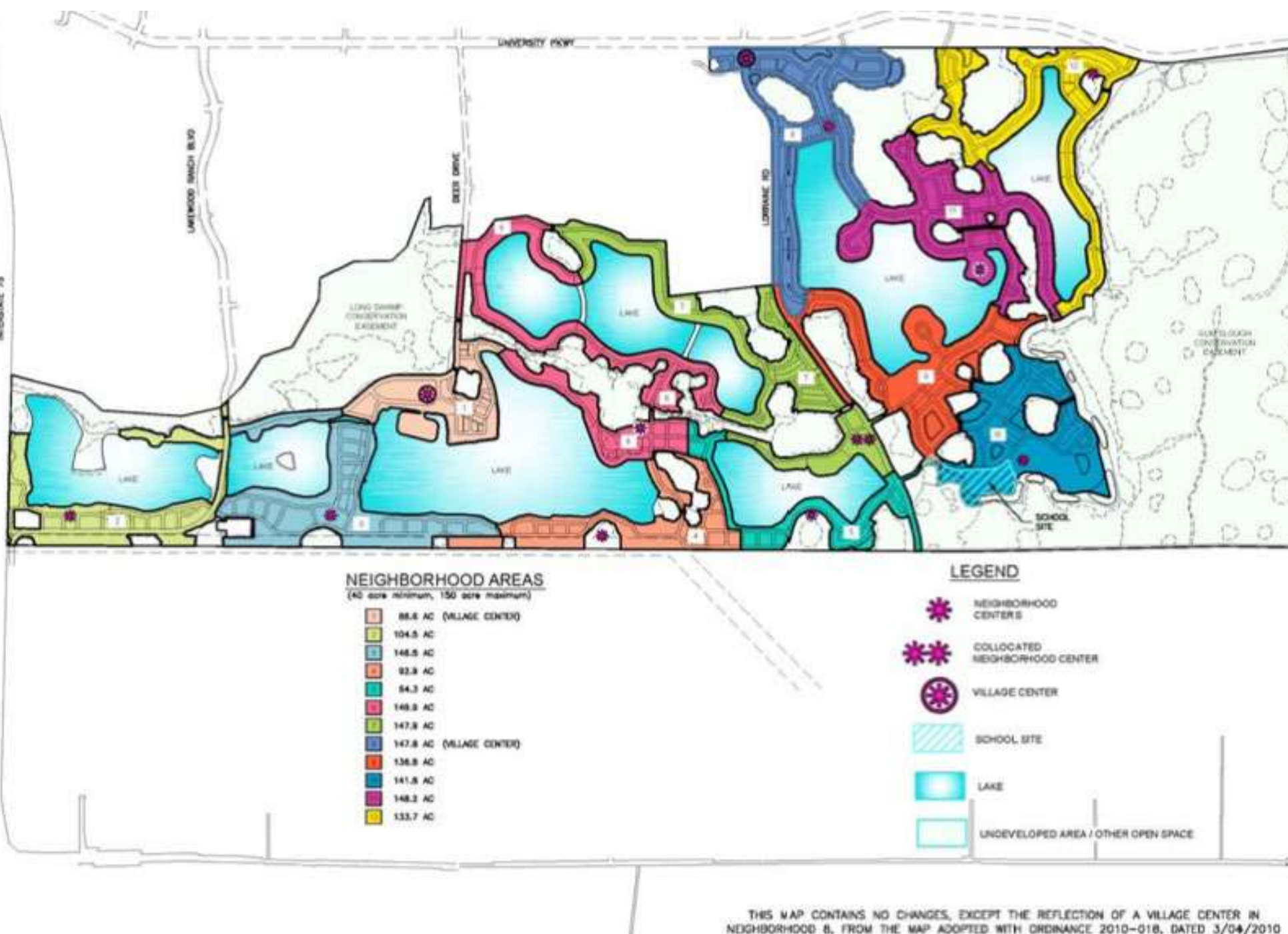
Schroeder-Manatee Ranch vice president of strategic affairs.

Schroeder-Manatee is also making the commitment to build a number of new roads to “fortify the roadway network” and offer alternatives for locals who use Interstate 75 for short north-south trips. Additionally, the company will contribute \$7.5 million toward either an extension of Iona Road south of Fruitville Road or to an overpass that would cross I-75 just south of Nathan Benderson Park.

Thirty-nine percent of the Lakewood Ranch project consists of affordable housing, a

planning decision Pokrywa says was driven by the development’s proximity to major employment centers. Patterson credited Schroeder-Manatee for going above and beyond the affordable housing requirements in 2050, which she said added greatly to the overall “attractiveness” of the proposal.

Kevin Cooper, a vice president of the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce, noted that other communities are looking to Sarasota County’s “village” developments as a “model” for the region. He urged the commission to approve Schroeder-Manatee’s plan, adding that the Villages of Lakewood Ranch South




A graphic offers details about the neighborhoods planned for Lakewood Ranch South. Image courtesy Sarasota County

will “set the bar on what village development will look like.”

Patterson supported those changes — they passed unanimously — but she was eventually the only “No” vote on the third phase of the 2050 changes, which will now go through a public comment phase and return to the Planning Commission and then the County Commission. A tentative end date for that process is scheduled for right before this November’s general election.

During an evening session on Wednesday, Patterson voted with the rest of the commission to approve a number of further 2050 revisions that originally came before the board in March. That move ratified proposed

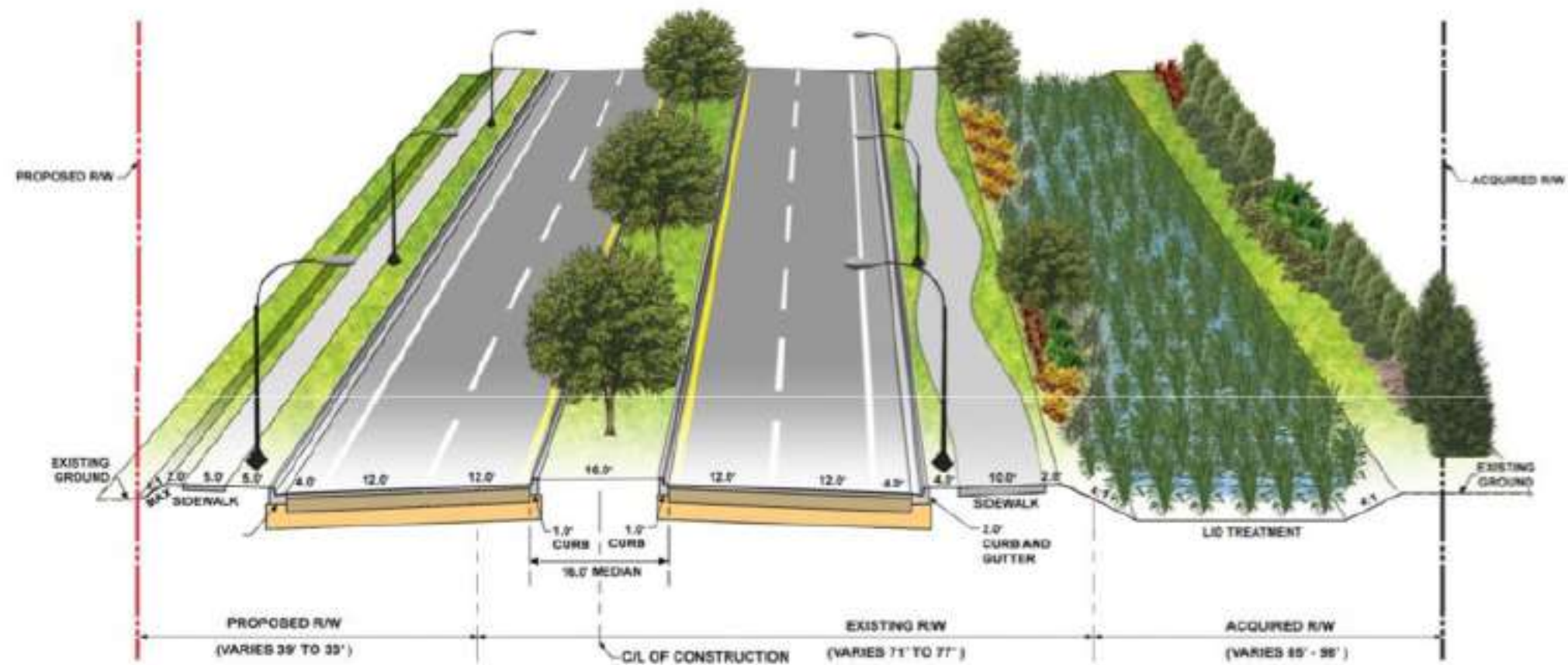
changes such as allowing developers to count stormwater ponds as open space, permitting them to reduce greenbelts between commercial centers and roadways and reducing New Urbanist design standards.

There was little public comment at all on this week’s 2050 changes, and as Parsons noted, “very little feedback” from the state agencies that review local comprehensive plan changes. The Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council, for example, found that the second-phase changes “will not significantly impact the resources and facilities of the County and will provide more economically viable developments for the future of the County and region.” 



The recent sale of more than 1,000 acres of cattle pasture at the intersection of Fruitville and Singletary roads in eastern Sarasota County has spurred speculation that a developer has been awaiting Sarasota 2050 changes before proceeding with a proposal for the property. Photo by Rachel Hackney

WIDENING BEE RIDGE ROAD



A graphic shows how a section of the new four-lane segment of Bee Ridge Road will appear from Mauna Loa Boulevard to Middlesex Place. Image courtesy Sarasota County

THE COUNTY COMMISSION AWARDS A CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT FOR IMPROVEMENTS FROM MAUNA LOA BOULEVARD TO IONA ROAD, WITH THE WORK SET TO BE FINISHED IN 2016

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Three 5-0 votes and a 4-1 split of the Sarasota County Commission cleared the way this week for the widening of 1.68 miles of Bee Ridge Road to four lanes, from Mauna Loa Boulevard to east of Bent Tree Boulevard, and the reconstruction of the two-lane road from Bent Tree to Iona Road.

The resurfacing of the 0.93-mile segment from Bent Tree Boulevard to Iona Road will include the addition of bike lanes, a 10-foot sidewalk on

the south side of the road, LED street lighting and reconstruction of the Iona Road/Bee Ridge Road Extension intersection as a single-lane roundabout.

The completion of all the work is expected in the early summer of 2016.

“Usually, they say a pregnancy goes nine months. This one will be nine years”

John Pecilunas
Chairman
Bee Ridge Neighborhoods Committee

The \$22,019,093.83 project contract went to Westra Construction Corp.

Only one person spoke during the public hearing on county funding

for the project. John Pecilunas, chairman of the Bee Ridge Neighborhoods Committee, thanked the commissioners and county staff for their efforts to make the improvements a reality. "Usually, they say a pregnancy goes nine months," he said. "This one will be nine years"

Commissioner Joe Barbetta cast the single "No" vote, which involved the awarding of a \$1,999,142.25 contract to CDM Smith Inc. for construction engineering and inspection services. Barbetta argued that only one point in a staff ranking separated CDM Smith from HDR Construction Control Corp. Both firms are based in Sarasota County.

CDM Smith will be responsible for daily field inspections of the project work, verification testing and surveying, as well as coordination with private utility companies and with affected businesses and residents along Bee Ridge Road.

"I'm a little concerned," Barbetta said. "This vote is so close." Further, one of the five county employees who participated in the

ranking appeared to have changed his vote to give CDM Smith the edge, Barbetta added. "I have a real problem when you have \$2 million worth of contracts and you're one point apart."

However, Barbetta told his colleagues and staff, "I don't want to mess up the project ..." Barbetta was among the commissioners in April 2012 who advocated the borrowing of funds to speed up the project. A few months ago, the county borrowed about \$10 million to help pay for the work.

Because of Barbetta's concerns regarding the CDM Smith ranking, Chairman Charles Hines called for separate votes on each staff recommendation relative to the project. Along with the unanimous decision on the Westra contract, the board was undivided in awarding a \$199,813.32 contract to Cardno TBE for design services on the segment from Mauna Loa Boulevard to Iona Road and in approving a \$375,333 appropriation to the county's Capital Improvement Program for the same section of the project.



An aerial map shows the segment of Bee Ridge Road where construction will take place. Image courtesy Sarasota County

THE DISCUSSION

During the staff presentation, Commissioner Nora Patterson asked Robert Fakhri, design technical manager for county capital projects, whether the two-lane section of Bee Ridge could be widened to four lanes in the future “without having to totally re-crown the road.”

Some adjustment to the sidewalk would be necessary, he replied.

Patterson was surprised, she continued, that more care had not been taken in the design to ensure the widening to four lanes could be undertaken without any significant impact. She added that the board originally wanted to make the section from Bent Tree Boulevard to Iona Road four lanes, but it did not have sufficient funding.

“We kind of had to live with the funds, with the budget, we had,” Fakhri told her.

During his remarks, Fakhri also pointed out that the county had to acquire 46 pieces of property for right of way along the project


route. Forty-three of those were voluntary acquisitions, he added.

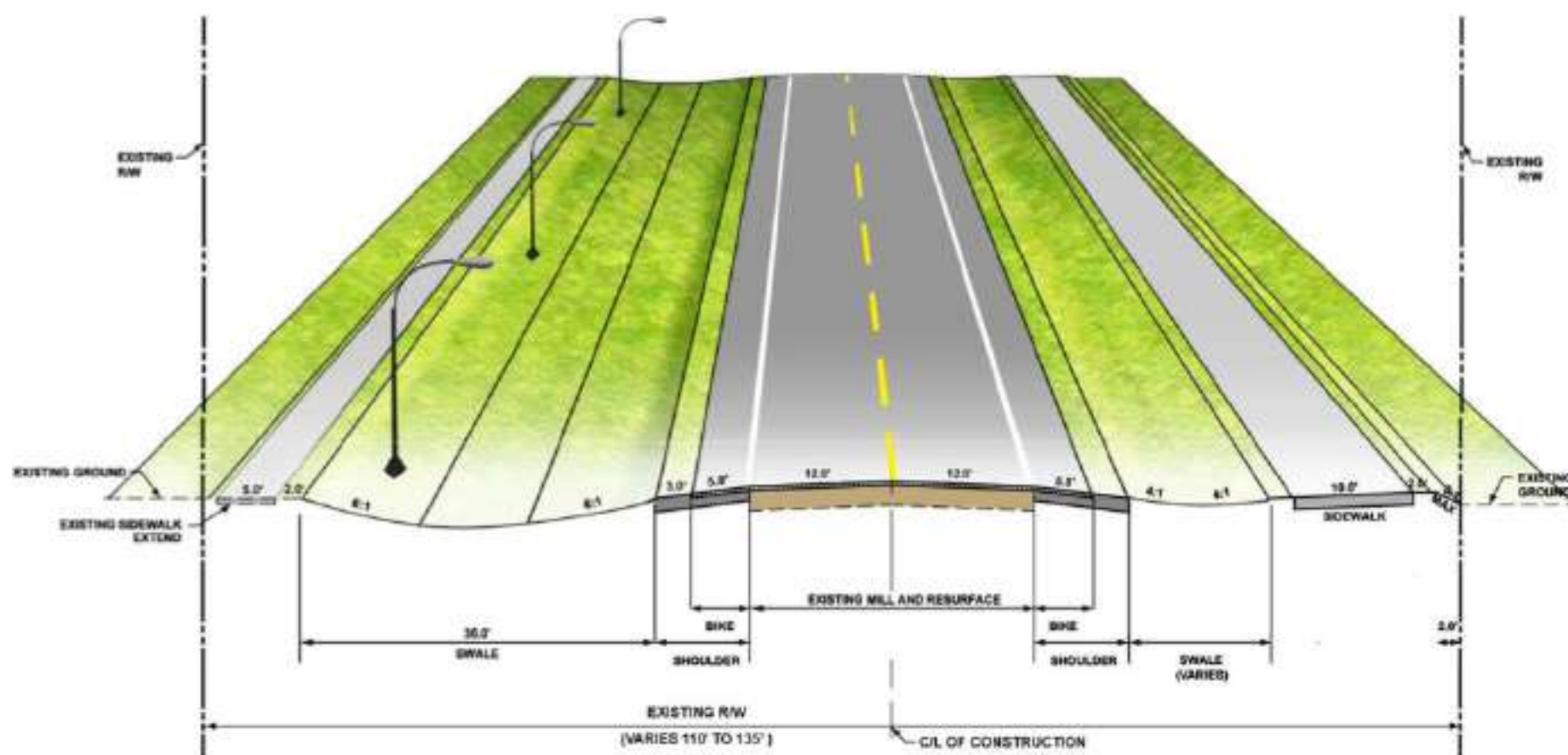
Barbetta queried Thai Tran, transportation manager for county capital projects, about the ranking of the firms that had competed for the construction engineering and inspection services contract.

“It’s too subjective,” Barbetta said of the county’s method of choosing firms for professional services contracts. “My theory’s always been don’t use county employees or maybe use two county employees — the project manager and the department head — and then three retired engineers or retired architects who have no horse in the race ...”

He added, “It’s just me. ... When you’re dealing with professional services, it’s very arbitrary and very subjective.”

Still, he told Tran, “I respect your opinion.”

“This is the process that we have,” Patterson said. “I’ve complained about it for five years,” Barbetta responded. 



A graphic shows plans for improvements to the two-lane segment from Bent Tree Boulevard to Iona Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County



\$9.8 MILLION TOWARD NEW INFRASTRUCTURE

The Sarasota Terrace Hotel under construction in the 1920s Photo courtesy scgov.net

WITH NEW BURDENS ON THE TAX COLLECTOR, THE COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES ROADMAP FOR RENOVATION, CONSTRUCTION

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

The Sarasota County Commission last week gave the nod to move forward on approximately \$9.8 million in infrastructure acquisition and improvements — an investment necessitated in part by new driver license responsibilities passed on to the county tax collector by the Florida Legislature.

In 2011, the Florida Legislature approved a measure requiring tax collectors to take over all driver license transactions by June 2015. According to Sarasota County Chief Deputy Tax Collector

Liz Klaber, that means 45,000 more transactions for her office annually. The tax collector has been handling driver license renewals and other common procedures since 1996, but the state Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles' facility on Pompano Avenue, behind Robarts Arena, has for years been the only spot in the county for driving tests, one of the responsibilities that will fall on the tax collector next summer.

And while Florida tax collectors will be receiving some

“*Do these projects as quickly as possible. This is key infrastructure.*”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County





A vintage postcard shows the Sarasota Terrace Hotel, now home to the Sarasota County Tax Collector and other government services. Photo courtesy scgov.net

revenue from the state for taking over those tasks, Klaber tells *The Sarasota News Leader* she doesn't believe it will cover the new costs the office will face. "I know tax collectors would like to get more," she says.

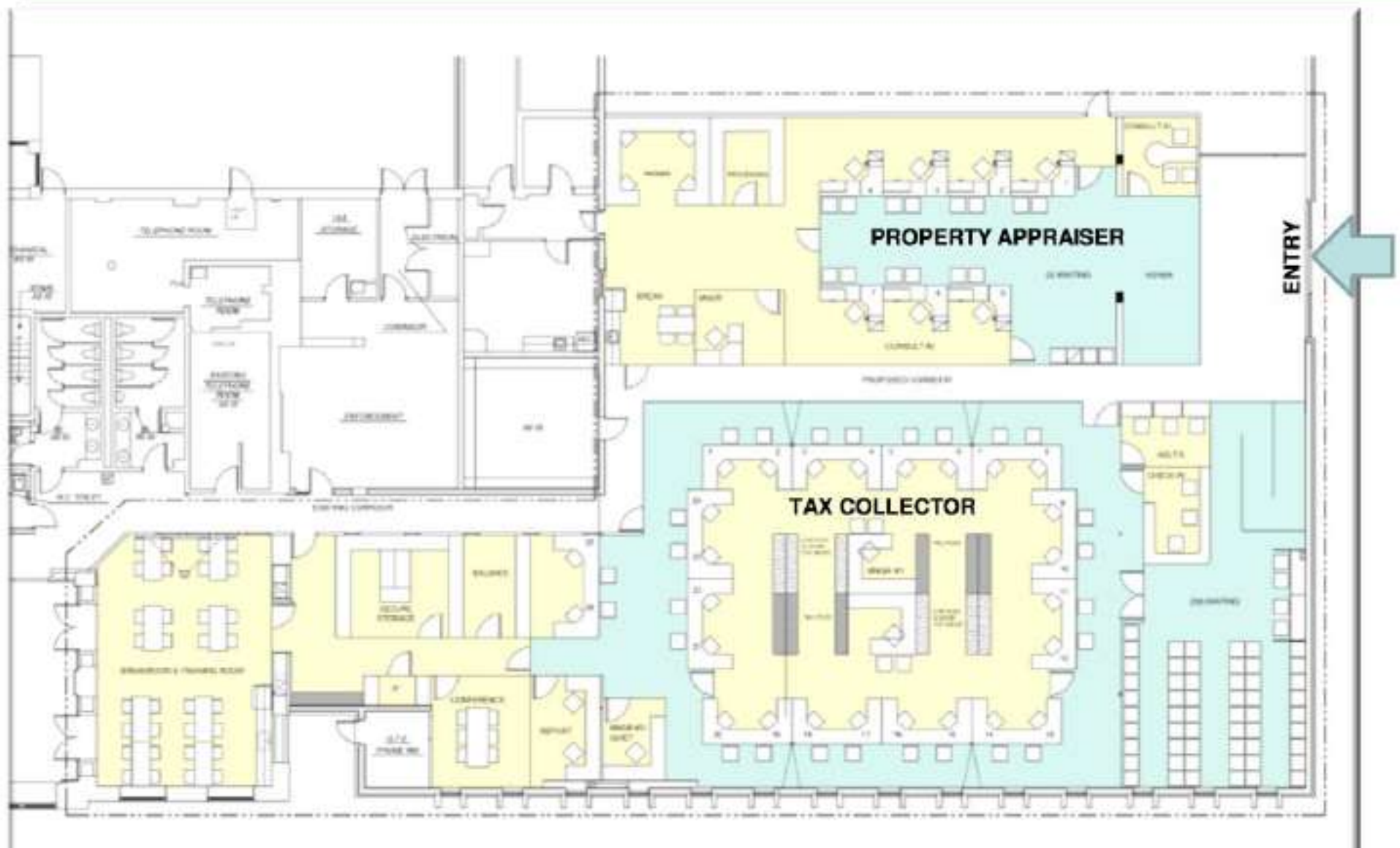
So with all those new customers and all those new tasks to be completed, the tax collector needs more space. The county's director of general services, Ed Gable, on May 16 outlined a plan to renovate the tax collector's space in the downtown Terrace building and in the R.L. Anderson Administration Building in Venice and to construct a new south Sarasota facility where the tax collector can conduct those driving tests.

The Terrace building upgrades are expected to cost \$1.2 million; the Anderson improvements, \$590,000. The deal to purchase the south Sarasota driving test property hasn't yet been finalized, but Gable estimated the cost to be about \$1.5 million for acquisition, plus \$2.69 million to build the actual test track, parking lot and building.

That new office will be located just off Clark Road, with close access to Interstate 75, which should make visits quicker for South County residents. Over time, according to Klaber, the tax collector would like to draw more customers to that location to lighten the load on its crowded, parking-deficient downtown spot.

Sarasota County
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Terrace Building Renovations



A schematic shows the planned modifications to the offices of the Sarasota County Tax Collector and Property Appraiser in the Terrace Building to accommodate the drivers' license responsibilities the Tax Collector's Office will have to take on starting in June 2015. Image courtesy Sarasota County


But with the tax collector scheduled to take over driving test responsibilities next June, there is no way the new location will be ready. In the meantime, Klaber says, the tax collector has discussed the possibility of temporarily taking over the Pompano Avenue facility, a proposal to which she says the state is amenable.

In addition to all those tax collector improvements, the commission also approved a plan to take advantage of the R.L. Anderson renovations by building new courtrooms there and eventually moving the tax collector's, property appraiser's and supervisor of elections' staffs out altogether.

That investment comes after years of complaints from South County lawyers who say the court system's current physical layout limits access to the justice system for

those in North Port or Englewood or other points southward. It can take an hour and a half for someone in South County to come downtown for a five-minute hearing, County Commissioner Christine Robinson pointed out to the *News Leader* last summer.

Gable told the commissioners the expansion of courtrooms at R. L. Anderson — expected to cost \$3.8 million — could serve the county well for 15 to 20 years. Robinson called the plan a “big, big deal” and an opportunity to upgrade security at the site, which she said is lacking. “It’s a step in the right direction for our future,” she added.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta also praised the plan, urging staff to go at it full-speed. “Do these projects as quickly as possible,” he said. “This is key infrastructure.” 

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CATALYST OR CUDGEL?



(From left) Dr. Mark Kauffman, Jonathan Parks, Selina Wilson (with Parks' office) and Joel Freedman, a planning consultant, speak to the City Commission about the Rosemary Square project. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

ROSEMARY SQUARE TEAM GOES TO THE MAT AND WINS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Maybe it was too much of a good thing: a proven local architect and a veteran local developer offering to create a mixed-use project in a blighted area two blocks from downtown, using private financing.

A year ago, the city asked for proposals regarding the former community garden site on Sixth Street (aka Boulevard of the Arts). The city wanted a “catalyst project” that would jump-start interest in the Rosemary District north of Fruitville Road and downtown. The city received

exactly one response. During the Monday, May 19, afternoon session of the City Commission meeting, board members picked apart the deal they were being asked to approve.

“This is risky adventure,” said developer Dr. Mark Kauffman. “We are looking to be the seminal project for the district.” He calls his proposal Rosemary Square, in part, because a public square lined with shops and cafés is a feature of the design.

Commissioners, however, were concerned

“ I think this is very exciting. I don't think we should get too mired in the details right now. ”

Suzanne Atwell
Commissioner
City of Sarasota



with the perception that they would be giving away the publicly owned and abandoned garden and an adjacent parking lot on Fifth Street. Kauffman's proposal called for him to receive "credits" against the \$1,054,000 purchase price in exchange for building "certain improvements providing benefit to the public," said Chief Planner Ryan Chapdelain with the city's Neighborhood and Building Services Department.

Kauffman and staff were not asking the City Commission to agree to the deal at the

meeting. They were simply laying out the parameters of the deal so a final document could be produced for signatures. "They'll get credit for 40 public parking spaces, and [improvements to] the roadway," said city Purchasing Director Mary Tucker.

"It looks like the credits exceed the purchase price," said Vice Mayor Susan Chapman.

"How much are they paying the city for this property?" asked Mayor Willie Shaw.



(From left) Attorney Brenda Patten, Dr. Mark Kauffman, Jonathan Parks, Selina Wilson and Joel Freedman gather before the City Commission as the Rosemary Square team. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

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- i. Experience of your company or firm with the services, products or combination thereof as stated in the scope of work or specification.

Sample Projects Developed

PROJECT NAME	LOCATION
Hollywood 20	Main Street and 301
Courthouse Center	Main Street and 301
P.F. Chang's	Osprey Avenue and US 41
Bank of Commerce Building	Ringling Boulevard and Links Avenue
Stearns Bank Building	Ringling Boulevard and Links Avenue
University Plaza	University Boulevard
Siesta Key Beach Plaza	Siesta Key Village on Ocean Boulevard
Arches	Siesta Key Village on Ocean Boulevard
Tijuana Flats/Yogurtology	US 41
Sarasota Orthopedic Center	Waldermere Avenue and US 41
Landmark Bank Building	US 301
Palm Aire Plaza	University Boulevard
Florida Cancer Center	Golf Boulevard and US 301
Links Plaza (Park and Eat Here)	Main Street and Links Avenue
Centerplex	Ringling Boulevard, Golf and Links Avenue
Payne Park Plaza	US 301 and Morrell Street

Sample Projects Rehabilitated to Present

PROJECT NAME	LOCATION
Roy's/Flemings Steakhouse Building	Siesta Drive and US 41
Crisp Building	Main Street and US 301
Mira Mar Plaza	Palm Avenue
711/Word of Mouth Center	Osprey Avenue
Pineapple Office Center	Pineapple Avenue
24 North Boulevard Presidents	St. Armand Circle
Chase Bank Building	St. Armand Circle

Sample Projects Designed by Jonathan Parks Architects Locally

PROJECT NAME	LOCATION
Palm Avenue Parking Garage	Palm Avenue
Louies Modern Restaurant	Palm Avenue
Palm Avenue Hotel	Palm Avenue
Citrus Square	Orange Avenue
Fairway Grande Apartments	DeSoto Road
Boast Volkswagen	14th Street (Bradenton)
Ivory Lounge	Main Street

The Rosemary Square team offered a list of past projects in Sarasota County with which its members had been associated. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

“It depends on the credits they will request,” said Chapdelain. “This will be a \$20-million, mixed-use property that isn’t on the tax rolls today.”

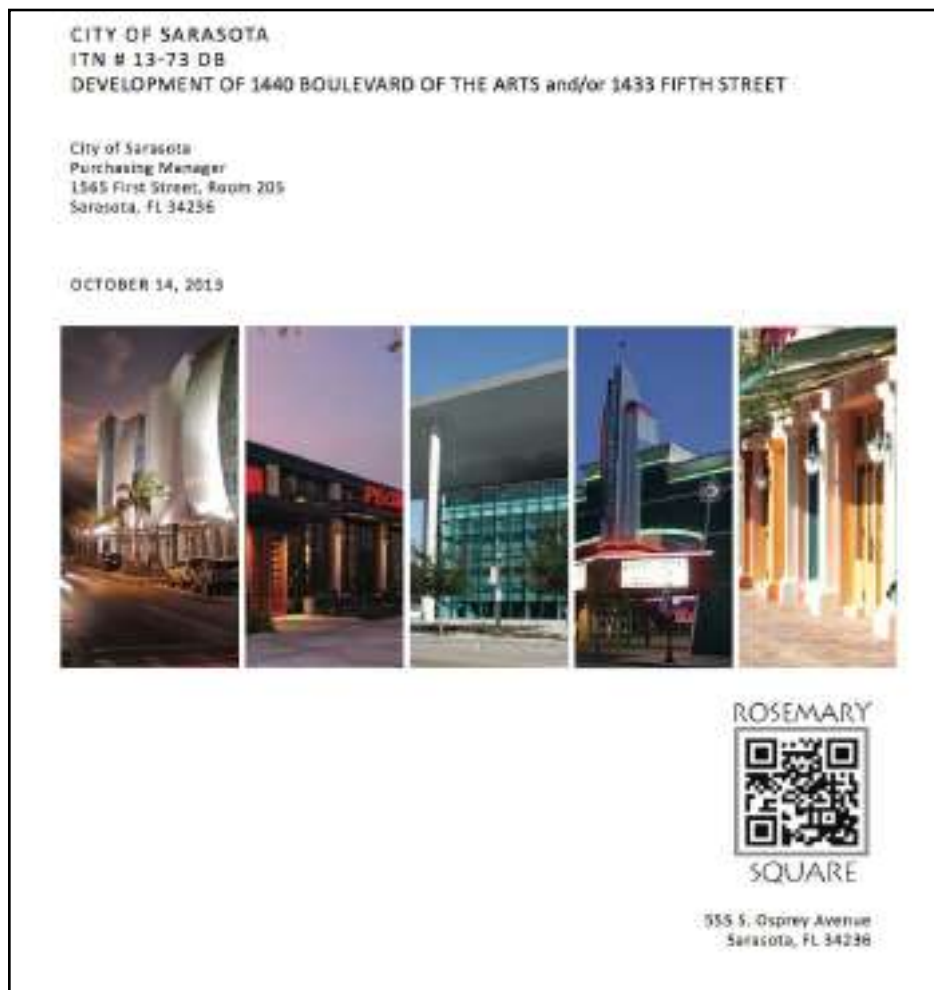
Two alleys are involved in the proposed development. An east-west alley bisects the property. Under the proposed terms, it would be vacated (but not sold) so Kauffman could use it. “If approved, there will need to be a vacation for the east-west alley to unify the property and obtain the density,” explained Chapdelain.

A second north-south alley on the east side of the property would have “an encroachment easement” for the building next door; the alley would be used for parking.

The western half of the Rosemary proposal would feature retail and commercial space around the square and 40 rental units above it. The eastern half would incorporate a boutique theater, either for live performances or for a movie house that would show independent and foreign films, plus a small parking garage.

Kauffman said that if the project were built all at once, as he favors, he might not need use of the alley to the east. But if the theater and parking structure came later, he would need use of that north-south alley for access to the site. Kauffman’s attorney, Brenda Patten, said the “encroachment easement” could be revoked by the city in 30 days if necessary.

“I can’t sit here today and say we will build this without using that alley. I looked back over the last two years, and we are moving very slowly on this,” added Kauffman. “We would love to do it immediately, if we can nail down this agreement.”



The Rosemary Square proposal presented to city staff in October 2013 featured the above cover. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

Kauffman put the commission’s decision in stark terms. “If you want to sell this land and get cash out of it, do it,” he said. “If you have the vision of what this [project] can do for the greater area and the profit you will make from all the other land going up in value, that’s what you should do.”

Architect Jonathan Parks pounded the point home. “You can either jump now or wait.”

HOW AFFORDABLE?

An old chestnut was dragged into the fray when Chapman asked, “What’s the price point for the rentals?”

“Market rents. These will be as small as 500 square feet to 1,100, a mix of studio, one- and two-bedrooms,” said Kauffman. “I don’t know what it’s going to cost yet; \$1.50 per square foot per month?”

“Any affordable housing in it?” asked Chapman.

“No,” he told her.

“But it will bring in \$350,000 per year in property taxes?” asked Commissioner Paul Caragiulo.

“Yes,” said Kauffman.

At that point, Commissioner Shannon Snyder questioned Kauffman’s planning consultant, Joel Freedman, about Kauffman’s record in rebuilding downtown, offering a reminder to his colleagues of that impact.

“Well, there’s Links Plaza and the Hollywood 20 plus the parking garage and P.F. Chang’s [Restaurant] on Mound [Street], the Links [Avenue] office building, the Bank of Commerce, the First State Bank,” responded

Freedman. “Thank goodness he retired [as a physician] to redevelop downtown.”

Then the “hosannas” began. “I think this is very exciting,” said Commissioner Suzanne Atwell. “I don’t think we should get too mired in the details right now.”

“I am glad to see such a project come,” added Shaw.

Chapman did not give up. “When we’re doing these experimental catalysts projects, we should also experiment with **Housing First** or affordable housing units,” she pointed out. “This is a golden opportunity to look at that.”

Snyder made a motion for staff to “move forward,” and it was approved unanimously. “Dr. Kauffman, thank you for putting up with us,” said Snyder. **SNL**

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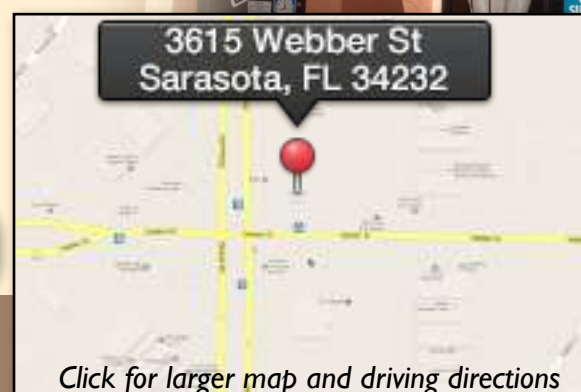
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MORE OF THE MORASS



A city lot on Goodrich Avenue seems to see little utilization, County Commissioner Joe Barbetta says, making it potentially an alternative parking location for city utility vehicles if an Osprey Avenue site is chosen for a homeless shelter. Photo courtesy of Joe Barbetta

A COUNTY COMMISSIONER SUGGESTS THE HOMELESS SHELTER EFFORT NEEDS A BETTER PUBLIC RELATIONS APPROACH WHILE DEBATE CONTINUES OVER CITY STAFF PARKING NEEDS RELATIVE TO ONE PROPOSED SITE

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

The homeless shelter saga revved up again this week, with diverging opinions on how best to move forward interspersed with logistical problems ranging from contamination on the top two proposed sites to burgeoning disagreement over a parking area for city Utilities Department staff.

In an episode Monday that resembled a courtroom cross examination, two city

commissioners who are opposed to a shelter in the city questioned, interrupted and sparred over data with Robert Marbut, the consultant hired to help the city and county address homelessness. (See the related story in this issue.)

Downtown merchants also took the opportunity of the “open to the public” segments of the session to sound off on homelessness.

“Are we going to be any further [along] when we have our joint meeting than we were before?”

Christine Robinson
Vice Chairwoman
Sarasota County Commission



The following day, May 20, the county commissioners heard another update on the progress — or, rather, lack thereof — on the topic. Three commissioners apologized to Marbut, who was in the audience, for remarks made at the City Commission meeting the previous evening.

The city and county boards are scheduled to meet yet again on June 23 for their third discussion of the shelter.

“Are we going to be any further [along] when we have our joint meeting than we were before?” asked County Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson. “It has appeared that there has been a lot of conversation and little action.”

The county commissioners have been united in saying a come-as-you-are shelter is the best option for addressing community homelessness, which has led to increasing problems in downtown Sarasota, from crime to shoppers worried about avoiding homeless people on Main Street.

Opponents say the shelter would increase not only the number of homeless people on the streets but also the number panhandling downtown.

Perhaps the shelter problem now is a public relations problem, County Commissioner Nora Patterson suggested at Tuesday’s meeting.



“*I am excited, Dr. Marbut, with your stick-to-it-ness.*

Carolyn Mason
Commissioner
Sarasota County

”

The city lot on Goodrich Avenue does not seem to be full of vehicles on either weekdays or the weekends, Commissioner Joe Barbetta says. Photo courtesy of Joe Barbetta

To make it possible for a shelter to be built in the City of Sarasota, Patterson said, Marbut's reasoning for advocating that has to be communicated to residents and business owners.

"It needs to be told more," Patterson said.

"It has been — six times," responded County Commissioner Joe Barbetta, referring to the number of public presentations Marbut has made about his proposal.

Patterson said opponents of the shelter have to be brought into the conversation.

"This is a problem of perception," Patterson pointed out.

Many people have been proposing the shelter be built on "a farm somewhere east of [Interstate] 75 and the homeless raise

tomatoes," Patterson added, which is not one of Marbut's suggestions.

CLOSE TO SERVICES

On Tuesday, Marbut told the county commissioners about operations of homeless shelters in Dallas and San Antonio that have led to reductions in the number of homeless people panhandling and living on the streets of those Texas cities.

It was not a new message from Marbut, who is [based in San Antonio](#).

"Before it opened, there was a major problem downtown," Marbut said of the Dallas facility. "You can go to downtown Dallas and see virtually no homeless; you can just go and see it."



An aerial view shows equipment and vehicles at the 1330 N. Osprey Ave. site. Image from Google Maps

The City of San Antonio, meanwhile, has realized a 75-percent reduction in its homeless population.

Downtown Sarasota is where the Sarasota County shelter needs to be built, Marbut and others say. San Antonio's shelter is in its downtown. The Dallas facility is two blocks from City Hall. Both shelters are near the judicial system facilities, the jail and offices of agencies that serve the homeless. Easy access to those services is integral to the success of a homeless shelter, Marbut told the commissioners Tuesday. Eleven of 12 shelters built recently have been located within downtown cores, he added. Pinellas Safe Harbor was constructed in Clearwater because Pinellas County's existing social services and criminal justice operations are located between Tampa and St. Petersburg.

The evidence is clear, Marbut said, that homeless shelters are most effective where the services are. In the case of Sarasota, that is downtown, which is also where data shows most of the community's homeless population are living.

CONTRADICTING ACCOUNTS

On April 22, in one of their joint sessions, the City and County commissions voted 8-2 — with City Commissioner Susan Chapman and then-Vice Mayor Willie Shaw dissenting — to further evaluate and compare the two top sites Marbut has proposed for a shelter.

Challenges remain, though. A report released last month detailed contamination and other logistical challenges involving both parcels — 1800 N. East Ave. and 1330 N. Osprey Ave., the latter of which is owned by the city.



On May 20, Homelessness Coordinator Wayne Applebee updated the County Commission on plans to build a homeless shelter in Sarasota. Photo by Roger Drouin

Another factor that has to be dealt with if the Osprey site is chosen is where to park city utility vehicles, which would be displaced from that property.

Reflective of the tense nature of the shelter debate, the parking matter has ignited another dispute between the county and city.

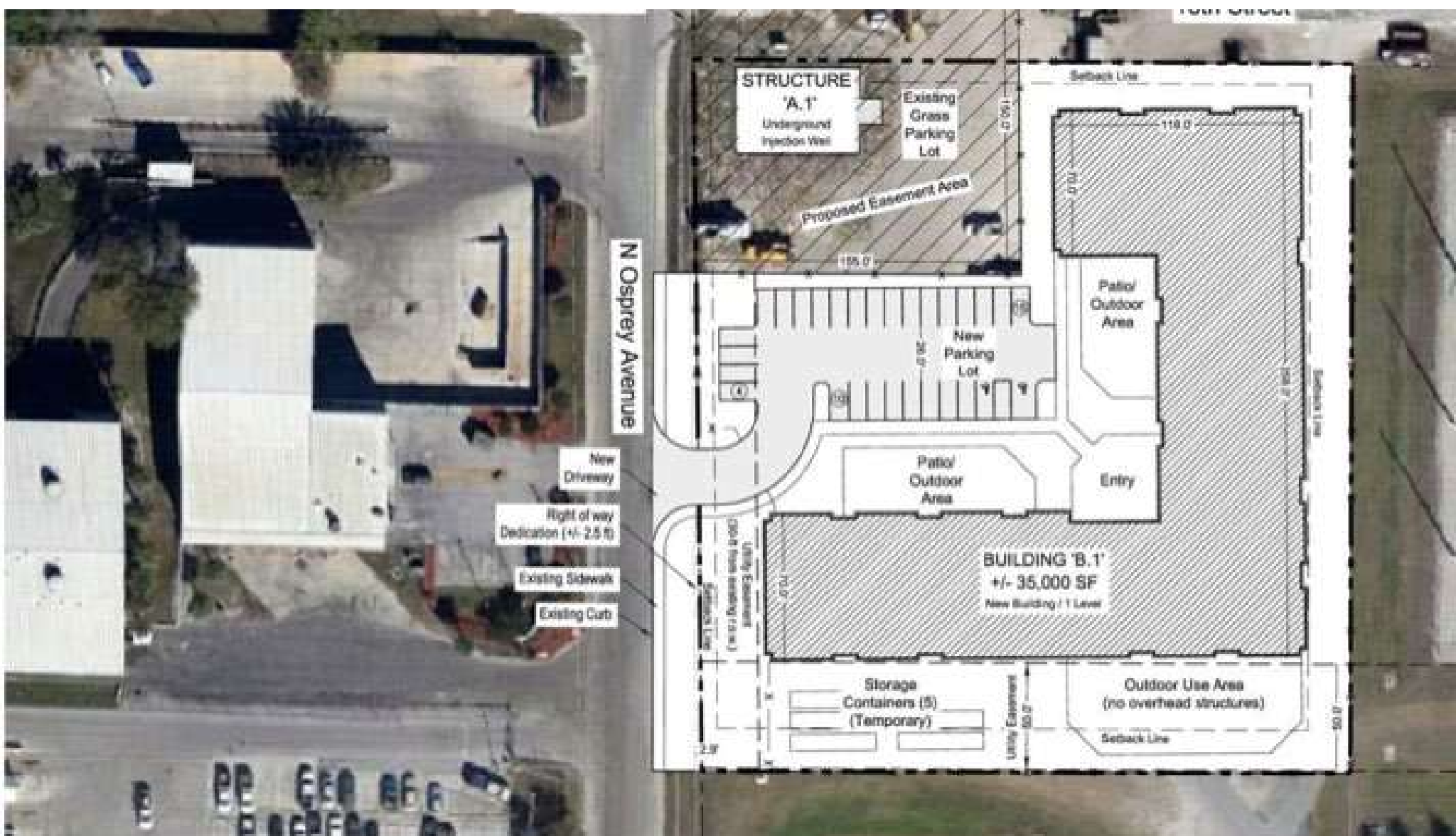
Earlier this month, both Barbetta and County Commission Chairman Charles Hines criticized city discussions about whether the City Commission should agree to purchase a \$1.6 million parcel from Florida Power & Light to use in relocating utility vehicles and storage bins from the Osprey Avenue site.

Why not park the vehicles on one of the city's less-utilized lots nearby, Barbetta asked during an interview Tuesday with *The*

Sarasota News Leader. Barbetta has even done some informal investigation on his own, which pointed to one site with potential close to the Osprey Avenue property. The city parking lot on Goodrich Avenue seems to see little use, he told the *News Leader*. Barbetta said he drove to the site on three different occasions, snapping photos with his smartphone during a visit on Wednesday and again on a weekend day. (See the accompanying photos.)

Statements from city officials contradict Barbetta's characterization of that lot and his photographic evidence.

The county's homelessness coordinator, Wayne Applebee, told the county commissioners on Tuesday, "I did raise that [Goodrich Avenue parking] issue at the [latest] joint city and county staff meeting [on homelessness]."



A consultant for Sarasota County prepared a graphic to show how a homeless shelter could be situated on the 1330 N. Osprey Ave. property. Image courtesy Sarasota County

He added, “They said that [Goodrich] lot is full. That is the statement by the city, that it is full.”

AN APOLOGY

On May 20, three county commissioners — Barbetta, Robinson and Carolyn Mason — expressed to Marbut their displeasure with city leaders grilling him the previous evening during the City Commission meeting.

“I would like to apologize for what I saw as rude and unprofessional treatment of you as you made your presentation,” said Mason, who attended the meeting. “Personally, I am apologizing.”

Robinson, who also attended the city meeting, said it is reasonable to “question things

[but] not OK to attack someone in a way to personally undermine their integrity.”

Marbut was questioned extensively by Vice Mayor Susan Chapman and Mayor Willie Shaw, with their focus on data provided by homeless shelters. They interrupted Marbut at times. “Stop! Time out,” Shaw yelled at one point as Marbut was answering a question. Then Shaw immediately asked another question.

“Thank you for sticking it out with us,” Robinson told Marbut Tuesday. “Most of us recognize we have a problem and are trying to solve it.”

Mason reiterated that sentiment. “I am excited, Dr. Marbut, with your stick-to-it-ness.”

Barbetta said he felt Marbut handled the City Commission situation well. 

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ANOTHER PONZI SCHEME ALLEGED



The Hamptons-style house reported to be the residence of Guy S. Della Penna and Sharon Nizolek is marked by a red flag. It is south of Stickney Point Road on Siesta Key's Peacock Road. Image from Google Maps

THE U.S. SECRET SERVICE AND THE SEC ACCUSE A SIESTA RESIDENT OF MISUSING MORE THAN \$3 MILLION OF INVESTORS' MONEY

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

A 61-year-old Siesta Key resident has been indicted on eight federal counts of wire fraud and 10 counts of mail fraud in connection with an investment fraud scheme, U.S. Attorney A. Lee Bentley III of Tampa announced on Wednesday, May 21.

Also on Wednesday, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) charged the same Siesta resident, Gaeton S. "Guy" Della Penna of 6629 Peacock Lane, with "defrauding investors in a Ponzi scheme that ensued

after he squandered their money on bad investments and personal expenses," an SEC news release says.

The SEC alleges that Della Penna raised \$3.8 million from investors in three private investment funds he operated. "Despite depicting himself as a distinguished trader and profit-maker, Della Penna lost nearly all of their money by making unsuccessful investments and diverting more than a million dollars to

himself for mortgage payments and money for his girlfriend,” the SEC news release adds.

The indictment says Della Penna “pocketed \$1.1 million [from investors] and used \$1.4 million to pay prior investors.”

The SEC’s complaint, also filed in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida, in Tampa, alleges Della Penna often promised clients annual returns of 5 percent along with 80 percent of the trading profits generated with their investments. Later, he allegedly promised some investors 10-percent returns on their money, which he said would be used for investing in small companies, the SEC complaint adds.

If he is convicted, Della Penna faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in federal prison on each federal count.

The indictment notified Penna “that the United States intends to seek a forfeiture money judgment in the amount of more than \$3 million and intends to forfeit any assets that are alleged to be traceable to proceeds of the offense, including funds in bank accounts in the name of Penna’s business entities and his Sarasota residence,” the release from the U.S. Attorney’s Office points out.

Della Penna turned himself in on Wednesday at the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Tampa, William Daniels, a spokesman for that office, told



A Sotheby's International Realty video produced in 2012 and still available on YouTube was part of the effort to sell the 6629 Peacock Road house where Gaeton Della Penna and Sharon Nizolek reportedly reside. Video from [YouTube](#)



The Sam Gibbons Federal Courthouse stands in downtown Tampa. Photo by Fightingraven via Wikimedia Commons

The Sarasota News Leader. Della Penna was released on a \$25,000 signature bond and ordered to surrender his passport.

Daniels added that he expected a status hearing for the case to be scheduled within the next two to three weeks.

THE 'GIRLFRIEND' AND THE HOUSE

In April 2011, Della Penna and Sharon Nizolek were interviewed by the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* for an article about the Peacock Road house south of the Stickney Point Road intersection on Siesta Key.

The article says Nizolek, an [interior designer](#), and Della Penna had been “partners in life for 13 years” and had become “partners in a major house-building project ...”

Regarding their almost 10,000-square-foot home on Siesta Key, it says the house “reminds them so much of the shingle-style homes of Newport, Cape Cod, Kennebunkport or the understated mansions in the tony villages of Long Island’s Hamptons, that the homeowners have named their big white Florida waterside dwelling Hampton.”

The article adds, “Hampton and [an adjacent] vacant acre are for sale as a package or separately. The house itself is on the market for \$8,595,000, offered by Linda Sloan and Cheryl Loeffler of Sotheby’s International Realty. It has five bedrooms, seven and a half baths, an infinity-edge swimming pool with spa, outdoor kitchen, dock with davits, and terraces off every bedroom, with balconies or porches off several other rooms, too.”

Sotheby’s International later produced a video about the house as part of its effort to sell the property.

According to a check of the Sarasota County Property Appraiser’s records, the “Hampton” is owned by Nizolek, who purchased the property in April 2003 for \$1,450,000. The record says the current house was built in 2008 with living area comprising 9,375 square feet over two stories. The assessed value of the land and house in 2013 was \$4,384,559.

THE INDICTMENT

From November 2008 through October 2013, according to the indictment, Della Penna solicited investors, most of whom he met through his church, to purchase promissory notes that would mature in 18 months.

Della Penna formed or is the managing partner of the following limited liability companies in Florida: Gaeton Capital Advisors, A-G Hedge Group, The Contrarian Fund and the New Economy Fund, the indictment says.

According to a search of the Florida Division of Corporations records, all of them except the A-G Hedge Group remain active. Della Penna is listed as the manager of the New Economy Fund with his Peacock Road address on Siesta Key. However, the corporate address for the New Economy Fund is 132 Seaward Way in North Port, the same address given with Della Penna’s name as registered agent for The Contrarian Fund and Gaeton Capital Advisors. The A-G Hedge Group, which was active from Oct. 29, 2008, until Sept. 27, 2013, listed Della Penna as the managing member with a different North Port address: 3438 N. Salford Blvd.


The indictment says that on Jan. 5, 2010, an individual who had invested money in June 2009 “purchased an additional \$400,000 in A-G [Hedge Group] notes. Della Penna did not disclose to this individual A-G’s insolvency and its need for investor money to fund payments to prior investors and to support Della Penna’s spending. A-G ultimately depleted the January 2010 investment as well due to trading losses and payments to Della Penna, and A-G’s noteholders suffered significant losses.”

Between August 2010 and October 2013, Della Penna solicited investors to purchase Contrarian notes, another private offering, the indictment alleges.

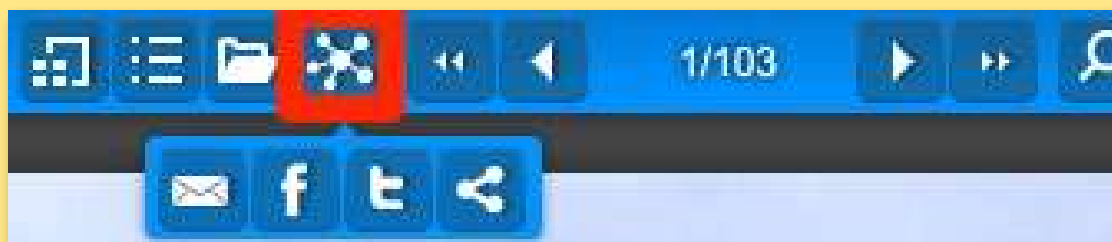
Regarding New Economy, the indictment alleges that the “first investor group consisted of members of a family and the family’s trust entities.” In the fall of 2012, it says, “Della

Penna told one of the family members he planned on doubling investors’ profits by trading options on exchange traded funds. Della Penna did not disclose A-G and Contrarian’s recent history of unsuccessful trading.”

The indictment further alleges that Della Penna raised about \$532,000 from private investors between January 2011 and March 2013 and deposited the money in bank accounts in the name of Gaeton Capital. “Della Penna used only \$40,000 of these funds for investment purposes, spending the balance on payments to earlier investors and for personal expenses,” the indictment says.

This news release from the U.S. Attorney’s office notes that the case was investigated by the U.S. Secret Service and the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office. 

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POOLS, PLAYGROUNDS AND BIKES



Vice Mayor Susan Chapman and Mayor Willie Shaw considered a matter during the May 19 meeting, Shaw's first regular session since he was elected mayor on May 16. All photos by Norman Schimmel

THE CITY COMMISSION THIS WEEK TACKLED PARK OPERATING HOURS, THE FUTURE OF THE LIDO POOL AND A NEW VERSION OF IMPACT FEES

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

On Monday, May 19, the Sarasota City Commission instructed the city attorney to rewrite the ordinance regulating the operating hours of city parks. The instructions followed reports of \$70,000 in vandalism at the new circus-themed playground at Payne Park.

“The shade structure has been destroyed; swings were destroyed. There were broken bottles and drug paraphernalia and cigarette butts strewn about,” said Ryan Chapdelain with the city’s Neighborhood and Development Services Department.

Payne Park and its new playground are now open from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. The playground area is directly across the street from the relatively new Sarasota Police Department.

Todd Kucharski with Public Works suggested his department be given the authority to modify operating hours as needed. “It would allow us to expand this to other parks, if the ordinance said, ‘as posted,’” he suggested.

City Attorney Bob Fournier asked the commissioners if they were ready to “cede all authority to Public Works.”

The vote was unanimous to direct Fournier to work on the problem, but it offered no specific direction.

LIDO BEACH HELP URGED

The first speaker at the meeting during the “open to the public” segment was the Lido Key resident most responsible for the “rescue” of the pool on Lido Beach. At one point in the past, the county threatened to fill the beachfront pool with sand. Carl Shoffstall rallied the residents and lobbied the city and county; the pool remains open for business.

He is still pushing for the pool, but in his remarks Monday, he turned to a larger issue regarding the city’s only barrier island. “The beach is gone,” he told the commissioners. “If

you haven’t been out there, you need to take a look at the beach. God forbid we have a major storm this summer, because there may not be anything out there.”

He urged any and all action possible to expedite a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers joint plan with the city to renourish Lido, using sand from Big Pass. (See the related story in this issue and the related item in *News Briefs*.)

LIDO POOL PLAN APPROVED

Shoffstall’s plan to “rescue” Lido Pool kept it alive, but the facility now needs a \$3 million rehab to stay alive. The residents developed a master plan, which was incorporated into the city’s strategic plan. On Monday, the commissioners were asked to put that plan in motion.



The City Commission has agreed to advertise an Invitation to Negotiate in seeking a new operator of the Lido Pool.

They unanimously approved issuing an ITN, or Invitation To Negotiate, asking developers to propose plans for the beachfront amenity that would include the right to operate it. The estimated \$3 million would be needed to renovate the restrooms and tiki bar, provide a better outdoor dining space along with a meeting room, improve the kitchen, replace the roof and create an outdoor plaza.

The county's lifeguards now use about 1,600 square feet of space in the existing building for maintenance equipment, fitness gear and a kitchen. In response to that information, Commissioner Shannon Snyder said Lido Beach was a very expensive place to use fitness equipment and store maintenance gear. Mary Tucker, the city's purchasing director,

replied that such use of the space was specified in a city-county interlocal agreement.

She added that the city could keep the current concessionaire through 2018, using it to collect pool user fees and run the gift shop and other concessions. She identified about \$1.25 million that the city could use to pay for improvements.

On the other hand, Tucker said, the city could prepare and release an ITN, calling for a developer to fund the improvements. She noted that it would take six to nine months to prepare the ITN, plus time to review and rate the responses. A similar process for the Rosemary District "catalyst project" took about 12 months.



The City Commission listened to a May 19 presentation about multi-modal fees.

The commissioners agreed unanimously to pursue the ITN, asking that a draft be brought back to them for approval.


MULTI-MODAL FEE SQUEAKS BY

Just how much should an impact fee cover? Should it pay for all improvements required by a new development or just some? The county is wrestling with this question under the guise of “fiscal neutrality.”

A little flavor of that issue came up Monday evening after a public hearing on the city’s proposal to replace traffic impact fees (which pay only for roadway improvements) with multi-modal impact fees (that can be used for bicycle and pedestrian improvements, mass transit schemes, etc.).

While there is strong support on the City Commission to switch to the multi-modal concept, the board split on how far it would go. A motion to require new development to pay “full, real costs” failed 2-3 (Mayor Willie Shaw and Vice Mayor Susan Chapman in the minority).

It was followed by a motion to accept the staff proposal, which is based on the current county transportation impact fee schedule, using a partial-pay system. That passed on a 3-2 vote, with Shaw and Chapman again in the minority.

The decision is one more step in the lengthy journey for the city to divorce itself from the narrow uses of traffic impact fees to the multi-modal plan with a greater variety of purposes. 



The city attorney will work on a revised ordinance regarding hours of operation at city parks in the wake of vandalism at Payne Park’s circus-themed playground.



MOVING UP THAT DISCUSSION

A channel marker stands in Big Pass between Lido and Siesta keys. File photo.

THE COUNTY COMMISSION REQUESTS TIME BE FOUND PRIOR TO ITS SUMMER BREAK FOR A DISCUSSION OF THE LIDO BEACH RENOURISHMENT PROJECT

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Citing the importance of the issue, the Sarasota County Commission last week asked County Administrator Tom Harmer not to delay a discussion of the Lido Beach Renourishment Project until September.

After discussing the concerns with staff, Harmer said on May 16 that, “We think we can find time in [June] to have a discussion.”

At that time, Harmer added, staff also will

be prepared to offer recommendations on how best to proceed if the commissioners agree on an independent peer review of the models and report on the project produced by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

“*We’re still reliant on when the report is actually provided. We don’t control that.*”

Tom Harmer
County Administrator
Sarasota County



After learning last week from Sarasota City Engineer Alexandra Davis Shaw that the Corps of Engineers’ [new timeline](#) calls for the material to be released

to the city on June 11, county staff proposed rescheduling the county board's discussion of the project from June 10 until Sept. 19. Staff referenced the full County Commission agendas between now and the beginning of the board's summer recess in early July and full agendas immediately upon its return from that break in August.

Vice Chairman Christine Robinson brought up the rescheduling request during the board's budget workshop on May 16, adding, "I don't envision us being able to talk about this in an allocation of an hour in a meeting. I anticipate this will be a long discussion."

The project as proposed by the City of Sarasota and the Corps of Engineers entails dredging about 1.1 million cubic yards of sand from Big Sarasota Pass to renourish Lido Beach in the

first step of a 50-year-long process to stabilize the beach, which state officials have deemed critically eroded. The approximately \$22 million project includes the construction of three groins on south Lido Key to help keep the sand in place. One of those groins appears to be on county property, county staff has said.

The city and Corps of Engineers will need permits from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and money from Congress to make the initiative feasible, the Corps of Engineers' project manager, Milan A. Mora, explained to community groups last year.

THE POTENTIAL FOR PEER REVIEW

After Robinson raised the matter last week, Commissioner Nora Patterson concurred and



*Lido Key structures are clearly visible north of Big Pass from a Siesta Key vista on Ocean Boulevard.
File photo*



Sarasota native Maria Lane, a professional singer based in New York City, performs in Big Pass on March 1 during the filming of a [video](#) created by Siesta residents and business owners opposed to the dredging of the pass. File photo

broached the idea of the county using funds from its beach maintenance account “to get an outside consultant to review the Army Corps’ analysis.”

Patterson pointed out that she had mentioned that idea to a number of groups and, “for the most part, that was a very well received suggestion ...”

Patterson noted that Virginia Haley, president of the county’s tourism office, Visit Sarasota County, had suggested Dr. Stephen Leatherman might be a good choice for such a review. Leatherman, known nationally as Dr. Beach, posts an annual Top 10 list of beaches in the nation; Siesta Public Beach won the No. 1 ranking in 2011-12.

Patterson added that Laird Wreford, the county’s manager of coastal resources, had told

her he had in mind a coastal engineering firm that he felt would be trusted by all sides to do the review. “I would love to have something from somebody independent of the Army Corps and who doesn’t actually make a living from dredging,” she told her colleagues.

Robinson responded that she wanted to hear from county staff members, after their thorough review of the Corps of Engineers’ material, before considering pursuing a peer review.

Robinson also pointed out, as she had [a couple of months ago](#), that she found it inappropriate for members of the public to take positions on the Corps of Engineers’ plan before seeing the material. (Residents and organizations of Siesta Key and the nonprofit organization [Save Our Siesta Sand 2](#) have announced opposition to the proposed dredging of Big Pass,



Milan A. Mora, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ project manager for the Lido Beach renourishment effort, discussed the proposal with the City and County commissions in late October 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel

which never has had sand removed from it, as well as to the groins' construction.)

"I would really like to just have staff look at it [first]," Robinson continued.

"I totally agree with Commissioner Robinson," Commissioner Joe Barbetta said of rescheduling the board's discussion of the Corps of Engineers' materials. Regarding Patterson's proposal about hiring a consultant, he added, "I don't think we're anywhere near that stage yet."

He stressed, "Lido Beach is falling into the water right now, and it's not good." (See the related item in *News Briefs* this week.) He also agreed with Robinson's concern that "too many people in this community make decisions ... before the facts are out."

Barbetta added, "Maybe we end up with the third party [to review the materials] and maybe we don't. But to talk about that now is just totally premature."

Chairman Charles Hines told Harmer, "We need to find time [for the board discussion]," without consideration of any other factors right now.

"I concur," Commissioner Carolyn Mason said.

"I actually agree with you," Patterson responded, adding that a June presentation of the material by staff, while the board is still crafting its 2015 fiscal year budget, would be the best time to consider options.


Patterson also defended the groups that have issued position statements on the Corps of Engineers' proposal. "They didn't really have [public opinions] prior to hearing any details," she pointed out. "There were some pretty

elaborate presentations by the Army Corps to various groups [last year], and it's pretty natural [for concerns to arise], especially given the history of this particular proposal, which goes way, way back, with a lot of citizens' angst connected to it."

Save Our Siesta Sand 2 is modeled on an organization that opposed a proposal to dredge Big Pass in the early 1990s for a Venice renourishment project.

Harmer reminded the commissioners that one challenge they and staff have faced has been numerous delays in the release of the Corps of Engineers' materials. "We've been anticipating this report for some time," he said. "The time frame keeps getting pushed out."

At the end of the May 16 workshop, Harmer told the board he had met with Wreford and Matt Osterhoudt, acting director of the county's Natural Resources Department, during the lunch break. They will work on a June presentation, Harmer added, but they still were nervous about how much time they will have to review the Corps of Engineers documents' beforehand. "We're still reliant on when the report is actually provided," Harmer pointed out. "We don't control that."

During a Sept. 18, 2013 presentation to the county's Coastal Advisory Board, the Corps of Engineers' project manager, Mora, indicated the federal agency would be able to start the state permitting process in late October or early November of 2013. Then, on Dec. 5, 2013, he told members of the Siesta Key Association that the Army Corps expected to start the permitting process in late January or early February. Subsequently, the timeline for releasing the new modeling materials has been pushed back several times. 

5¢ Levy Allocation



Notes: Initial 2% Levy - effective November 1, 1988
First additional 1% Levy - effective April 1, 1997
Second additional 1% Levy - effective May 1, 2007
Additional 1/2% Levy - effective May 1, 2010
Second additional 1/2% Levy - effective May 1, 2011

20% County Beach Maintenance (as of October 1, 2009 w/2yr review)

12.5% Promotion (as of May 1, 2011); Capital Projects/Events (as of May 1, 2013)

**50% Beach Maintenance – revenue allocated to County and Municipalities based on population
Municipalities expend for Beach Renourishment*

PLAN OF ATTACK

*A chart shows how revenue from the five cents of the county's Tourist Development Tax is allocated.
Image courtesy Sarasota County*

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONER CHAIRWOMAN OF THE TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL SPURS THE ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS TO FIGHT HER COLLEAGUES' PROPOSED REDUCTION IN TOURISM PROMOTIONAL FUNDS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The day before the topic was expected to arise again during a Sarasota County Commission workshop, the chairwoman of the county's Tourist Development Council (TDC) — Commissioner Nora Patterson — urged the council members to fight a proposal by some of her colleagues to reduce the amount of money designated for promoting the county in Visit Sarasota County

marketing campaigns. (See the related story in this issue.)

"I was concerned about the \$15 million as a cap," said TDC member Sharon Cunningham of [Cunningham Property Management Corp.](#) on Siesta Key, who brought up the matter on May 15. "I'm just concerned ... that we're going to hurt ourselves for the future if the

“We will lose market share; we will lose momentum.”

Jeffrey Mayers
General Manager
The Resort at Longboat Key Club

commissioners decide to put a cap on some of the funds.”

“I’m concerned as well,” Patterson replied.

Over the years, she explained, the commissioners have been “fairly loose in [their] definition of what is considered promotion,” as they allocated Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue set aside for that purpose.

For example, she said, promotion funds have been used for infrastructure at Nathan Benderson Park’s rowing venue.

Payments on the loan the county took out for renovations of Ed Smith Stadium also come out of the promotion account, she added. However, because TDT revenue has continued

to grow since 2011, she noted, that account has more money in it than the county needs to cover the loan payments and interest.

Right now, she continued, it takes \$1.2 million per year in payments for the approximately \$21 million in borrowed funds.

Patterson explained that the proceeds coming in above the amount needed for the bond payments could be used for other purposes, if the County Commission chose to take such action.

As far as she was concerned, she continued, when the County Commission raised the TDT on hotel and condo rentals to 5 percent as of May 1, 2011, the understanding was that



Integrated Marketing Campaign

FY 2013 – 2014

- Advertising (Print, Digital, Out of Home)**
 - Earned Media (PR)**
 - Website (Responsive Design)**
 - Content, Content, Content**
- Sales (Outreach: TA’s, TO’s, Mtg Planners)**
- Sports Marketing (Event Rights Holders)**

A graphic presented to the Tourist Development Council in January shows facets of Visit Sarasota County’s marketing campaign for 2013-14. Image courtesy Sarasota County

promotional efforts would benefit from some of the forthcoming extra income.

Therefore, capping the revenue dedicated to promotional efforts would be going back on a promise, Patterson told the TDC members. Nonetheless, she said, “There is disagreement with my perspective at [the County Commission dais].”

She added that the TDT revenue does not “feel like real money to the board.”

When TDC Vice Chairman John Ryan, president and CEO of the Venice Area Chamber of Commerce, pointed out that he and his fellow advisory board members voted unanimously against a cap at their March meeting, Patterson replied, “[That] was definitely put on the [County Commission] table by me.”

However, she continued, the Gulf Coast Builders Exchange had just sent a letter to the County Commission supporting a cap. She told Ryan she had seen no letter from the Venice Chamber opposing one.

“Over the years, we’ve had people making end runs, trying to get into the [promotion] pot of money,” TDC member Tony Swain told his colleagues. “To me, it looked like this cap was just another end run to take money from what has been successful.”

Patterson reminded the TDC members, “Your political power as a board is not as great as [that of] the organizations you represent.”

Virginia Haley, president of the county’s tourism agency, Visit Sarasota County, explained to the board that some of the commissioners are considering a variety of potential capital projects for which money diverted from promotions could be used. Among them are an equestrian center in South County, a conference center in Sarasota, a bayfront aquarium

in Sarasota, a cultural center on the Sarasota bayfront and mid-county sports fields.

Patterson noted that a conference center could cost between \$40 million and \$50 million to build, and the county probably would have to allocate an extra \$500,000 per year for its operations after it was completed.

“The price tag of all these things [together] is really very high,” Patterson added. “I don’t see that putting some kind of cap on the arts and promotion ... is going to fill all these dreams.”


She continued, “I think I’m speaking to the choir here, but we really need to get people involved in this conversation.”

Cunningham asked whether Patterson was suggesting the TDC members discuss the matter with the Chambers of Commerce and other organizations with which they are involved, seeking letters from them opposing a cap.

“I’m a collegial member of the commission ... and I’m not a really good spokesman [against the cap],” Patterson replied. Even if she voted against the cap, she pointed out, she would have to “own” it as a member of the commission.

New TDC member Jeffrey Mayers, general manager of [The Resort at Longboat Key Club](#), voiced adamant opposition to a cap. “We will lose market share; we will lose momentum.”

He noted, “There are three hotels that are coming online downtown” and others under discussion. “We have to create that additional demand based on the growth in inventory to keep our businesses thriving.”

“So your opinion needs to be heard, not just here,” Patterson told him. 

SO MANY QUESTIONS



The City Commission took a lot of time to focus on homelessness issues Monday. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ANALYSIS: AS THE DEBATE CONTINUES OVER A COME-AS-YOU-ARE SHELTER, COMMUNITY LEADERS DIG MORE DEEPLY INTO THE PROS AND CONS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

There never seems to be enough opportunity to discuss Sarasota's problem with homelessness. City commissioners literally ran out of time on Monday, May 19, taking testimony and asking questions until they had exhausted their afternoon session and dinner hour.

Something similar happened on April 1, when a joint meeting of the City and County commissions was "hijacked" for three hours by public testimony and

commissioner discussions about vagrancy and homelessness.

As far as nuances on the subject, there are many, but the essence of the issue is simple:

Should the city and county guarantee shelter to sequester the area's homeless? The decision appears to be "Yes." However, the top two sites selected by Robert Marbut — the consultant to the city and county — have drawn

“My data points are, how many people in jail are homeless? What is the emergency room data or EMS transport data? And I use visual data on the streets. These are three data points I talk about everywhere I go. What elected officials are concerned about is the visual homeless.”

Robert Marbut
Consultant on Homelessness

criticism from two city commissioners and they received an iffy environmental report card after their initial examination. The final report card on the two sites is expected in mid-June.

Meanwhile, pressure is growing daily to “do something.” During Monday’s City Commission meeting, the term “visible homeless” was added to the lexicon. As described, those are the panhandlers, verbal abusers, “comatose” doorway sleepers, fountain bathers, baggage-laden strollers and parking lot partiers who live and “sleep rough” in downtown Sarasota.

‘HOMELESS CALCULUS’

Robert Marbut is a Texas-based consultant specializing in the thorny problem of homelessness and vagrancy. The problem is thorny because state and federal judges refuse to strip a sub-group of citizens of their constitutional rights to use public property. The thorn has been sharpened by the ruling of a federal judge in Miami (upheld on appeal to U.S. District Court in Atlanta) that police cannot jail a person for doing what all people must do at some point — sleep, urinate and defecate.

If there is no public place to do that, but people still do that, it is not a crime even if it is done in public. This is called “the Pottinger Rule” after a Miami man who was arrested and defended by representatives of the American Civil Liberties Union.

The Pottinger “problem” goes away if a community builds a shelter that users can enter or leave at any time. Such a facility is called a “come-as-you-are shelter,” and Marbut is



Homelessness consultant Robert Marbut answers questions during the May 19 City Commission meeting. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

a strong proponent of shelters. One opened May 12 in Gainesville on the site of the old Gainesville Correctional Institution. Volusia County has hired Marbut to study its problems under a \$48,805 contract. On May 18, the *Daytona Beach Journal's* Eileen Zaffiro-Kean reported that Marbut spent three days “under the radar and lived as a homeless person in the Daytona Beach area.” He is scheduled to deliver a report there in August.

Cities and counties do not build million-dollar facilities without a public purpose or public pressure. From Gainesville to Daytona Beach to Sarasota, communities are facing the reality that public accommodations must be offered to those willing to accept free shelter in an effort to move the “visible homeless” out of downtown.

At the Pinellas County come-as-you-are facility, the feeding of the “shelterless” is undertaken by local religious organizations. Gainesville leaders are still wrestling with that issue.

One reason come-as-you-are shelters are popular is price. Per person, per day, they tally about one-quarter of the cost of keeping a prisoner in jail. Further, because medical and dental care is available in a shelter, visits to a hospital emergency room can be forestalled. The expense of indigent care is picked up by taxpayers, one way or the other.

These Pottinger-inspired shelters offer minimal but useful facilities, including a secure place to sleep outside, secure storage for possessions, showers and food. While drugs or alcohol are not permitted in these facilities, admission of a person while he or she is drunk

or stoned is permissible (the “as-you-are” part of the design). There is no maximum length of stay, and the facility is open 24/7/365.

But to move beyond the basic Pottinger services of toilet, water fountain and sleeping pad, the “shelteree” must come inside the facility, meet a caseworker and start to figure out a plan to change his or her life. The ultimate objective is to “graduate” people back into the mainstream, with the help of existing public and nonprofit social service agencies.

Lack of job skills, physical disability, mental problems, war-related issues for veterans, family abuse and other “life events” can and do reduce people to living on the street. For those willing to try to change, a come-as-you-are shelter can help. For those who refuse to change, there is still shelter (but no air conditioning). It is an equation each individual will figure out for himself.



A homeless man sleeps in Five Points Park in June 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Mayor Willie Shaw has argued against a shelter in his district, which includes north Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

FIGHTING FOR NUMBERS

After sleeping rough in Volusia County, Marbut appeared fresh and rested at Monday afternoon's commission session as he sparred over data with Vice Mayor Susan Chapman and Mayor Willie Shaw.

She started by using information from the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, which runs the Pinellas Safe Harbor shelter. "It talks about people who left after one month. Where did they go?" she asked.

"Various places," replied Marbut. "Referrals to other programs, or they went out on their own, or they self-referred, perhaps to a job."

"At the end [of the document] it says, 'Destination upon discharge' and 'Reason

for leaving,'" continued Chapman. "It says, 'Unknown — 3,170.' So we don't know where 3,170 went?"

"If you are part of the [Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)], you can follow the story of the person. This is internal tracking, not through the entire system," said Marbut.

"How do we get HMIS data?" asked Chapman.

"You'd have to ask the Pinellas Sheriff's office," he told her.

"How do we get the data supporting your claims? I want the raw data that supports your statistics," she replied.

"Each city has a different system," said Marbut.



Homeless people gathered outside Selby Library and Five Points Park when the park was temporarily closed in May 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel

“You are asserting this statistic, so where does your data come from?” Chapman asked. “You are our consultant, but you don’t feel responsible to give us this data?”

“If you want the backup data, you have to go to those agencies and request it,” he told her.

Marbut was claiming numbers between 81 and 98 percent reflecting the reductions in visual homelessness in communities with come-as-you-are shelters. The graduation rates for programs ranged between 51 and 83 percent, he said.

“How do we come to the numbers that bring us to where we really know what is happening?

Where do we get those numbers?” asked Mayor Willie Shaw.

“You’ll never hear me use that data,” replied Marbut. “My data points are, how many people in jail are homeless? What is the emergency room data or EMS transport data? And I use visual data on the streets. These are three data points I talk about everywhere I go. What elected officials are concerned about is the visual homeless,” added Marbut.

“Recovery is what we want to see,” said Shaw. “Your numbers do not include that. Is it not a part of the whole system?” “Absolutely, it’s part of the sub-aggregate number. A come-as-you-are shelter is an intake portal, not an



Vice Mayor Susan Chapman asked homelessness consultant Robert Marbut a number of questions about data during the May 19 meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel

agency,” said Marbut. “They might have to go through different needs, [post-traumatic stress disorder], chronic homelessness, families — all have different pathways.”

“People call your program not a shelter, but a ‘jail-ter,’ a shelter feeling more like a corrections facility,” noted Chapman. “Is this a jail diversion program?”

“There is no more cost-effective program, even a traditional shelter. Pinellas Safe Harbor [in Clearwater] is a revolutionary program,” said Marbut. “If you are getting case management, some medical and dental care, job training and placement, it is a starting point to get you into other programs. You don’t get this under a bridge or in jail.”

A SIMPLE CHOICE

Marbut calls it the “velvet hammer.” Once a come-as-you-are shelter is operating, police officers or deputies can confront an ordinance violator with two choices: jail or shelter. “You step up enforcement on people who refuse to obey the law,” said Paul Sutton. As a retired city police officer, he has dealt with homelessness and vagrancy for 30 years in Sarasota. “If you take people to services, there’s a chance they may accept help.”


The chances improve if the other head of the “velvet hammer” is used — stop playing their game. Stop giving panhandlers money; stop mass feedings; stop the giveaways. Marbut says these acts of “kindness” perpetuate homelessness and actually further vagrancy with positive reinforcement. Giving a puppy a treat after it bites you is not a good way to train a dog.

In a nutshell, that is Marbut’s plan. Stop the giveaways and move the “visible homeless” off the streets and into a facility offering case management, with referrals to the types of help each individual may need. Given the choice, said Sutton, “Ninety-nine percent will pick the shelter, and that’s also where the services are.”

“With a shelter, we will touch people we wouldn’t touch otherwise,” noted Pam Merlet, Sarasota County’s Health and Human Services behavioral policy coordinator. “But you can’t make people do anything they don’t want to do.”

So far the skepticism of two Sarasota city commissioners has not slowed down the local shelter process. To use federal money to build a come-as-you-are shelter, a site must be environmentally sound, and it will take about another month for the analyses of the proposed locations on East and Osprey avenues in Sarasota to be completed. One or both sites may fail to pass scrutiny, requiring examination of other potential locations.

But ultimately, the question will be faced: Do something or not? Howls for action are mounting daily from downtown merchants, who fear for their lives and livelihoods. With the heat of summer coming, there are predictions of violence. The “visible homeless” are more visible than ever. If a shelter does not go up on East Avenue or Osprey Avenue, then where will it be built? If not Marbut’s plan, then what?

Cities all over Florida are facing the same fundamental question: Is it now a public duty to provide shelter for the shelterless? 



THE PROPOSED OUTDOOR DISPLAY ORDINANCE HAS BEGUN MAKING ITS WAY THROUGH THE COUNTY PROCESS; THE TEMPORARY USE PERMIT PROVISION WINS ITS EXTENDED SUNSET DATE; AND ROUNDABOUT WORRIES LINGER



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The county Zoning Administration Office has started the process that will determine whether a [revised Siesta Key Overlay District \(SKOD\) ordinance](#) will be approved, allowing some types of outdoor retail and rental displays.

That was the news this week from Donna Thompson, assistant county zoning administrator. She received the paperwork last week from the Siesta committee that has worked

on the proposed changes, she told me on May 19. She put the material in draft ordinance form and sent it to the Office of the County Attorney for review, she added.

After that office has signed off on it, Thompson said, she will schedule the matter for a meeting of the county Planning Commission.

However, because agendas are so tight right now for the County Commission, Thompson



*Siesta Public Beach remains popular with people of all ages, with many families visible year-round.
Photo by Rachel Hackney*

Siesta Seen

explained, she expects that board will not be able to address the proposed changes until after its summer recess. The board will break for about a month starting in the last third of July.

Rick Lizotte, owner of [Comfort Shoes in Siesta Village](#) and one of the leaders of the outdoor display initiative, told me on May 19 that, to his knowledge, the proposal submitted to the county had not changed since the Siesta Key Village Association voted in support of it on April 1.

During the May 1 meeting of the Siesta Key Association (SKA), Commissioner Nora Patterson asked President Michael Shay whether his board had discussed the proposal.

“We had a discussion on this months ago when we saw the first draft,” he replied, “and, to be honest with you, the board was against it.”

SKA Director Deet Jonker pointed out last year that he was on the committee that drew up the SKOD and that he had serious concerns that outdoor displays would make the island look less inviting to residents and visitors.

The SKOD applies to all parts of the island, Village Association leaders have explained. The committee that worked on the revision included representatives from south Siesta businesses.

TUP SUNSET APPROVED

The county commissioners took no longer this week than they did on April 22 with their discussion of the Temporary Use Permits (TUP) provision in the SKOD ordinance. With a unanimous vote after about five minutes of presentation and a quick comment from Commissioner Patterson, the sunset of the TUP provision was extended to June 8, 2016.

No one addressed the County Commission during the public hearing on the matter.

The vote on May 20 also added Halloween to the list of the holidays/special days for which businesses can seek TUPs.

Thompson, the assistant county zoning administrator, pointed out again this week, as she did in April, that only one business had applied for a TUP since the ordinance language was approved in June 2011. That request came in for a TUP for a Halloween event, but it had

FPN: 4344911 Project: SR 758
AT BEACH ROAD ROUNDABOUT
Desc: ROUNDABOUT
Project Length: 0.379 Begin Mile Post: 1.048 End Mile Post: 1.427
Comments:

Phase	Fund	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
PE	HSP	\$292,807				
PE	SA	\$10,000				
CST	DDR			\$39,800		
CST	HSP			\$801,539		
CST	SA			\$10,910		
Project Total:		\$302,807		\$852,249		

A segment of the Florida Department of Transportation Tentative Work Program Report for July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2019 provides details about funding for the roundabout proposed on Siesta Key. Image courtesy FDOT

Siesta Seen

to be denied because Halloween was not on the list.

Patterson did tell her colleagues that, at the request of Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson, she had checked with Terrace East resident Peter van Roekens about his view of adding Halloween to the ordinance. “He basically said, in his words, ‘It’s a non issue,’” Patterson said.

She noted that Van Roekens has been a spokesman for years for residents concerned about noise issues in Siesta Village.

Along with Halloween, the ordinance will allow for TUPs to be issued for the following holidays, beginning no earlier than 11 a.m. and ending at the hour specified:

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

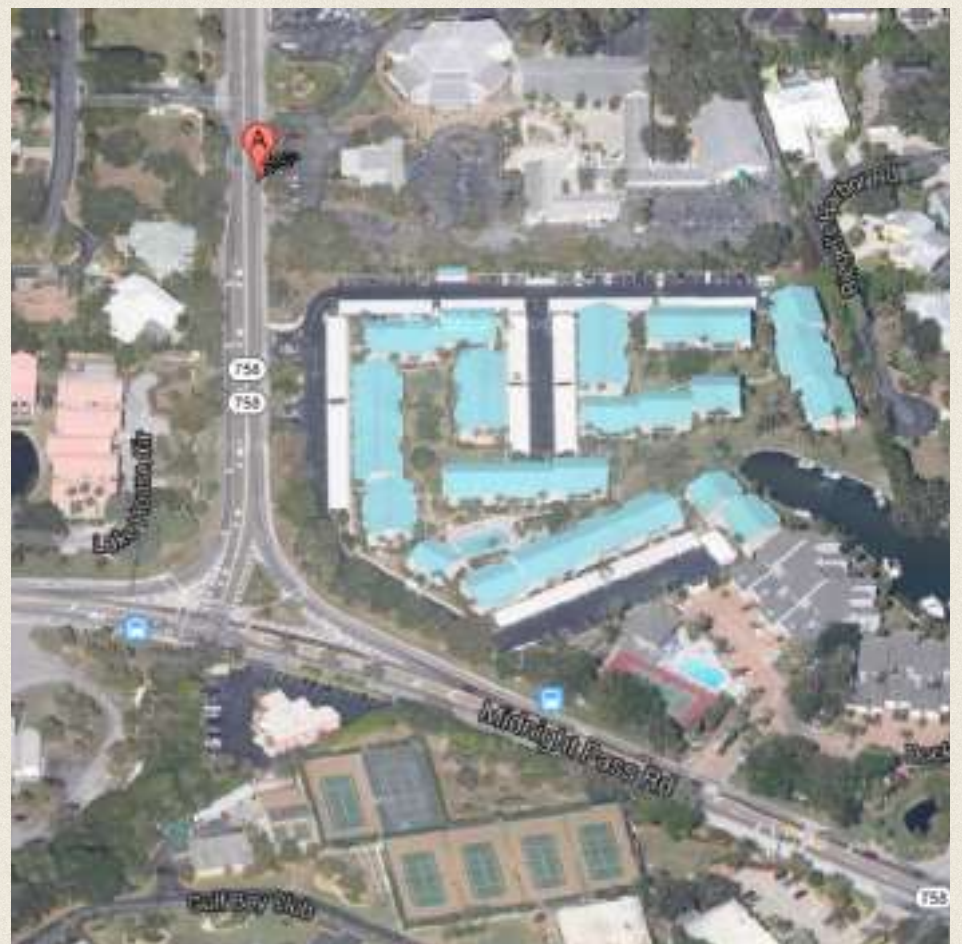
The ordinance also provides for the TUP to include one extra day immediately before or after the holiday for which it is obtained, and it is valid to 10 p.m. that day. “If a second day is requested, all subsequent parties requesting a TUP for that holiday desiring a second day must select the same second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

County noise regulations do apply to all TUPs, the ordinance points out.

ROUNDABOUT WORRIES REMAIN

Although discussion of the subject has died down amid members of Siesta organizations, the proposal of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for a [roundabout at the intersection of Beach Road and Midnight Pass Road](#) is still “hanging fire,” as evidenced by a recent email to the county commissioners.

On May 7, a member of the Siesta Key Condominium Council wrote that she lives on Beach Road across from Fire Station No. 13, in close proximity to the site FDOT has in mind: “I do not understand what they think a



St. Boniface Episcopal Church (marked by red flag) sits north of the intersection of Beach and Midnight Pass roads on Siesta Key. Image from Google Maps

Siesta Seen

roundabout will do. The traffic is bumper to bumper all during season. A roundabout will NOT facilitate traffic flow. People don't even yield for the current yield signs."

The woman added, "It takes us 5 minutes or more to get out of our complex, and that's with the help of the traffic light. Take away that light and it will take us forever to get out. And forget turning left; that won't be possible. ... [Y]ou [also] are adding many more beach parking spaces at that corner. How will those people get out?"

Commissioner Christine Robinson responded on May 7. "I personally expressed concerns

to FDOT as well," she wrote. "FDOT makes the final decision. I highly suggest you focus your attention on FDOT as they can choose to do whatever they want for safety reasons regardless of what the Commission and [the [Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization](#)] says."

Robinson added, "Public outcry greatly helped get the light at Midnight Pass and Stickney Point better regulated by FDOT. You can make a difference."

In the last comment, Robinson was referring to the "No Turn on Red" signage FDOT put up at that intersection during season. After



Siesta business owners and residents hope some type of recycling bins will be available in Siesta Village after the start of the new fiscal year in October. The county already has such bins at its beach accesses on the island. File photo

Siesta Seen

a hue and cry over traffic backups stretching onto South Tamiami Trail, FDOT erected a new sign designed to stop traffic only when pedestrians push a button to use the crosswalk at that intersection.

WHITHER RECYCLING?

During the last Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) meeting, a person asked what had become of the initiative to start a recycling program in the Village. The answer: "It's going through the budget process right now."

That information came from SKVA Vice President Mark Smith, who also serves on the board of the Siesta Key Village Maintenance Corp. That group represents the owners of Village property who are assessed by the

county for the ongoing beautification of the Village.

County staff is at work on the 2015 fiscal year budget, which goes into effect on Oct. 1.

'A TERRIBLE SHAME'

Commissioner Nora Patterson responded on May 17 to a troubling email from visitors to Siesta Key.

A day earlier, a man from Yorkshire, England, emailed the commissioners the following:

"We have been visiting Florida for the last ten years and have always found American people to be courteous and friendly until today when it was my misfortune to meet the man who issues tickets for beach rentals at Siesta Key.



Beach lounge chair and umbrella rentals were available in early March near one of the main paths from the pavilion to Siesta Public Beach. File photo

Siesta Seen

Our daughter is 42 and severely disabled due to [cerebral] palsy. ... [A]s with every visit we drove the 220 miles round trip to the [Siesta] beach as it is one of our favourite places to spend the day."

When they walked up to the person who handles the rentals, requesting two lounge chairs and an umbrella, the writer continued, the man told them he could not rent the equipment, adding, as the English visitor put it, "NO UMBRELLAS TODAY TOO WINDY."


They told him they understood, the writer continued, so they asked for just two loungers so they could sit under the trees, where their daughter would have some shade. "[I]n reply we were told we were not allowed to sit behind where the loungers were given out (20 yards away). ... [We] explained that she needed to be in the shade and close to the restrooms [and] tried to explain that we couldn't drag the wheelchair through the sand and she [could not] use the beach wheelchair as hers is custom made. At first I thought he must not like English people but it seems he treats all customers with the same contempt [because] he was talking to everyone in an arrogant tone as if they were 5 year olds." The writer added, "A local man overheard how [the rentals representative] talked to us and apologised saying it's not usually like this here ... [I]t seems such a shame that the public face of such a lovely place is represented by this person and I am sorry I had to feel the need to contact you regarding this matter." Patterson replied, "That's a terrible shame. I apologize for our community."



Season officially may be over, but visitors still are very visible on Siesta, as evidenced by these three-wheel vehicles headed south on Midnight Pass Road on May 17. Photo by Norman Schimmel

She also sought details about exactly where the incident occurred — whether the person with the rentals represented the county-approved concessionaire near the beach pavilion or a condominium complex.

"Again," she added, "I am sorry for your bad experience. It would help to know where [the man was] because if the gentleman is operating off the public beach it would be easier to see that it does not happen again."

Patterson copied Parks and Recreation Department Director Carolyn Brown on her answer to the Englishman. 



Units in the 2013 Memorial Day Parade make their way down Main Street in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES CLOSED FOR MEMORIAL DAY

City and County of Sarasota administrative offices will be closed Monday, May 26, in observance of Memorial Day, the offices have announced.

Solid waste, yard waste and recycling collections will be handled as usual, according to city and county news releases.

Additionally, the City of Sarasota, in conjunction with the Sarasota Patriotic Observance Committee, will host the annual Memorial Day parade in downtown Sarasota starting at 10 a.m. The theme is *Legacy of Heroes*.

The parade will begin at the intersection of Main Street and Osprey Avenue “and will continue Sarasota’s longstanding history of honoring military personnel,” a city news release adds.

At its conclusion, a ceremony will be held at Chaplain J.D. Hamel Park at the intersection of Main Street and Gulfstream Avenue. The ceremony is expected to begin about 11 a.m. Brig. Gen. Frank Laudano, commandant of Sarasota Military Academy, will be the guest speaker, according to a county release.

“The parade and ceremony [are] an opportunity for the citizens of Sarasota County to honor not only veterans of the Armed Services but police officers, sheriff’s deputies, firefighters and emergency medical personnel,” said Patriotic Observance Committee President Dan Kunkel in the county release.

Marching units will represent veterans’ service organizations, law enforcement agencies, fire departments and their color guards, civic

organizations, high school bands and ROTC units, with historical military equipment, the county release notes.

Additionally, a Venice ceremony will be hosted by the American Legion NO-VEL Post 159 at 10 a.m. at Patriots Park at the northern junction of U.S. Business 41 and U.S. Bypass 41, the county release points out. Attendees are encouraged to bring lawn chairs; water will be provided.

The county release also points out that most Sarasota County government offices, including libraries, recreation centers, chemical collection centers and the Florida Department

of Health in Sarasota County, will be closed on Monday, May 26, in observance of the holiday.

The landfill at 4000 Knights Trail Road in Nokomis will be open, but the administrative office will be closed. The Citizens Convenience Center at 4010 Knights Trail Road in Nokomis also will be open.

No Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) bus or trolley service will be provided on Memorial Day.

Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department's Payne Park Tennis Center will be open from 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

PUBLIC INVITED TO COMMUNITY MEETING ABOUT HURRICANE SEASON

With the 2014 hurricane season beginning June 1 and continuing through November, members of the public are encouraged to attend a joint Sarasota County and City of Sarasota preparedness meeting scheduled for Tuesday, May 27, from 6 to 8 p.m., at the John Chidsey Bay Front Community Center in Sarasota.

The Chidsey Center is located at 803 N. Tamiami Trail. Sarasota County and City of Sarasota leaders will talk about their staffs' roles in handling major storm events "and provide helpful information to aid residents in preparing for hurricane season," a county news release says.

"Because of Sarasota County's coastal location, the area is vulnerable to flooding and other devastation caused by hurricanes," the release adds. "Being prepared is the community's best defense once a storm strikes," it points out.

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

2014 HURRICANE SEASON






BE PREPARED

GET IT TOGETHER

READY OR NOT, HERE IT COMES!

The 2014 hurricane season begins June 1 and continues through November – that's 182 days when we will need to be on the alert and prepared to respond. Join local government officials for a special meeting to learn what's being done now to prepare emergency crews for disaster response. Also, learn what you need to do to ensure that your family and property are protected.

WHO: County Administrator Tom Harner, Sarasota City Manager Tom Barwin, Sarasota County Emergency Management Chief Ed McCrane, Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight and Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino will speak about their staff's roles – and yours – in preparing for a hurricane.

WHAT: 2014 Hurricane Season Kickoff

WHEN: Tuesday, May 27, 6-8 p.m.

WHERE: John Chidsey Bay Front Community Center, 803 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota

WHY: Because of our coastal location, we are vulnerable to flooding and other devastation caused by hurricanes. Being prepared is our best defense once a storm strikes.

For more information, call 861-5000 or visit scgov.net, keyword search Be Prepared.


Sarasota County

Sarasota County provides information in all services, programs or activities. View the 2010 ADA policy at <http://www.sarasotacountyfla.gov/ada.htm>

BOATING SAFETY EVENT SET FOR SATURDAY IN CENTENNIAL PARK

On Saturday, May 24, from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m., the Sarasota Police Department and the Civilian Volunteer Marine Program will team up with representatives of United States Coast Guard Flotilla 84, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, the Longboat Key Police Department and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission for the Interagency Boating Safety Inspection Day at Centennial Park, located at 1059 N. Tamiami Trail (known as the 10th Street Boat Ramp) in Sarasota, the Police Department has announced.

"Target has generously donated children's life jackets" for the occasion, a news release notes. Officers will be handing out educational material to boat owners, and coloring books and other materials will be available for children.

"According to the United States Coast Guard, each year hundreds of lives are lost, thousands are injured and millions of dollars in property damage happens because of

preventable recreational boating accidents on our waterways," said Lt. Kevin Stiff of the Patrol Division in the news release. "The Sarasota Police Department wants everyone to have a safe boating season."

"Families enjoying the Memorial Day weekend may head out for a day on a boat that has seen very little use during the winter," the release points out. "In the excitement of the holiday weekend, safety equipment checks are often overlooked. Families may later find themselves without the necessary equipment in an emergency or be upset when they are cited for violations," it adds.

As boats make their way to the 10th Street Boat Ramp, officers will perform safety inspections and answer any questions, the release continues. Boats in full compliance will be given a 2014 Multi-Agency sticker that can be displayed while they are on the water, it says.



Boats sit at the Marina Jack docks on the Sarasota bayfront with Golden Gate Point condominium complexes in the background. Photo by Norman Schimmel

NEW CROSSING GUARDS SOUGHT FOR COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Sarasota Police Department is in need of crossing guards to encourage students to cross at the proper intersections during the school year, the department has announced.

It also is hoping to hire a crossing guard coordinator to manage the crossing guards, a news release says.

School crossing guards are considered part-time temporary employees and are paid for the time they work at their crossing posts (approximately 10 hours a week). Starting pay is \$12.50 per hour, uniforms are provided and crossing guards are paid while in training, the release points out.

The morning hours, depending upon the school whose students they assist, are 7:15 to 8:15 a.m. or 7:30 to 8:30 a.m.; the afternoon hours are 2:45 to 3:45 p.m.

Crossing guards work only while school is in session, August to May, and they are off for two weeks during the Christmas holiday period, one week at spring break and on national holidays and professional days for teaching staff.

The minimum qualifications include the following:

- An eighth-grade education.
- Experience in a customer service role.
- The ability to pass background screening.
- The ability to handle the physical requirements of the job.
- A sense of responsibility for the safety of students.



A crossing guard for Southside School stands ready to assist students on a recent morning. Photo by Cleve Posey

- Possession of a valid Florida driver's license and means of transportation to the job site.

Those interested in the position should call Nicki Whitehead at 954-7063.

ST. ARMANDS GROUP PETITIONS FOR LIDO RENOURISHMENT

Sarasota County Administrator Tom Harmer notified the county commissioners this week that the St. Armands Residents Association submitted a petition to the City of Sarasota last week in support of the proposed Lido Beach Renourishment Project (see the related story in this issue). According to a May 14 email from City Engineer Alexandria DavisShaw, the group wanted to have a copy provided to the County Commission.

Titled *Petition to Support the US Army Corps of Engineers Lido Beach Restoration Project*, the document says, “Lido Beach has suffered severe erosion in recent years and is in urgent need of replenishment.”

The petition was signed by 94 members of the St. Armands Residents Association. Seven of them marked a box to indicate they are not Florida residents, while four left that box blank.

Rachel Brown Hackney



A sign on St. Armands Circle points drivers toward Lido Beach. Photo by Norman Schimmel

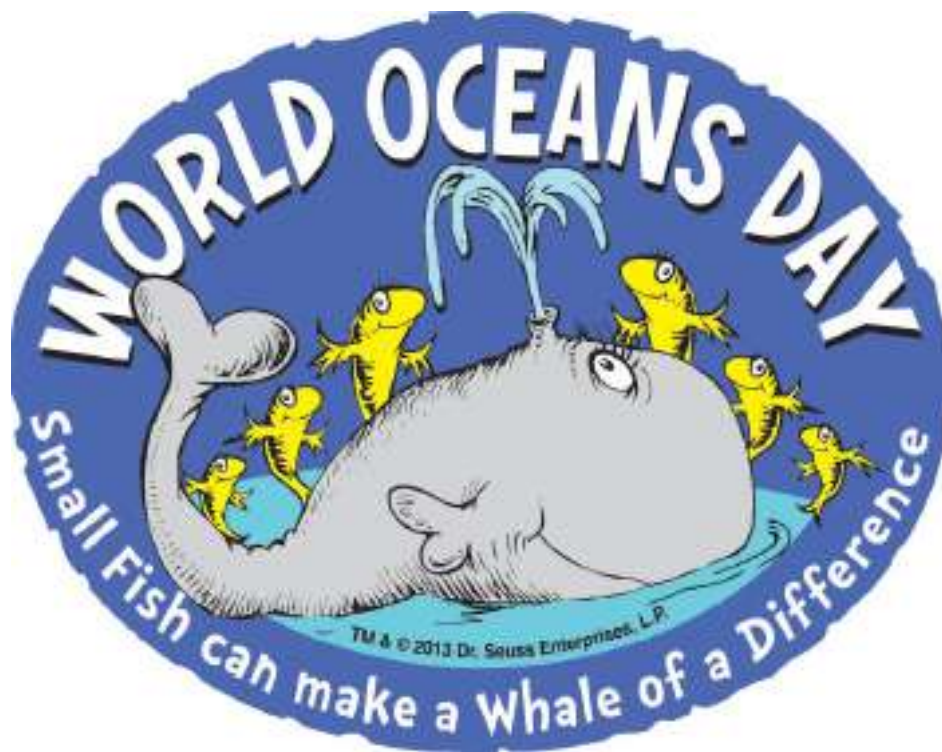
MOTE MARINE TO HOST WORLD OCEANS DAY FESTIVAL ON JUNE 7

Mote Marine is inviting the public to participate in the World Oceans Day Family Festival on June 7 at its aquarium located at 1600 Ken Thompson Parkway in Sarasota.

The event, which will feature a Dr. Seuss theme, a news release says, is designed “to spotlight the ocean’s deep connection to the human spirit and the boundless inspirational power of our natural world’s greatest resource.”

Activities will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The festival is free with paid [admission to Mote](#), the release points out.

World Oceans Day, which is celebrated officially on June 8 each year, was created in 1992 at the Earth Summit, the release continues. It was declared a holiday by the United Nations in 2009.



The Mote celebration “will feature games and crafts focused on green practices, marine science and conservation by Mote and other local organizations,” the release notes.

COUNTY UNVEILS NEW VERSION OF AWARD-WINNING WEBSITE

“Providing excellent service is one of Sarasota County’s eight strategic goals, and the recent redesign of the county’s homepage is an online example of that continued commitment to excellence,” the county announced on May 21.

“Visitors to the county’s website may notice a visible difference from the new centralized contact center portal to a shift in programs and services featured on the homepage,” a news release explains.

The contact center features “one-click” access, allowing community members to ask questions, make requests and provide comments about the county, its services and programs, the release adds.

“We are committed to customer service in all that we do. Developing new methods for our residents to access their county government is one of our highest priorities,” said Donn Patchen, Sarasota County Communications Department director, in the release.

A Florida First Amendment Foundation study recently ranked Sarasota County’s website No. 1 for counties, topping those in Miami-Dade, Charlotte and Pinellas counties, the release points out.

The website also has received a Sunny Award from the [Sunshine Review](#). The recognition pointed to the website as one of the most transparent among governments in the United States, the release explained.

Sarasota County WELCOME

World Environment Day

Sarasota County selected by UN as Host Community [\(more\)](#)

PARKS

BEACHES

SCAT BUS

LIBRARIES

QUESTIONS, REQUESTS, COMMENTS

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The new Sarasota County [homepage](#) recently made its debut. Image courtesy Sarasota County

PRESCHOOLERS AT THE GAN RAISE FUNDS FOR MDA RESEARCH

Students at Temple Sinai's [The Gan](#) preschool recently participated in their annual Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) Hop-A-Thon, raising close to \$700.

While the event was a fundraiser, it was also a disability awareness, acceptance and education program for the students, a news release points out.

Temple Sinai is the only preschool in the area involved in this MDA initiative, the release says. MDA provides a curriculum that teachers utilize to educate their students in an age-appropriate manner about "the core values of dealing with people with muscle diseases," it notes.

Laura Freedman, director of early childhood education at The Gan, said in the release, "Preschool age kids learn by doing. The boys and girls of our school learn about hopping for those who cannot hop for themselves."

"The students rotated to different stations where they hopped like rabbits, frogs and kangaroos," the release says. Not only did they collect almost \$700, but the youngsters also had the honor of winning the regional photo contest for the event, the release notes. The prize was a hop-themed gift basket for the school.

This is the second Mitzvah project of the school year for The Gan; it also annually hosts



Laura Freedman, director of early childhood education at The Gan at Temple Sinai, talks with students about the Muscular Dystrophy Association. (From left) Teak Gammaro, Sam Willner, Nash Gold and Eli Winters participated in the annual Hop-A-Thon and helped raise close to \$700. Contributed photo



a Trike-A-Thon fundraiser for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The school recently received a plaque in recognition of its raising more than \$1,490 during that fall event, the release adds.

It is part of the mission of the school to teach youth about doing good deeds in the community and the world at large, the release explains. "Our kids learn so much about sensitivity to others and helping others with these projects" said Freedman in the release.

For more information about the school, contact Freedman at 926-9462.

Ella Brucksieker hopped like a frog leaping from one lily pad to another as part of The Gan at Temple Sinai's Hop-A-Thon to support MDA. Contributed photo

NEW PRINCIPAL NAMED FOR HERON CREEK MIDDLE SCHOOL

Sarasota County Schools Superintendent Lori White has named a Manatee County middle school principal as the next leader of Heron Creek Middle School in North Port, the school district has announced.

Matthew Gruhl, 39, is scheduled to begin the job July 1, pending approval by the School Board of Sarasota County, a news release explains. He will succeed Interim Principal Candace Dearing, who has led the school since January. Heron Creek Middle School has about 870 students, the release adds.

"I am so excited to serve the students, teachers, parents and community of Heron Creek Middle School," said Gruhl in the release.

Gruhl has served as principal of Buffalo Creek Middle School in Palmetto since June 2009, the release continues. He worked closely with school staff and parents to identify goals and areas needing improvement and successfully reduced discipline referrals, the release says.

From December 2006 to June 2009, Gruhl was an assistant principal at Bayshore High School in Bradenton. From June 2004 to December 2006, he was assistant principal at Seven Springs Middle School in Trinity in Pasco County.

Gruhl also has experience as a teacher and coach, the release notes. From 2001 to 2004, he was a social studies teacher at Electa Lee Magnet Arts Middle School in Bradenton. During the 1999-2000 school year, he taught world history and economics at Port St. Lucie High School, and during the 1998-99



Matthew Gruhl/Contributed photo

school year, he taught in the pre-International Baccalaureate program at Lincoln Park Academy in Fort Pierce, the release says.

At Port St. Lucie High and Lincoln Park Academy, Gruhl was an assistant basketball coach.

He holds an Education Specialist degree in educational leadership and a Master of Science degree in social science education from the University of South Florida, along with a Bachelor of Science degree in sociology and social studies teaching from Francis Marion University in Florence, SC. He attended the latter university on a full basketball scholarship.

Gruhl and his wife, Martye, have two sons, Nathaniel, 8, and Stryker, 7, the release adds. 

CRIME BLOTTER



A suspect is seen in video surveillance provided by a Publix store in Venice. Contributed image

HELP SOUGHT IN IDENTIFYING SUSPECT WHO CLONED CREDIT CARD

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is asking the public for assistance in identifying the man seen in surveillance photos using a credit card cloned with the victim's account number, the office has announced.

The victim, who lives in Plant City, noticed unauthorized charges were made on his account on May 7 at the Publix located at 4173 S. Tamiami Trail in Venice, a news release explains. The suspect bought a gift card and other items for \$150, it says. The suspect later made a \$230 purchase at Macy's in Port Charlotte, and the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office is investigating that case, the release notes.

Anyone who can identify this suspect is asked to call Criminal Investigations at 861-1713, contact Crime Stoppers of Sarasota County at 366-TIPS (8477) or go online at sarasotacrimestoppers.com.



A second photo from video surveillance shows the suspect. Contributed image

DEPUTIES ATTACKED BY MAN WHO SAYS HE WANTED TO BE SHOT

Two Sarasota County Sheriff's Office deputies are recovering from minor injuries after being attacked by a man who says his sole intent was to force law enforcement officers to shoot him, the office has announced.

On May 20, Deputies Simon Franks and Anthony Allport responded to a call about a shoplifter at the Bealls located at 4251 S. Tamiami Trail in Venice. After concluding their investigation, the deputies attempted to arrest the suspect, a news release says. "He resisted, struck both deputies and tried to take their guns during the struggle," it adds. He was unsuccessful, and the "deputies deployed their Tasers to gain compliance and take him into custody," it continues.

Joshua B. Roberts, 24, of 2022 10th St., Sarasota, is charged with Resisting Arrest with Violence; two counts of Attempted Unlawful Taking, Possession or use of Law Enforcement Officer's Firearm; and Petit Theft. Roberts was first taken to Venice Regional Bayfront Health and later booked into the Sarasota County Jail, the release says. He was placed under bond of \$6,120.

Roberts has only been in Florida for three months, the release notes, but he already had two prior arrests. The first incident was in March, when he was arrested for retail theft; the second case involved a criminal mischief incident in Venice on the night of May 16, the release adds. He was released on bond May 18 in the latter case.



An image from video surveillance shows the suspect confronting the deputies in Bealls on May 20. Image courtesy of the Sheriff's Office



Joshua Roberts/Contributed photo

FUGITIVE SEX OFFENDER CAPTURED IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Fugitive Apprehension Unit, working in conjunction with the U.S. Marshals Service Florida Regional Fugitive Task Force, facilitated the arrest of an absconded sex offender who has been on the run since 2011, the Sheriff's Office has announced.

After deputies developed information that Vincent Coppola, 60, was in New Hampshire, they sent the lead to the Marshals Service there, a news release notes. Coppola's arrest followed in Concord, NH, on May 20, the release says.

Coppola was wanted in Sarasota County for Failure to Appear in Court and Failing to Register as a Sex Offender, the release explains. He moved to Florida in June 2010 but never registered in the state, it continues. When he was arrested for Grand Theft and Battery in Manatee County later that year, it was discovered that he was a sex offender who was convicted of two counts of Aggravated Felonious Sexual Assault in 1986,



Vincent Coppola/Contributed photo

the release adds. "When he learned there was a warrant for his arrest he fled the state," the release points out.

Coppola is being held on a no bond warrant and will be extradited back to Sarasota County.

SUSPECT ARRESTED IN HIGH NOON GUNS CASE IN SARASOTA

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested the man suspected of breaking into High Noon Guns on Bee Ridge Road Saturday morning, May 17, and stealing several weapons, the office has announced.

A patrol deputy located a man matching the description of the suspect on Sunday morning near Lalani Boulevard and Aloha Drive and brought him in for questioning, a news release explains. Detectives identified the suspect as Colten Walker-Schmoyer, 24, of 4011 Cochise Terrace, Sarasota. Walker-Schmoyer, "who had numerous cuts from the broken glass [at



Colten Walker-Schmoyer/Contributed photo

High Noon Guns], admitted to the crime and told detectives the guns were at his home,” the release continues. Detectives obtained a search warrant and recovered the stolen property, it adds.

Walker-Schmoyer was also identified as the suspect who tried to steal a television from

Evie’s Tavern on the Range on Bee Ridge Road Saturday morning. When he was unable to pull the TV off the wall, “he took an American flag instead, which detectives also recovered,” the release notes.

He is charged with one count of Armed Burglary and one count of Burglary.

HOMELESS MAN CHARGED WITH STEALING JEWELRY FROM HOME

Wyatt Pierce, 53, a transient, was charged with a felony count of Residential Burglary after he confessed to Sarasota Police Department detectives that “he stole a large amount of jewelry” from a home on Hibiscus Street in Sarasota, the office has announced.

“Pierce has a substantial criminal history,” a news release says, including 25 felony arrests, 16 felony convictions, 11 misdemeanor arrests and seven misdemeanor convictions. He was released from prison in September 2012 after a conviction for Dealing in Stolen Property and Fraud, the release adds.

On May 8, a woman reported a burglary at her home, located at 2741 Hibiscus St. in Sarasota, the report says. Officers found a rear sliding glass door to the residence was open, and the woman discovered her jewelry box was missing from the master bedroom. She told the officers the box contained numerous pieces with a total value of about \$150,000, according to the report.

The woman also said she and her boyfriend had hired Pierce the previous week to do yard work, for which she had paid him \$40, the report notes.

On May 10, detectives talked with acquaintances of Pierce, one of whom told them Pierce had called, asking if the man would



Wyatt Pierce/Contributed photo

like to buy some jewelry, the report adds. The acquaintance purchased two watches from Pierce and later turned them over to detectives, it says.

On May 10, Pierce was arrested on an unrelated warrant and transported to the Sarasota Police Department, where he was interviewed by detectives and charged with felony Residential Burglary.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE DETECTIVES INTERCEPT 'MOLLY' SHIPMENT

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Special Investigations Section, working in conjunction with the United States Postal Inspection Service, "arrested three convicted felons who received a shipment of a half-kilo of the dangerous drug known as Molly," the office has reported.

Border Patrol personnel intercepted the package when it arrived from China and notified postal inspectors that the recipient was a woman with an address in the 2600 block of Twin Drive, Sarasota, a news release explains. They notified detectives, who set up surveillance, watched the woman sign for the package and immediately confronted her and three men waiting in a gold Chevy Impala, the release adds.

Detectives learned that two men from the Florida Panhandle asked Zachary Farr, who



Zachary Farr/Contributed photo



Robert McKuhen/Contributed photo



Matthew Townley/Contributed photo

recently moved back to Sarasota, for an address to which they could ship the package, the release continues. Early Wednesday morning, May 14, Matthew Townley of Niceville, who was paid \$800 to pick up the package, and Robert McKuhen of Ft. Walton Beach, drove to Sarasota to meet Farr and retrieve the shipment, the release adds.

All three suspects are charged with Possession with Intent to Deliver Dimethylmethcathinone. McKuhen is also charged with Possession of Cocaine and Possession of a Firearm by a Convicted Felon (he has 23 prior felony convictions). Farr is also charged with Possession of Cannabis. Detectives determined the woman who signed for the package was not involved in the crime.

“Molly, also known as MDMA or Ecstasy, is sold as a stimulant,” the release explains. It is a man-made chemical substance that can interfere with the body’s ability to regulate temperature, and it “can cause serious heart and kidney problems” and, in some cases, death, the release points out.

“The quantity of this party drug seized here would have equaled about 5,000 doses,” said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. “This is another successful example of the established federal partnerships forged by my personnel over the years, and our ability to quickly react to intelligence to keep large quantities of drugs out of our kids’ hands.”

ANIMAL SERVICES STAFF FINDS ABSCONDED SEX OFFENDER

The Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office has arrested a convicted sex offender who failed to register in Florida and has been out of compliance with Washington state’s registration system since 1999, the office has reported.

Deputy Kathi Pitman, an Animal Services officer, received a complaint from a resident about possible animal neglect; the information included a license tag number for the dog owner’s vehicle, a news release says. Pitman ran the information and found the registered owner did not have a Florida driver’s license, “so she researched the owner’s name and discovered he was a sex offender with a 1984 conviction in Washington for Statutory Rape,” the release points out.

Pitman passed on that information to detectives who confirmed that Randall Ashby, of 1120 Coleman Ave., Sarasota, was required to register in Florida, the release continues. When detectives contacted Ashby on May 15, he explained he had lived in Georgia and



Randall Ashby/Contributed photo


Texas before moving to Sarasota about a year ago. He claimed he did not know that Florida law required him to register, the release adds.

Ashby was charged with Failure to Register as a Sex Offender.

KIDNAPPING CLAIM CALLED COVER-UP FOR DRUG BINGE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a Venice couple who falsely reported they were kidnapped at gunpoint and forced to make purchases on a stolen debit card, the office has announced. On May 12, 37-year-old William Clifford and 39-year-old Tammy Landry, who live with Landry's mother at 540 Plantation Road, went to the Sheriff's Office's South County location "to report their ordeal," a news release says. Detectives interviewed them separately under oath on May 13 "and noticed a number of inconsistencies in their stories," the release adds.

Clifford and Landry eventually admitted to having smoked four or five rocks of crack cocaine and paying their supplier by buying things he needed with the debit card, which "was stolen from Landry's 61-year-old mother," the release continues. So far, investigators have found five fraudulent transactions totaling \$232, the release notes.

Clifford and Landry were arrested and charged with Making a False Report to Law Enforcement and Scheme to Defraud. 



William Clifford/Contributed photo



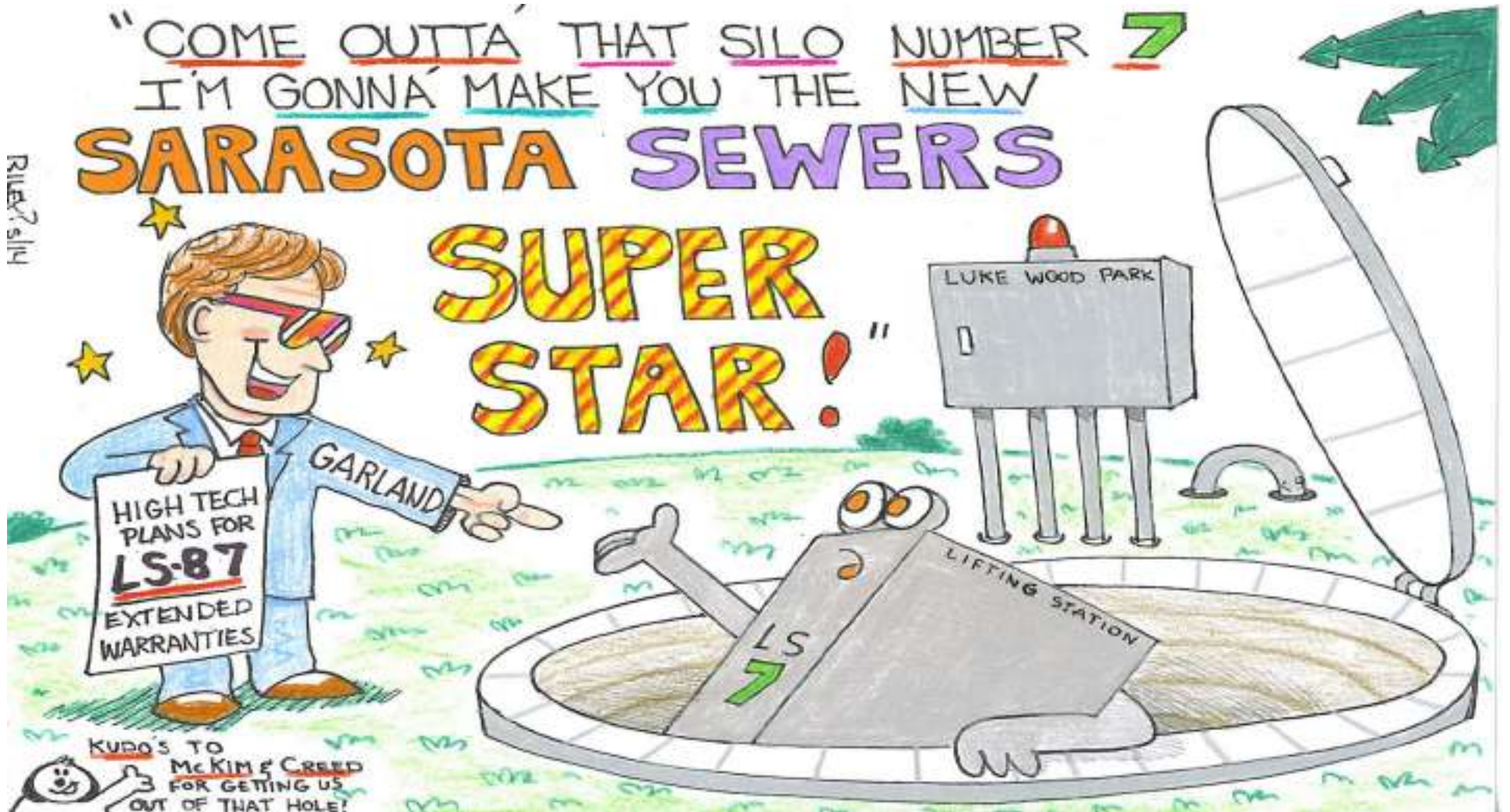
Tammy Landry/Contributed photo



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

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

OPINION



CALL THIS AN OUTRAGEOUSLY EXPENSIVE BOONDOGGLE THAT DEMANDS AN EXTRAORDINARILY POSITIVE CONCLUSION

EDITORIAL

It is a miracle that the city residents who live near Luke Wood Park have not resorted to wearing wigs. No one would have found it odd if all of them, to a person, had pulled out every strand of hair on their heads over the past three-plus years as the Lift Station 87 project started, sputtered, stopped, sat idle and remains a gigantic question mark at City Hall.

The U.S. Marine Corps has a *sobriquet* applicable to the project, but, given our efforts to make the *News Leader* a “family publication,” we have to substitute “boondoggle” for the Marines’ word. The City of Sarasota easily could end up spending more than \$50 million by some estimates to get rid of the remnants of the first incarnation of Lift Station 87 and

complete construction of a theoretically much more reliable design. If that proves to be the case, the new facility had best earn Sarasota the sorts of engineering accolades that will wipe away all memories of this painful ordeal.

The apparent hope at City Hall is that the city will win enough money in its lawsuit against the first project contractor — which seemed to have been glaringly inept, based on documentation revealed over the past months by subsequent consultants — to be able to afford the final price tag. That is the type of “if” on which we would not bet even if we had a *Back to the Future* DeLorean that enabled us to watch City Manager Tom Barwin and the city commissioners doing a victory dance outside the courthouse.

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What has been most confounding and astounding to us about the whole project is that the original design called for the lift station to be constructed underground. Did the original group of engineers think they were working in a mountain community? Last time we checked, the water table for most of Sarasota County was pretty high. Those same neighbors we referenced earlier might have wished for an out-of-sight, out-of-mind facility in the park, but that notion is as absurd as our being able to take a DeLorean to the future.

In fact, that “invisibility” desired by those neighbors, and the City Commission’s foolish acquiescence to their call for an underground facility, planted the first seeds for this multi-million dollar boondoggle.

Fortunately, discussion about storm surge has persuaded the City Commission that an aboveground structure is the only practical course of action. Visions dancing in their heads of hundreds of pounds of water popping the “lids” off the underground silos — and creating just the type of environmental disaster the lift station is designed to prevent — seem to have proved quite effective. We have been exceedingly fortunate to have dodged a serious storm in this county over the past decades, but emergency management officials remind us every hurricane season that we cannot continue to count on lore about Native

American burial grounds and the energy of that fine quartz sand on Siesta Key to keep storms churning away from our coast.

As far as we are concerned, the designs for the type of building that will house the lift station have tremendous aesthetic potential. We believe the neighbors will be satisfied with whichever architectural style is chosen, even if the resulting building is as tall as 34 feet. And, after all, public meetings will allow them a say in that process.

More important than any other factor in this ordeal is the need to construct a lift station that will incorporate the best technology to safeguard the city against future sewage spills. After all, that is why Lift Station 87 was planned in the first place. Lift Station 7, which sits three blocks away from the Luke Wood Park site, failed a number of times, sending hundreds of thousands of gallons of sewage into Hudson Bayou and ultimately into Sarasota Bay. The city is keeping that old lift station active through special dispensation from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection until the new facility is on line and functioning well.

No one yet has offered a timetable for completing Lift Station 87. Everyone who recalls those tragic Lift Station 7 spills wishes they were part of an overly long nightmare about ineptitude. How wonderful it would be to just wake up and




What has been most confounding and astounding to us about the whole project is that the original design called for the lift station to be constructed underground.



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find Lift Station 87 complete and operating with remarkable efficiency.

Because that is not the case, we urge patience, as frustrating as that can be. If, as we fear, the city taxpayers will end up footing most of the bill for an extraordinarily expensive project to prevent future sewage spills, the last

thing the engineers need now is pressure that will produce haste. By the time Lift Station 87 goes on line, it had best be such a marvel of technology that it will be touted nationwide as the design to be copied in other communities with the storm and water table challenges we face. 

THE LAST DRAFTEE



By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

It was a nervous evening, Dec. 1, 1969. The United States was about to hold its first draft lottery. All over the nation, draft-eligible young men, their families and friends were clustered around radios or televisions.

It was a bingo-like event, with two balls being drawn from two cages. Inside one ball was a birthdate; inside the other, a number. And with every draw, breaths were held coast-to-coast. Will this be the number? I was in the middle of it, and I ended up in the middle of it. My number was 175, slightly over the halfway point. My best high school friends all “scored” much higher than I.

We all knew the stakes. I had been to one Silver Star funeral; it was for a fellow class clown, a Marine who fell on a grenade to save his mates. It was a closed-casket service.

After all the dates were read, we young men still knew little. A low number meant

service was a certainty. A draft number of 300 looked safe.

The Vietnam War was winding down. President Richard Nixon’s “secret plan” to end the war was actually a “secret plan” to get out of it. And Nixon, in the 1968 campaign, promised to end the draft and replace it with a “volunteer” army.

I watched with anxiety as the draft claimed higher and higher numbers in 1970. By early summer, it was clear 175 was not high enough.

ONE GENERATION EARLIER

You have no say in when you are born. My dad’s luck was awful. He grew up hardscrabble in southern Illinois, enjoying a childhood during the Roaring Twenties — though there was not much “roaring” around that dirt farm except maybe when a bull got loose. He entered his teens as the economy collapsed

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into the Great Depression. In the late 1930s, times were even darker than they had been five years earlier.

My pa tried to enlist in the Armed Services and was told the government was not taking anybody. But then “Tojo” bombed Pearl Harbor and, eventually, 10 million men were drafted into the Armed Services to serve in World War Two. My pa recalled his pre-induction draft physical: “They told me I was qualified for the Army, the Navy, the Marines and the Air Corps.”

By then my father was beyond prime military age, but he was drafted and sent to help Gen. George Patton win the Battle of the Bulge as a combat engineer.

AND ONE ON EITHER SIDE

My mom’s father was a draftee, too, in World War One. All I know is that he survived to die in a car crash when I was a little kid. Of the six children in his family, one of my aunts or uncles received whatever military sweepings remained from his service.

Nothing was passed down to me except his name, Stanley. Of all the possible hand-me-downs, that was not so bad.

It is a safe bet he was a soldier, because the enormous majority of draftees ended up as cannon fodder for that awful meat-grinding war.

Interestingly, my wife’s father and grandfather also served in those two world wars as members of the Belgian Army.

Their grandson and great-grandson — my son — never faced a draft, or even the threat of a draft, because in 1973, the draft ended, though young men still had to register on their 18th birthdays. But the draft mechanism has not been used in 41 years.

Despite that, my son is in uniform today, an officer in the U.S. Navy. And on this Memorial Day we will go together and find my father’s




This sheet music cover dates to 1917. Image via Wikimedia

OPINION

remains in Arlington National Cemetery, overlooking what we and so many million others were fighting for: a representative democracy with justice for all.

Somehow I do not believe anybody died fighting for corporate free speech or unlimited

campaign contributions or hysterical political gridlock. As I stand among the crosses and look across the Potomac, I will hope their sacrifices have made us strong enough to withstand the folly of those who govern us today. 



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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

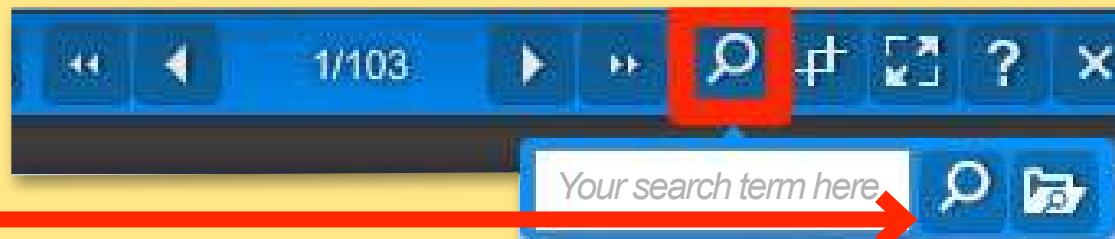
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

23+ MAY	Dabbert Gallery presents <i>Expressions of Spring</i> Through May 31, times vary. 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Information: 955-1315 or DabbertGallery.com .
23+ 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 .
23+ 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 .
23+ 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 .
23+ MAY	Asolo Repertory Theatre presents <i>I Loved, I Lost, I Made Spaghetti</i> Through June 15, times vary. Cook Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$25 and up. Information: 351-8000 or AsoloRep.org .
23+ MAY	<i>Unconventional Inventions, Vanishing, Black Box Projects: Summation and Perspectives</i> Through June 27. Art Center Sarasota, 707 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Free. Exhibits feature kinetic sculpture created in collaboration with area schools and businesses, cutting-edge works by University of South Florida Master of Fine Arts candidates, a selection of art from the Lemur Conservation Foundation and works in an all-media juried show. Information: 365-2032 or artsarasota.org .
23+ MAY	Allyn Gallup Gallery presents <i>A Few Great, Big Pictures</i> Through July 28. 1288 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Information: 366-2454 or AllynGallup.com .
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 redeemersarasota.org .



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

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. Southgate Community Center on the Tuttle Avenue traffic circle between Bee Ridge Road and Webber Street, Sarasota, hosted by Congregation Kol HaNeshama. Event to include a service, study session and Yizkor service. Information: 244-2042, email at office@congkh.org or congkh.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 .
07+ JUNE	Baritones Unbound: Celebrating the Uncommon Voice of the Common Man June 7-29, times vary. Asolo Repertory Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$20 and up. Information: 351-8000 or AsoloRep.org .
07+ JUNE	FST Improv: <i>Out of Bounds Match Up</i> June 7 through Aug. 23, 7:30 p.m. Browne's Lab Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$15. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org .
10+ JUNE	Black Is the Color of My Voice June 10-22, times vary. Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$21.50. Information: 366-1505 or wbttstrq.org .
12+ JUNE	Players Theatre presents <i>The Dixie Swim Club</i> June 12-22, times vary. 838 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$18. Information: 365-2494 or ThePlayers.org .



SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS

SARASOTA WAR MEMORIAL

The Sarasota War Memorial was commissioned by American Legion Bay Post 30 and designed by architect Clare C. Hoamer. On November 11, 1928, it was dedicated at the city's Five Points intersection in a ceremony observing the 10th anniversary of Armistice Day.

It remained at Five Points until 1934, when the city relocated it to what is now Chaplain J.D. Hamel Park. The monument recognizes all residents who have answered their country's call, and honors those who died in World War I and subsequent conflicts.



REMEMBERING THOSE WHO NEVER CAME HOME

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.