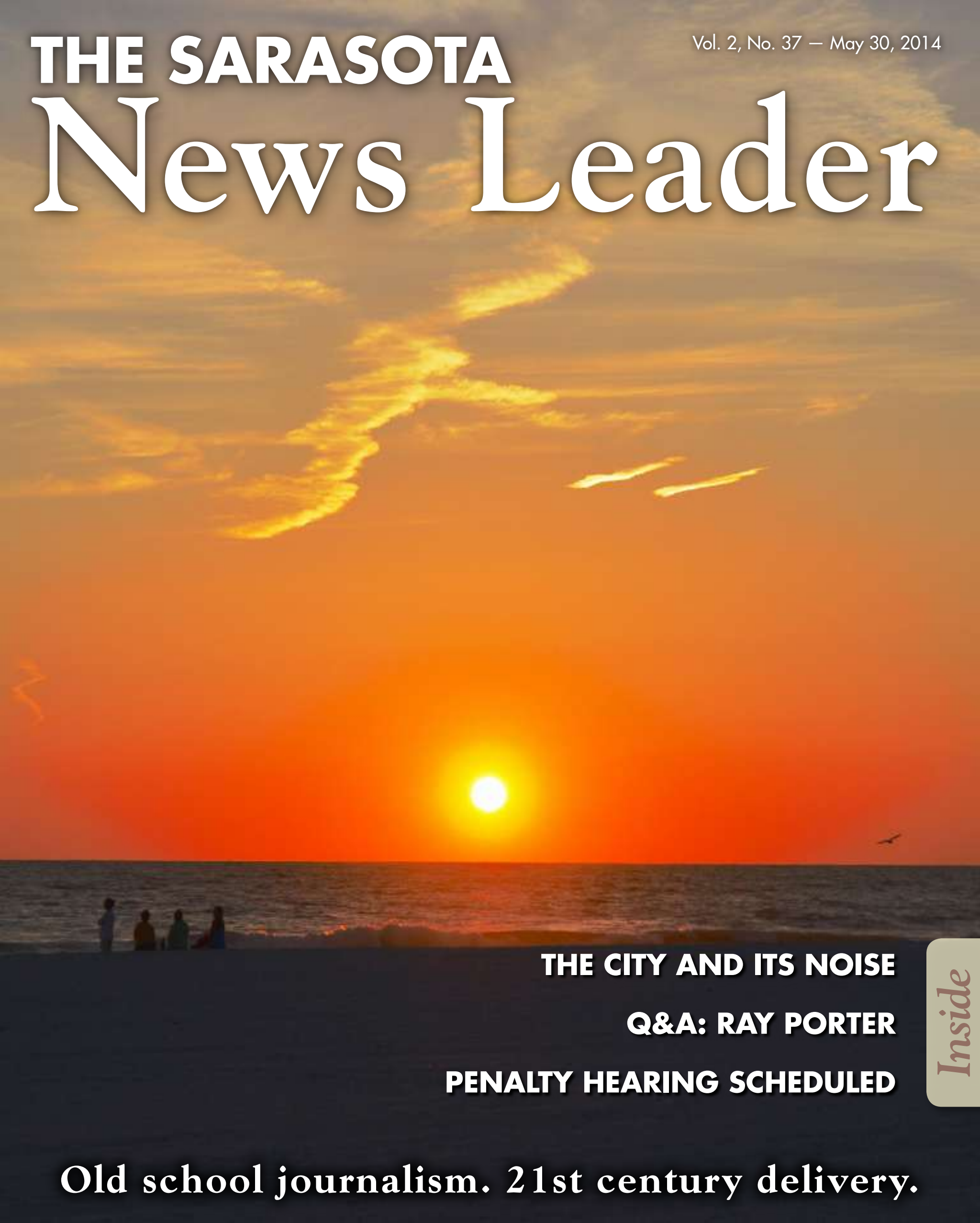


**THE SARASOTA**

Vol. 2, No. 37 — May 30, 2014

# News Leader



**THE CITY AND ITS NOISE**

**Q&A: RAY PORTER**

**PENALTY HEARING SCHEDULED**

**Old school journalism. 21st century delivery.**

*Inside*

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# A.K.A. HELP

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# Welcome

Coming back to the office after a holiday weekend almost always proves a bit challenging — whether just in terms of getting back into work mode or, in reporters' cases, trying to find enough fodder for stories.

Fortunately, I do not believe “dull” is a word that ever can be employed in describing this community.

Noise issues are in the spotlight again, from city and county perspectives. With City Editor Stan Zimmerman having taken some time off, I ended up writing the City Commission preview. I readily admit I cannot replicate his style, but at least I have previewed the discussion expected Monday night regarding the city's proposed new noise ordinance.

On the county side, the focus once more is music at Bob's Boathouse's — along with the restaurant's months-long effort to obtain its Certificate of Occupancy.

Thank goodness for the variety Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker and County Editor Roger Drouin offer in this issue. Cooper conducted one of his thoroughly engaging candidate interviews, this time with Democrat Ray Porter. Roger not only enjoyed learning how a Selby Library staff photo ended up making international news, but he also delved into County Administrator Tom Harmer's first 100 days on the job.

Beyond the news stories, Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel covered Memorial Day events in Sarasota on Monday, and contributor Barbara Dondero has a charming story about tennis. Her article features local legend Nick Bollettieri and a renowned French player of the past.

Yes, this issue does offer a few recurring themes, but you will find plenty of new news as well.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

Editor and Publisher



## THE CITY AND ITS NOISE



## Q&A: RAY PORTER



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# THE CITY AND ITS NOISE



*Residents at the Plaza at Five Points have complained repeatedly about noise from the Ivory Lounge on the ground floor of the complex. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## THE CITY COMMISSION ON JUNE 2 WILL CONSIDER THE LATEST PROPOSED SOUND ORDINANCE AND HANDLE AN ARRAY OF OTHER ITEMS, FROM STREET IMPROVEMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH A NEW HOTEL TO A POTENTIAL EXTENSION OF THE SARASOTA KEYS PROGRAM

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

Noise will be at the forefront of Sarasota City Commission discussions again Monday, June 2, as the board considers scheduling a public hearing on revised sound regulations “to simplify and facilitate enforcement,” according to the agenda.

A May 27 memo to the commission from City Attorney Robert Fournier says that when the

board directed him several months ago to bring back proposed amendments to the city’s noise ordinance, the three primary objectives were to make the ordinance easier to understand and enforce, “with emphasis on the sections where maximum decibel limitations were set out”; make greater use of the “plainly audible standard” in light of a Florida



*Smokin' Joe's also has been a focal point of residents' noise complaints in the past in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Supreme Court ruling; and “explore possibilities for increasing penalties for violation.”

First, Fournier proposes combining the current ordinances’ two sections on sound restrictions into one. That part of the revised law would establish separate maximum decibel levels for sounds emanating from inside sources and outside sources, his memo points out. Further, different levels would apply in the daytime and at night.

He also proposes eliminating the current law’s distinctions between “continuous source” sound and “impulsive” sound, along with the separate regulation of “amplified” sound at night.

Fournier notes that after the previous draft of a proposed new ordinance was released in February, “citizen comments were received to the effect that the decibel limitations in [it] were too high and exceed what are in place in other communities.”

However, Fournier continues, after talking with a consultant who advises the Sarasota Police Department on sound meters, he and his staff learned the city’s decibel levels are “generally consistent with levels set in other jurisdictions for ‘mixed use’ areas.” He adds, “Although the consultant agreed that the City’s current decibel limits are higher than many limits established for exclusively residential areas, he felt that they were in line



*The City Commission Monday will be asked to extend the right of way permit for the Sarasota Keys program, which invites the public to play pianos at various outdoor locations. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

with limits set by other jurisdictions for commercial areas.”

Fournier pointed out, “As for which decibel limits are more appropriate, that is a policy question for the City Commission ...”

Regarding penalties: Fournier suggests the City Commission, by “supermajority vote” — four of the five members voting for approval — can set much higher fines than those allowed under the current ordinance. Instead of a maximum of \$500 per day for a repeat violation, the maximum could be \$5,000. Moreover, if the City Commission chooses, it also can act with a supermajority vote to allow a fine up to \$15,000 per day if a violation is deemed to be “irreparable or irreversible” in nature, instead of the current

maximum of \$5,000 for such a finding by a Special Magistrate.

Further, Fournier proposes that the new ordinance allow the city to initiate action for temporary or permanent injunctions as remedies when a substantial amount of fines in a case remains unpaid.

He proposes as well that a third or subsequent offense within a 12-month period would subject the offender to arrest, “which could result in imprisonment in addition to or in lieu of a fine.”

The noise ordinance discussion will be the next-to-last item in the evening portion of the meeting.



*Robert Fournier is the Sarasota city attorney. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## BESIDES THE NOISE ...

Among lighter items on the June 2 agenda, Jim Shirley, executive director of the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County, will seek an extension of the right of way use permit for the popular Sarasota Keys program. The 180-day trial period the commission allowed for pianos to be placed outside for leisurely play at various downtown locations is up on June 2, Shirley notes in a May 21 memo to city administrative staff.

According to the backup material provided with the item, "The program has been working very well and staff hasn't received any complaints on the pianos."

Other items under New Business Monday night will be the proposed 2015 fiscal year budget for the city's bayfront mooring field and a request by Floridays Development Co. to

pursue a \$3.5 million Economic Development Assistance grant in the city's name for public improvements on Cocoanut Avenue from Gulfstream Avenue to Fruitville Road and adjacent public areas.

A memo for that item reminds the commission that the city has a purchase and sale agreement as well as a redevelopment agreement with Floridays "to purchase land and to construct Hotel Sarasota at the corner of Cocoanut Avenue and Palm Avenue."


The land expense is \$2.5 million, the memo notes, with \$1.2 million credited back to Floridays for public improvements associated with the hotel. Those improvements were limited to Cocoanut Avenue between First Street and just south of Palm Avenue, including the construction of a roundabout at Palm and Cocoanut.

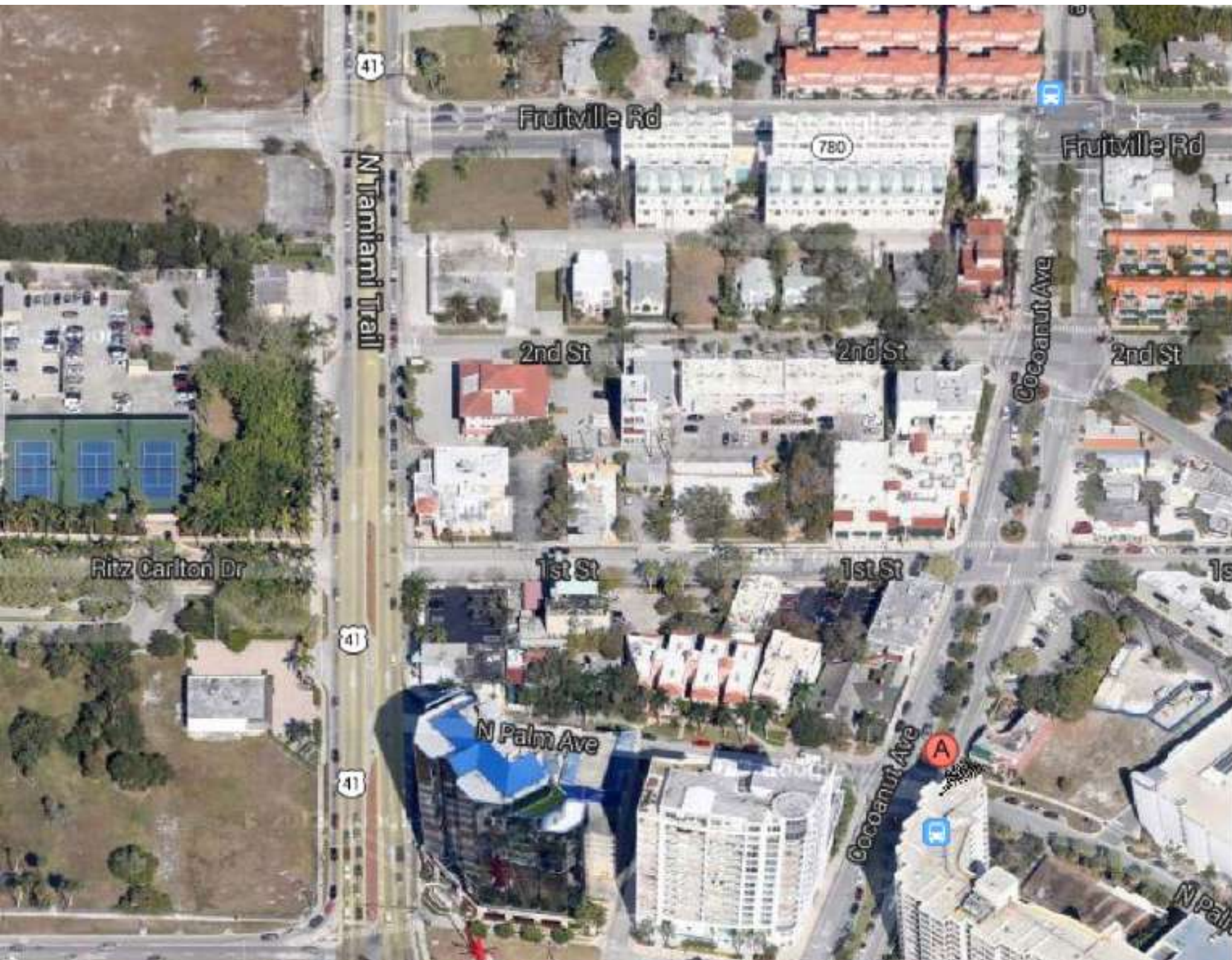


*Some prep work was under way late last summer at the site of the planned Hotel Sarasota next to the Palm Avenue parking garage. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

In discussions with city staff, the memo continues, Floridays representatives have determined that the cost of improvements in the public right of way, plus fees it has to pay the City in conjunction with construction of the hotel, will exceed the \$1.2 million credit. Therefore, the company has considered pursuing the grant to cover the additional costs. City staff is very interested in that opportunity, the memo indicates, because if it is successful, the funds will pay for more improvements to Coconut.

Rounding out the agenda will be further discussion of the community's homelessness issues, hours of operation for the Payne Park Playground, restricting special events on St. Armands Circle and Lift Station 87 in Luke Wood Park, as well as appointments to a number of advisory boards.

The meeting will begin at 2:30 p.m. in the Commission Chambers at City Hall, located at 1565 First St. in downtown Sarasota. The evening session will start at 6 p.m. 



*A map shows the area of Coconut Avenue, Palm Avenue, First Street and Fruitville Road in downtown Sarasota. Image from Google Maps*

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# Q&A: RAY PORTER



*Democratic Sarasota County Commission candidate Ray Porter. Photo courtesy Ray Porter*

## DEMOCRATIC COUNTY COMMISSION CANDIDATE KNOWS HE'S IN A TOUGH BATTLE, BUT REMAINS 'CONFIDENT'

By Cooper Levey-Baker

*Associate Editor*

And then there were four. What was only a couple weeks ago a two-person, all-GOP contest for a Sarasota County Commission seat has morphed into a full-on race, with Democrat Ray Porter and independent John Minder joining Republicans Lourdes Ramirez and Alan Maio in the competition to replace outgoing County Commissioner Nora Patterson.

For starters, that means the August primary elections will be closed, i.e., only Republicans will be able to vote for Maio or Ramirez. If neither Porter nor Minder had filed to run, all registered voters in Sarasota County could have participated in the GOP primary. Now, whoever wins that primary will face off against Porter and Minder in the general election this November.

Porter, a former journalist and now the director of communications for the Sarasota Association of Realtors, faces tough odds. Republicans hold a significant voter registration advantage over Democrats in the county: 43 to 31 percent, with 26 percent of voters registered with third parties or with no affiliation. It's a situation with which Porter is well familiar. In 2008, he ran for a seat on the Charter Review Board, losing by 4 percentage points to Republican Marie Nisco.

"It's going to be difficult," Porter acknowledges. But he's making a run for it anyway. He spoke with *The Sarasota News Leader* this week about his campaign.

*The Sarasota News Leader:* What prompted you to run for elected office again?

**Ray Porter:** It's been a six-year process. I first approached the Democratic Party and met Rita Ferrandino [chairwoman of the party] and was talking about running for County Commissioner Jon Thaxton's seat. She looked at me and shook her head and rolled her eyes and said, "You really have no chance."

I wound up filing to run for the Charter Review Board in District 5, and that experience was interesting, being my first time trying to run for political office, and your opponent doesn't need to really mount a campaign if she has an "R" next to her name. She didn't show up at any debates. And even after all that, I lost by about 4 percentage points. It wasn't an overall negative experience. I got to meet the future president and celebrated a lot of Democratic victories.

And I had many years of experience in journalism. You kind of see things from the inside out. You hear things and you know things that the public never gets the chance to know. You wind up learning a lot about politics, a lot about government, and it tends to turn people cynical. Finally, a switch came on in my brain and said, "You've got to be someone who takes the bull by the horns and tries to change things."



**SNL:** You say exposure to the process turns people cynical. Why do you still have faith in government?

**RP:** It wasn't all negative. I met some very decent people who were involved in government: Bob Anderson and Mabry Carlton, Gene Matthews, David Mills, especially at the county level — people to respect and admire. And even though I didn't agree with everything they did, I liked the way they treated people. They took their civic duty so seriously. It's not an easy job, and I know they get pulled by interest groups, but they handled it with such humor and just deflected anything that was going to turn into an argument.

I briefly met [former Florida Gov.] Jeb Bush when he was running against Lawton Chiles in 1994. He came to our office, stopped by

my desk briefly. He introduced himself and I talked to him for two minutes, and then he went on to talk to the managing editor. Four years later, he was running again. He came in with his team and he remembered my name; he remembered what I did, and I was amazed. That's the consummate politician. He just doesn't forget, and that always impressed me. There are very good people in politics.



**SNL:** On your website, you say “restoring trust” in county government after the procurement scandal is a top priority. How would you go about that?

**RP:** For so many years, I had heard rumors that in order to get things done at the county, you had to know someone, you had to play



*The Sarasota County Commission will have two new members come November, with Joe Barbetta (far left) and Nora Patterson (far right) term-limited. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

the game, and people accepted that. It never did filter up to the level of the policymakers, which kind of stunned me. It never rose to the level of the elected officials, and our elected officials are supposed to be the people who manage the store.

Well, all of that fell apart in 2011. Even after all that, the voters seemed to not even notice that the people they elected to oversee this process hadn't caught this earlier. It probably was a systemic problem for many more years before that. They did finally correct the course and they did finally let the administrator go, but the board as it's set, it's five people who are all Republicans who pretty much come from the same political cloth and the same philosophical cloth.

In 2006, if I had heard these rumors, I wouldn't have let it go for five more years.



**SNL:** How would your journalism background affect your decision-making?

**RP:** People have different ideas of what journalism is. A young person turning on the news may not understand traditional journalism. If you go from Fox News to MSNBC, you think, "I'm getting a whole different story." That to me is more entertainment.

Back when I was at the newspapers, community newspapers, normally, if I wrote a story, it would have at least two sides. We'd put out the newspaper and the following Monday I'd get calls from the city council, and they'd say, "Your story was completely off-base." Then you get a call the next day from someone in the public, saying, "You're always siding with

the city." That's what a balanced story is. You let the public decide.

As a journalist on a board, you can ask the right questions; you can bring other people in, investigate it, find out what you need to find out. If the county administrator says there are no problems in the Procurement department, you don't accept that on face value. The perspective of a journalist is a much different perspective than a businessman. You want to minimize your difficulties, your conflicts, in business.



**SNL:** Has the county handled the process well of revisiting Sarasota 2050?

**RP:** There's going to always be pressure from the development community to do what they do. They develop. Any corporation is going to try to get an advantage so they can maximize their profits — that's what corporations do.

When you talk about major developments of regional impact, you need to have years of planning done and have financing in place, and in order to do that, they must minimize risk. They must have some sort of predictability. That's understandable. You have to have some sense that you're not wasting all this time and money. I understand why they want to modify the plan. I'm not totally in favor of that. It's just the reality of the way that system works.

You can kind of summarize me as, "I see a lot of gray areas." I see the benefits of development, putting these things in place, bringing jobs here. On the other hand, you have to have the right kind of scrutiny: Is growth paying its fair share?

From 2006 to 2010, people got a very, very clear image in their minds of what happens when development virtually freezes. Carpenters and tile people and all the auxiliary services, they just leave town, and people start hurting. Places were closing; storefronts were going empty. We know that we're vulnerable to those economic problems. We have to diversify the economy, but we've also got to understand that the core of our economy in this area is development and real estate and it's just a fact of life.



**SNL:** So you support what the county's done so far?

**RP:** Up to this point, I think so. I don't have a major problem with what they've done to this point. There's always going to be a very vocal part of the community that's opposed to growth of any kind, and then there's always going to be the other side, saying, "Back off and let us do what we want." The balance is what we need, a person who's just pragmatic and logical.



**SNL:** Is the county's investment in the rowing facility at Nathan Benderson Park wise?

**RP:** Am I a rower? No. Personally, we're baseball players. We'd love to see the Little League facilities at Twin Lakes [Park on Clark Road] doubled in size. But rowing is a growing movement and the park is going to have success. In the short term, it's going to have growing pains. We're going to have traffic problems till that [Interstate 75] interchange is improved.

But overall, 10 years from now, we'll look back on it and say it was a decent investment.



**SNL:** There's been a lot of debate recently about investing money in promoting the area versus investing it in upgrading tourism infrastructure. Do we have the right balance now?

**RP:** Maybe it's time now to start looking at the capital investments.

There's this whole other level of baseball; there's travel ball. You want to develop that. It's more competitive and the kids are considered the real serious ballplayers. In an area like Sarasota, we don't have as many fields as we need. It's just time to maybe spend less on marketing and a little more on capital, bringing it to a better balance.



**SNL:** Scientists say the sea level will rise between 24 and 48 inches by 2100. Is the county doing enough to prepare for that?

**RP:** I'm not sure I could even give you a definitive answer on that. I'm not an expert on global warming. There is the tipping point when humans begin to produce more CO2 than they have in history; that's when you start to create the greenhouse effect, and you start to create the problems, and that's when you see sea levels rise.

I go to the beach occasionally. I certainly don't see any less beach. If anything, it's growing. I just haven't seen any physical evidence that we need to start worrying about sea level rise. If it does, I live in Gulf Gate East. I might have waterfront property.



**SNL:** Having already lost one countywide race, what makes you think this year will be different?

**RP:** I'm really approaching it 180 degrees differently. In 2008, I barely did a thing. I did the minimum public appearances; I didn't go door-to-door. This time, I'm working hard on a plan, on a strategy. It's more of a traditional campaign, and it starts with money. I was hoping you could avoid money and still get your message out, but you can't do that. I'm setting up fundraisers in the near future and putting together a team of volunteers.

I feel confident. I know we won't raise anywhere near [the amount of funds of] the likely candidate I'll face in November. It's going to be about reaching the voters with a message that makes sense. Hopefully, moderate Republicans will be receptive to my message,

and if you have turnout, the numbers can put you over the top. If Democrats aren't energized, I have no chance.



**SNL:** Have you been planning this campaign since losing in 2008?

**RP:** It's been in the back of my mind since 2008, but I didn't stay very involved in Democratic politics.

I put my name in to be on the Planning Commission five or six times. I kept putting in my paperwork. It's not typical for a Republican to appoint a Democrat, but maybe that's part of what needs to change around here.

To learn more about Porter and his campaign, visit [rayporter2014.com](http://rayporter2014.com). 

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## PENALTY HEARING SCHEDULED

*James Aker (left), attorney for Bob's Boathouse, and Assistant Sarasota County Attorney David Pearce prepare for the start of the May 23 Special Magistrate hearing. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

### WITH 10 'PUNCH LIST' ITEMS UNRESOLVED, REPRESENTATIVES OF BOB'S BOATHOUSE ARE TOLD TO APPEAR AGAIN BEFORE A SPECIAL CODE ENFORCEMENT MAGISTRATE ON JULY 25

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

On July 25, representatives of Bob's Boathouse will appear for the third time before a Sarasota County Special Magistrate, that time for a penalty hearing, Special Magistrate Meg Wittmer ruled on May 23.

According to testimony and evidence presented to Wittmer last week, only two items out of the 12 on a county "punch list" had been completed since she issued a [March 21 compliance](#)

[order in the case](#). The March order allowed the business 60 days to address everything on the punch list except for landscaping and lighting matters.

*I know what needed to be accomplished and the proximate time it takes to do that. I was looking at it from a construction standpoint.*

Mike Mehan  
Utilities Department  
Sarasota County

All the items have to be finished before the business can obtain a Certificate of Occupancy (CO).

"And you will be able to have an opportunity to discuss any defenses that may

be applicable, based upon any items you would be out of compliance on at that point,” Wittmer told James Aker, the attorney for Bob’s Boathouse.

“I’m hoping that they’ll actually be in compliance,” Pearce added.

Twice during the May 23 hearing, Aker indicated financial constraints as the reasons items on the punch list had not been completed. During questioning of Mike Mehan of the county’s Utilities Department, he also appeared to blame Mehan’s absence from the office for several days for the delay in getting one item finished.

When Aker asked whether Mehan would concede that there had been delays, Mehan replied, “I don’t know what you mean by

delays. After the last hearing, we were prepared to move forward, and we did things in a reasonable time frame. We didn’t need to wait until Tuesday.”

“You were on vacation for a good part of that time, correct?” Aker countered.

Mehan said he was out of the office for five days in early April.

When Pearce asked Meehan whether he knew of any reason why those four items could not have been accomplished in 60 days, Mehan said, “There’s no reason it couldn’t have been done.”

Aker also asked whether Mehan would agree that Michael Seery, who has been representing the owners in the matter, “has had good faith efforts to get [some of the work] done.”



*Special Magistrate Meg Wittmer reviews material before issuing an order during the May 23 proceedings. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

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

**Public Utility Department:**

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

**Natural Resources:**

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

**Land Development:**

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

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

**Zoning Administration:**

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

**Building:**

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

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

(According to his [website](#), Seery is the founder of Michael Seery & Associates Inc., a real estate firm in Sarasota.)

“I believe so,” Mehan responded.

Aker then asked, “All of the first four items do require money to have them completed, do they not?”

“I believe so,” Mehan replied.

“And you don’t know the financial condition of the respondents in this case do you?” Aker continued.

“I do not,” Mehan said.

“And you apparently don’t have any knowledge as to why there’s been certain delays?” Aker asked.

“I do not,” Mehan told him.

“So how do you know they could have been done?” Aker continued.

“I know what needed to be accomplished and the proximate time it takes to do that. I was looking at it from a construction standpoint,” Mehan responded.

Later Jon Mast, the county’s manager for land development services, testified that, “to date, we have not received drawings from a landscape architect” to satisfy one item on the punch list: “Landscape must be checked for compliance with the permitted plans and certified complete by a registered Landscape Architect.”

Aker then entered into evidence drawings from a person he identified as a registered landscape architect. When Aker asked Mast whether he recognized the man’s signature, Mast replied that he did not know the man.



*Condominium complexes are visible across South Tamiami Trail from the Bob’s Boathouse site. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*Michael Seery represented the owners of Bob's Boathouse during the May 23 hearing. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

Mast added of the documents, “I have not seen this in my office,” though testimony indicated the drawings were dated May 18.

Then Aker asked whether it was possible that the engineer of record for the work at Bob’s Boathouse “may be holding [the documents] either for payment or [completion of other punch list items] to submit this to the county?”

“Anything is possible,” Mast said.

When Pearce asked whether it was the obligation of the respondent in the case — Skipper Bob’s LLC — or the engineer of record to certify the landscaping, Mast replied, “Ultimately, it’s the respondent’s and not the engineer’s.”

Aker explained that the landscape architect provided copies of the documents to him and the engineer of record on May 18.

Pearce countered that he did not know whether that particular landscape architect was certified.

Wittmer pointed out that the documents were not sealed, questioning whether they complied with her March 21 order.

However, Pearce consented to admitting the documents into the record. “It goes to the weight of the evidence,” Wittmer agreed.

“That document would be accepted with the inclusion of the signed and sealed drawings,” Mast noted.

## LIGHTING AND LANDSCAPING

In further testimony, Brad Bailey, the county’s zoning administrator, said he had received a copy of the lighting plan the business had



*Attorney James Aker (left) asked questions of Brad Bailey, the county’s zoning administrator, during the hearing. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

to submit within 60 days after the March 21 Special Magistrate hearing. It was provided to his staff on May 21, he told Wittmer.

However, Bailey continued, two of the items were deficient. He added that he planned to issue a memo that day with comments detailing his review of the plan.

Wittmer noted that she gave Bob's Boathouse 120 days from the March 21 hearing to complete installation of the lighting according to a plan approved by the county.

Regarding the removal of nuisance and invasive vegetation on the property — for which work Wittmer had allowed 45 days from March 21 — Jim Dierolf of the Natural Resources Department testified, "Substantial progress had been made." In response to a question from Wittmer, Dierolf estimated, "They're pretty close to 75, 80 percent."

Additionally, he told Wittmer, some of the watercourse buffer plants have been installed; that item had a 90-day timeline.

"They should be able to complete that planting" within 90 days, he said.

## SUMMING UP

After the testimony ended, Pearce said of the Bob's Boathouse owners, "There are instances

where they certainly could have moved a lot more quickly to bring things into compliance."


The county's recommendation, he continued, was to set a penalty hearing after the 120-day period had ended.

"They are totally out of compliance and in violation" in regard to 10 of the punch list items, Wittmer responded. "We also discussed at *great lengths* [on March 21] that we felt that the time given to each of these items was reasonable."

After considering options, Wittmer concurred with Pearce that the best course was to set the penalty hearing for July 25.

Pearce explained to Aker, "There will be a penalty associated with missing the deadlines in the [March 21] compliance order. ... The calculation of the penalty will depend upon when [the business came] into compliance; a daily fee for each."

Wittmer also advised Aker that in terms of testimony on July 25, "I don't want to bring up issues that have already been raised and discussed and ruled on."

Aker agreed that he would offer only "reasons why time limits were not met." 



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# THE FIRST 100 DAYS

*County Administrator Tom Harmer offers remarks during the Jan. 22 groundbreaking for improvements at the Siesta Public Beach Park. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TOM HARMER HIGHLIGHTS COUNTY ACHIEVEMENTS AS HE MARKS A MILESTONE IN THE TOP APPOINTED POST IN COUNTY GOVERNMENT

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

With May 22 marking the end of the first 100 days of Tom Harmer's tenure as the new Sarasota County administrator, he sent out a memo thanking county staff for their commitment and stating why that period of new organizational leadership is so important.

"The idea that the first 100 days defines change originated in 1933, when Franklin D. Roosevelt took office amid the Great

Depression," he wrote. Roosevelt called for a special session of Congress that lasted 100 days and passed 15 separate bills, forming the basis of the New Deal.

**“ This budget process has been like night and day. I am very pleased with the way Mr. Harmer is leading this budget process.**

Christine Robinson  
Vice Chairwoman  
Sarasota County Commission



Harmer, who officially took the top appointed county post on Feb. 12, following brief contract discussions, also sent his employees a list of 100 projects undertaken during his first months on the job. He



May 22, 2014

**BUILDING THE CULTURE**

From County Administrator  
Tom Harmer

**The First 100 Days**

On Feb 12th, I accepted the appointment as Sarasota County Administrator. One hundred days later, it is time to assess what we have accomplished so far, and prepare for what lies ahead.

Early on in my tenure here, I asked you to focus on four guiding principles:

- Being responsive
- Offering timely solutions
- Actively communicating (internally and externally)
- Thinking "Team"

You responded with admirable support and commitment. By concentrating on creating positive work environments that provide excellent customer service to our citizens, our board, and each other, you have contributed to an impressive array of accomplishments. I have included a [list of 100 items](#), and it is by no means complete.

We kept the list to 100 for a reason. As of May 22, I have been your County Administrator for 100 days. The idea that the first 100 days defines change originated in 1933, when Franklin D. Roosevelt took office amid the Great Depression. Determined to lead his nation to recovery, between March 8 and June 16 of that year, Roosevelt called a special session of Congress that lasted 100 days and passed 15 separate bills that formed the basis of the New Deal.

Fifteen years earlier, Allied forces staged the "Hundred Days Offensive" on the Western Front that led to the end of WWI.

Google "100 days" and you'll find pages of 100 days of real food, 100 ways to lose weight and 100 days to become happy.

But the predominant measurement of 100 days remains that of a leader's ability to affect change.

Former presidential advisor David Gergen describes the significance of the first 100 days as, "the most precious time in the life of a [leader] to define who he is and what he is seeking to achieve through his leadership. In those [14] weeks he sets the stage for his entire stewardship."

In other words, the first 100 days is about opportunity. It's about catching lightning in a jar and harnessing that power to propel us further.

Over the past 100 days, I have watched you pull together in a shared mission of service. Together we have completed major capital improvement projects. We have protected citizens and property, enriched people's lives through community services, and we are reaching more citizens than ever via social media platforms. Most important, we have been successful in making a smooth transition. We are busy maintaining and moving forward the business of Sarasota County.

*This is a section of the memo County Administrator Tom Harmer sent to staff on May 22 as he reflected on his first 100 days on the job. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

forwarded the list and memo to the County Commission as well.

The *First 100 Days* list highlights achievements or milestones — from capital projects, such as the groundbreaking for the Siesta Public Beach Park improvements; to collaborative efforts, such as approving an interlocal agreement with Manatee County involving a new emergency radio communications system; to everyday duties, such as handling 47,107 incoming telephone calls for service through the county's call center. (See the accompanying link to the list.)

"I wanted to set some mark to look back on — especially from one of my big picture goals of minimizing the impact of any transition associated with the leadership change," Harmer

stated in written response to questions this week from *The Sarasota News Leader*. "I didn't start counting the days right away, but as the time went by, it helped me put things in perspective for the staff — the old saying, 'It's a marathon and not a sprint.'"

Harmer added that he wanted county employees to realize everything they have accomplished.

"I was concerned that it might be hard to identify 100 items for the list, but that wasn't the case at all," Harmer wrote. "I purposefully called the list 'our first 100' days, so the employees could see all of the output from their efforts."

While the list is impressive, as County Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine



County Administrator Tom Harmer (second from left) addresses the County Commission during the April 29 budget workshop. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Robinson noted, some challenges remain, among them, addressing homelessness.

And community activists cite concerns about how recent County Commission policy decisions will play out, including limited public access to commission emails, how the county will handle ethics inquiries and what the critics call the county's failure to protect the public and hold the Suncoast Aquatic Nature Center Associates Inc. (SANCA) accountable in the Nathan Benderson Park rowing agreement.

"The overriding problems with the county right now are not related to Mr. Harmer. They are related to the culture and decisions of the commission," said Cathy Antunes, an advocate for open government who is a supporter

of Harmer. "Thank goodness for term limits," she added.

Asked if he plans more 100-day updates, Harmer replied that he will be focused on quarterly and annual messages instead.

## '[L]IKE NIGHT AND DAY'

The *First 100 Days* list is full of ambitious projects and indications of collaboration with other local governments, noted Robinson.

Perhaps the most important to her is No. 88: "Developed a new budget process."

"It's so small and buried," Robinson, a staunch advocate for keeping spending under control, told the *News Leader*. "But it catches my eye because that is my thing. It affects every other item on the list."



*Tom Harmer had a big smile on his face in late January after the County Commission asked him to remove the 'interim' from his title as county administrator. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Harmer has made the county's budget one of his priorities. Under his oversight, workshops began atypically early this year — Feb. 21. Harmer has also been more involved in creating the fiscal year 2015 budget, pledging to review all department spending plans and calling the document that will be presented this summer for final approval his "County Administrator's Budget."

Robinson said Harmer's earlier workshops, combined with his focus on a fiscally conservative approach to county operations, are already indications of a better conclusion to the process than she has observed in the past. A projected deficit has been reduced and pushed out to a later year, for example, Robinson pointed out. "It's a sign of a more stable budget."

Robinson said fiscal difficulties remain, but Harmer "recognizes those challenges."

Harmer has made it clear to staffers, Robinson noted, that they have to be frugal as they approach projects.

The previous administrator, Randall Reid, did not work closely with county department managers as they pulled their department budgets together, she added. Another problem under Reid's administration, Robinson said, was a lack of communication, especially when unexpected issues arose. "We had a problem with transparency — and even the commission understanding what is being put before them," Robinson added. "This budget process has been like night and day. I am very pleased with the way Mr. Harmer is leading this budget process."

## CHALLENGES ALONG WITH PROGRESS

Two projects on Harmer's list reflect as much of a challenge as they do an achievement.

No. 10 is "embarked on an ambitious plan to combat homelessness," and No. 89 highlights the agreement with SANCA to operate the Nathan Benderson Park rowing venue.

Robinson said both of these are "cutting-edge" projects. "With that comes challenges," she pointed out. "When you are willing to invest in your community in another way, you get challenges with that." It is better than the alternative, Robinson added, which is saying things are fine just as they are.

SANCA, the nonprofit that manages the rowing venue, had to face a big setback last month: State lawmakers refused to give it the \$2.5 million in funding it sought. Legislators said they wanted to see some of the promised, private financial donations coming in before contributing more public dollars. "I think the challenges are going to be making sure the private sector steps up to the plate and has a stake in this," Robinson said.

Progress continues, Harmer told the *News Leader*. "We are marching ahead to the 2017 International Rowing Championships with a number of events scheduled leading up to that showcase event."

## DOWNLOAD THE PDF



Read County Administrator Tom Harmer's  
First 100 Days list.



“

*I was concerned that it might be hard to identify 100 items for the list, but that wasn't the case at all.*

Tom Harmer  
County Administrator  
Sarasota County

”

*Tom Harmer offers a few comments to members of the Siesta Key Association during their annual meeting on March 1 after Commissioner Nora Patterson (at right) invited him to take the floor. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

“We are early into our formal relationship with SANCA,” Harmer added. “There has been a lot of interest in this project, and SANCA has been asked for periodic public updates to the Board,” he wrote in his comments for the *News Leader*.

The planned homeless shelter project has been one of the most complex to come before the County Commission.

“I don’t ever recall having a standing item that is automatically on the agenda every meeting,” Robinson told the *News Leader*. “It is important to the County Commission, and we want to work through it. And I am hoping the city will work with us to solve this problem that everyone knows exists.”

Harmer points out that the county has assigned a full-time manager, Wayne Applebee, to lead the initiative and report on progress. “This is a joint effort with many partners,” Harmer noted. In addition to regular updates to the board, meetings are held on a routine basis with city staff and local nonprofit partners.

## COUNTY CONCERNS

Antunes, president of Sarasota Citizens for Responsible Government, does give the county administrator good marks for his work thus far. “Tom Harmer has accomplished many positive things,” Antunes said. “He is an able administrator.”

But Antunes noted “persistent concerns about county government [that] are separate and apart from Mr. Harmer’s performance.”


Antunes points to a range of recent policy decisions that have made headlines and angered some residents.

She is frustrated with what she calls the county’s failure to protect the public and hold SANCA accountable in the Benderson Park agreement.

She also was disappointed by Harmer’s recent move to fire Ethics Officer Steve Uebelacker, who was hired in 2011 after a scandal erupted in the county’s Procurement Department, following the commission’s dismissal of County Administrator Reid in 2013. “The firing of Randy Reid and Steve Uebelacker, instigated by one or more commissioners, puts staff on notice: Fall in line or else,” Antunes told the *News Leader*.

In addition to questions about how the county will address ethical inquiries, open government concerns remain. One item on the *First 100 Days* list — No. 98 — seems undeserved to Antunes.

In that slot, Harmer highlights the First Amendment Foundation’s naming of Sarasota County’s website as the No. 1 government website in Florida. The organization did not look closely enough, Antunes said.

“It is regrettable that the First Amendment chose Sarasota County as the No. 1 website in the state when our County Commission persists in refusing to make all Commission emails available online,” Antunes said. “Other counties provide full access to their commission emails online; the First Amendment Foundation got this one wrong.” 



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## 'SELFIE' SUPPORT FOR THE EARTH

*The famous shot: Selby Library staff snapped this selfie at 9:45 a.m. on Earth Day, just before the library opened. Contributed photo*

### A SELBY LIBRARY PHOTO WAS AMONG THOSE CHOSEN OUT OF MORE THAN 50,000 TO BE PART OF A NASA VIDEO

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

The star-studded Oscars “selfie” might be the single most famous in the world, but it has nothing on Selby Library’s recent selfie, which was taken for a good cause and has achieved its own place in the global spotlight.

Laurie Bates-Weir, web services librarian for Sarasota County, snapped the local photo on Earth Day last month, moments before the library opened. She was surprised that after

posting it to NASA’s Flickr page, the selfie made it into a [short video](#) comprising images taken of people at work around the world. The video was created and posted by NASA on May 21. The Selby shot ran alongside photos

snapped at Microsoft, *Sesame Street*’s studio, the Weather Channel, a research area on the edge of Antarctica and an office in Qatar.

“It’s definitely global,” Bates-Weir said of the exposure.

“*I thought this is a great way to commemorate Earth Day, and a neat way to make a connection with staff and our patrons — and the whole world too.*”

Laurie Bates-Weir  
Web Services Librarian  
Sarasota County



While the Selby selfie might never get quite as many views as the one [Ellen Degeneres](#) took at the Oscars, it was for a worthy cause. NASA's Global Selfie project was designed to encourage environmental awareness and recognize the agency's ongoing efforts to protect our home planet.

After photos were submitted from around the world, NASA created a "Global Selfie" [mosaic](#). That mosaic was built with more than 36,000 individual photographs drawn from about 50,000 images tagged #GlobalSelfie and posted on or close to Earth Day on several social media sites.

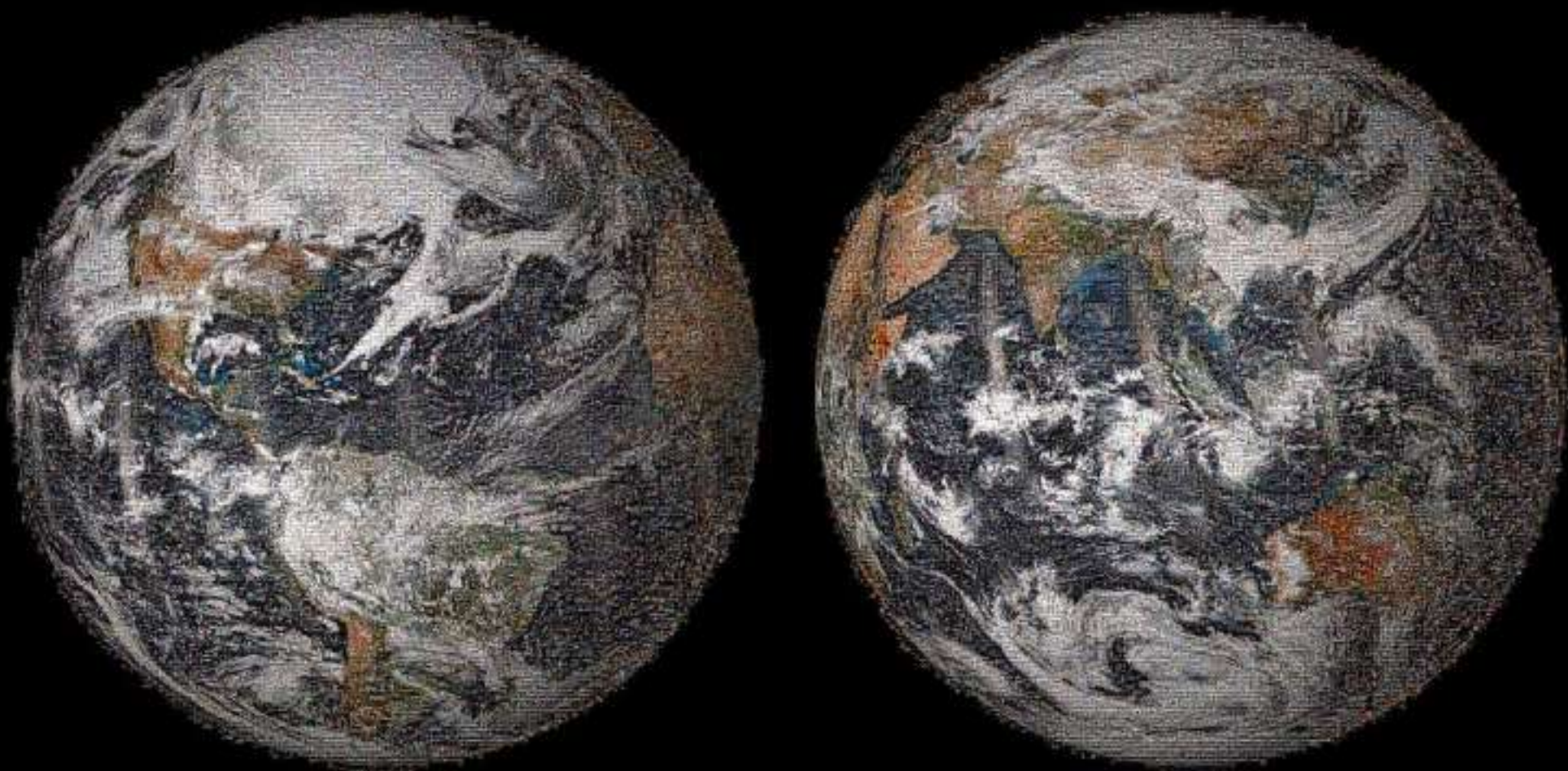
Bates-Weir organized the Selby selfie after seeing a post about NASA's Global Selfie project on the agency's Twitter feed. "We took the photo real fast so we could be done before the library [opened]," she told *The Sarasota News Leader*.

The project highlights how social media can draw people together.

"The reason anybody is on social media is to try to make a connection with other people, and I thought, especially in the last month or so, I've been trying to have the library's Twitter account make more of a connection than we have in the past," Bates-Weir added. "I thought this is a great way to commemorate Earth Day and a neat way to make a connection with staff and our patrons — and the whole world, too."

The Selby Library staff portrait did garner some local attention, as well, with 612 people having seen the image on the county library service's [Facebook page](#).

Bates-Weir also encouraged staff members at six other county libraries to snap and submit selfies. Those that participated were the North Sarasota, Gulf Gate, Sarasota County Historical Resource Center, Venice and Elsie Quirk public libraries. 



NASA's 'global selfie' incorporated more than 36,000 images. Image courtesy of NASA



# My Sunday Paper...

# ...two days early!

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

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

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

***The Sarasota News Leader - Your New Sunday Treat***

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# BIDDING FOR THE SPRINGS' FUTURE



*Warm Mineral Springs is known internationally for the healing nature of its water. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

## **FOUR FIRMS HAVE RESPONDED TO AN INVITATION TO NEGOTIATE OVER THE LONG-TERM OPERATION AND POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF WARM MINERAL SPRINGS**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

The future of Warm Mineral Springs appears to lie in the proposals of four firms.

At 5:01 p.m. on May 23, City of North Port staff opened four bids in response to an Invitation to Negotiate for the long-term management and potential development of Warm Mineral Springs, Sarasota County staff informed the County Commission.

The four bidders were as follows:

- National and State Park Concessions Warm Mineral Springs Inc. of Hobe Sound in Martin County. (National and State

Parks Concessions is handling the short-term management contract for the resort through August.)

- Junco Ventures Inc. and Angelshot LLC of Sarasota.
- Friends of Warm Mineral Springs Inc. of Lake Worth in Palm Beach County.
- Warm Springs Attractions of North Port.

More details about each of them are expected during a joint meeting of the North Port City and Sarasota County commissions on June 10. The session will be held at 1 p.m. in the

R.L. Anderson Administration Center, located at 4000 Tamiami Trail in Venice.

According to an [agreement between the two local government bodies](#), a firm is to be hired this summer so it can begin operations by Sept. 1.

The County Commission is expected to approve a management contract during a special meeting scheduled for 9 a.m. on July 18;

the North Port Commission is anticipated to vote on the bid award during a session prior to that date.

On March 25, when the County Commission approved the short-term operation bid offered by [National and State Parks Concessions Inc.](#), Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson told her colleagues, “I actually unknowingly last summer visited this vendor in [Cades Cove](#) up



*An aerial view shows the property at the focus of the long-term bid. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

in Tennessee” during a family vacation. She even bought a Christmas ornament in the gift shop, she added, and commented at the time “on how nicely run the shop was.”

Since then, the firm has received accolades from county staff for its operation of the North Port resort.

Warm Springs Attractions of Port Charlotte, with a sole proprietor listed at the time as Robert Zabler, also bid on the short-term operation.

Angelshot LLC is identified in the state’s Division of Corporations filings as BizZoom Real LLC, whose principal address is 505 Orange Ave., Unit 101, in Sarasota. The registered agent is Cross Street Corporate Services LLC with an address of 200 S. Orange Ave. in Sarasota. The managing member is James Abrams of 2727 Dick Wilson Drive in Sarasota, according to the company’s 2014 annual report.


The BizZoom [website](#) says Abrams has “created national brands in multiple industries,” including consumer products and services, contractor services, training and financial services. His first company, it adds, became

publicly traded first on the NASDAQ and later on the New York Stock Exchange, and that company eventually achieved more than \$900 million in revenue.

The website adds that Abrams and his long-time business associate, Terry Nicholson, formed BizZoom Inc. in 2012 as “a small private equity firm that invests in and grows successful consumer products and services.”

Friends of Warm Mineral Springs Inc. filed its incorporation papers with the state in June 2013. Although its principal address is in Lake Worth, its mailing address is 12301 Durango Ave. in North Port.

The organization’s [website](#) says its mission is “To Educate the public and provide for Restoration, Preservation and Stewardship of these vital historical and natural resources in perpetuity.”

The registered agent for the company, as updated on the Division of Corporations website in September 2013, is William Delp of Lake Worth. Mike Ange of North Port is listed as vice president, and Dr. Juliette Jones of 12301 Durango Ave., North Port, is listed as secretary. 

# SHARE



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# POINT/COUNTERPOINT OVER NOISE



*Bob's Boathouse is at the rear of property that used to be home to a car dealership at 5515 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## BOB'S BOATHOUSE AND SARASOTA COUNTY TRADE MOTIONS OVER PROVISIONS OF THE COUNTY'S REVISED NOISE ORDINANCE IN MISDEMEANOR CASES INVOLVING TWO RESTAURANT MANAGERS

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

In the wake of [Bob's Boathouse's](#) continued alleged violations of [a revised county Air and Sound Pollution Ordinance](#) that went into effect on March 20, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has issued at least two criminal Notices to Appear to managers at the restaurant, *The Sarasota News Leader* has learned.

Wendy Rose, community affairs manager

in the Sheriff's Office, explained that such a notice "goes on the books as an arrest."

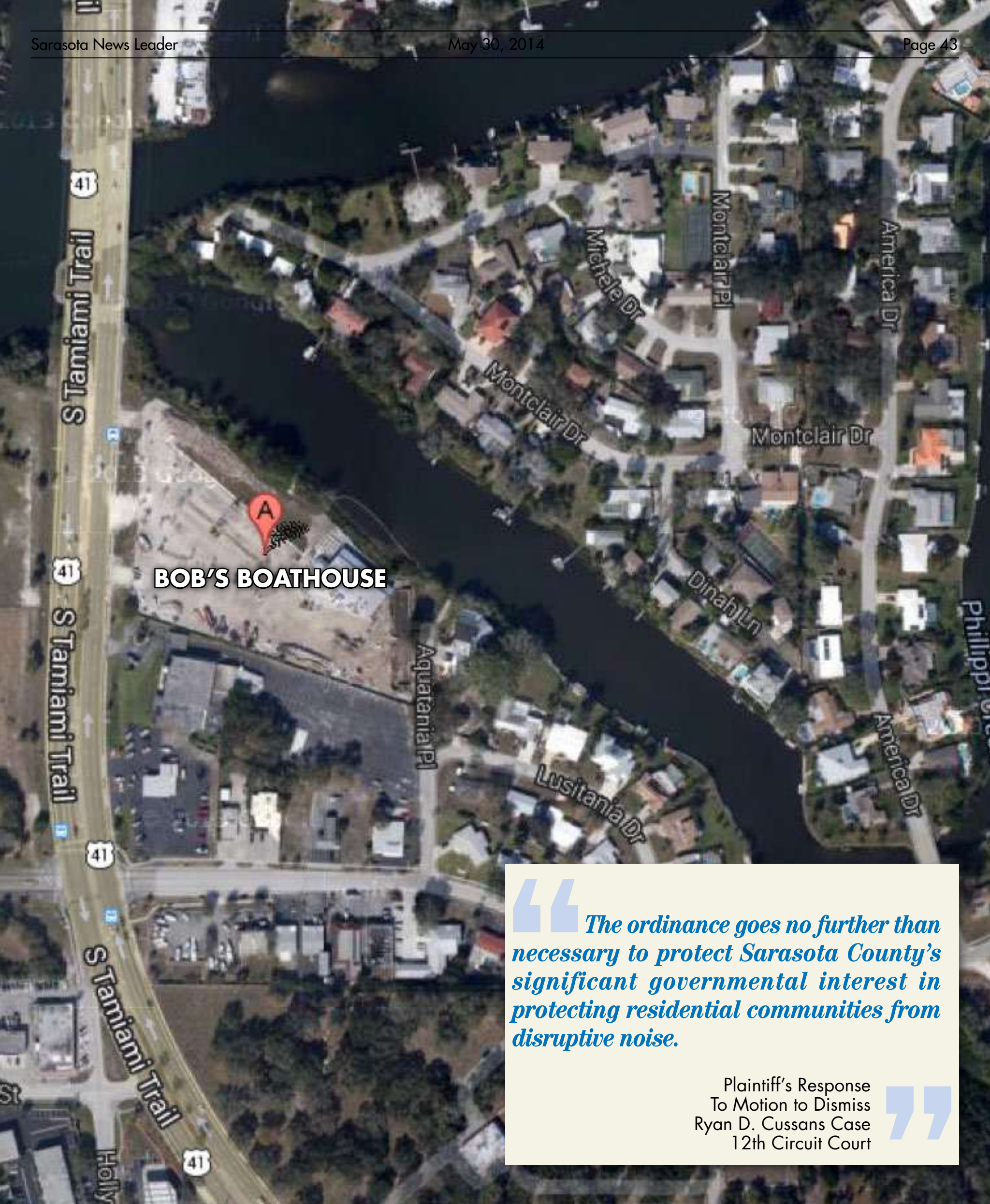
In response to a recent *News Leader* request for information, Rose reported that

as of May 13, deputies had responded to 23 complaints of noise ordinance violations since the ordinance was revised. However, she pointed out, not all of them have resulted in citations.

“*The restrictions under the Ordinance are so severe that it regulates sound in a way that substantially limits more speech than necessary to achieve the goal of protecting citizens from excessive noise.*”

Motion to Dismiss  
Ryan D. Cussans Case  
12th Circuit Court





**BOB'S BOATHOUSE**

*“ The ordinance goes no further than necessary to protect Sarasota County’s significant governmental interest in protecting residential communities from disruptive noise.*

Plaintiff’s Response  
To Motion to Dismiss  
Ryan D. Cussans Case  
12th Circuit Court

*”*

*An aerial view shows the proximity of homes to Bob’s Boathouse. Image from Google Maps*

In the latest incident for which she had a record, a deputy responded to a complaint logged at 3:11 p.m. on April 20. The deputy's report said the reading he took of the amplified live music in the complainant's back yard on Montclair Drive — across Phillippi Creek from Bob's Boathouse — showed a reading of 70.7 dbC (referring to the bass level). Afterward, the report continues, the band went on break, so he took a sampling of the ambient noise — road sounds from South Tamiami Trail and "some faint talking originating from a backyard a few houses north of the complainant's," and the reading was 63.3.

Among the changes in the county noise ordinance is the requirement that decibel readings in the range most people hear — designated as dbA measurements — cannot exceed a level of 60 from a residential receiving area between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. or 55 dbA between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. The maximum allowed level for bass recordings between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. is 65 dbC.

The deputy then spoke with manager Ryan Cussans at Bob's Boathouse, the report continues. "Per instructions I have received from my supervisor," the deputy wrote, he issued Cussans a criminal notice to appear for the violation.

The Sheriff's Office declined comment about the supervisor's instructions other than to say that it works to handle new situations as they arise.

"Cussans took receipt of the citation and advised he would turn the music down," the deputy added in the April 20 report.

Bob's Boathouse attorney James E. Aker told the *News Leader* this was the second case in which the Sheriff's Office had served a manager individually. He filed "not guilty" pleas in both, he pointed out.

A pretrial hearing in the Cussans case is scheduled before Judge Maryann Boehm at 9 a.m. on June 10, according to court records.



*The entrance to Bob's Boathouse is through a boat that has had its interior removed. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

The second Notice to Appear case involves manager Mariah Bogert. The motion to dismiss the charges against Bogert was filed on April 30, according to court records. A hearing in that case is set for July 1 before Judge Phyllis R. Galen.

The nine noise citations issued to the business are going to be addressed in 12th Circuit Court in Sarasota instead of by a Code Enforcement Special Magistrate hearing, Aker told the *News Leader*.

## DEFENDING THE CASES

The Motions to Dismiss Aker filed in both the Cussans and Bogert cases say that since the restaurant opened last fall, “primarily two, if not only two, neighbors on the north side of Phillippi Creek, across from Bob’s, have complained to Sarasota County Code Enforcement and the Sarasota Sheriff’s office about the sound of the music emanating from [Bob’s].”

From Oct. 31, 2013 through approximately March 18, the motion continues, Code Enforcement officers and deputies “made numerous sound measurements at the north side of Bob’s property, closest to the two complaining neighbors, at the behest of the neighbors, and not once was Bob’s found to be in violation of the then existing Sarasota County sound ordinance.”

County staff has confirmed that statement in past interviews with the *News Leader*.

Subsequent to approval of the revised Air and Sound Pollution Ordinance, the motions say, sound level measurements have been taken from the property line of complaining neighbors on the north side of Phillippi Creek. However, the revised law allows readings to be taken from the receiving site instead of at the generating property line if “the closest real property line to a complainant is not easily accessible or discernible” because it is a shoreline.



Houses on Montclair Drive sit across Phillippi Creek from Bob's Boathouse. Photo by Rachel Hackney



*James E. Aker, who has a law firm in Sarasota, is the principal attorney for Bob's Boathouse. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

The motions contend that “sound can be safely measured from the top of the embankment on the north side of Bob’s property between the source of the music and the neighbors’ property.”

Therefore, because the alleged violation “was based on a measurement from an invalid location [it] should be dismissed.”

The motions also argue that restaurant staff is unable to monitor compliance on the north side of the creek because the neighbors have declined “Bob’s request to enter upon [their] property to measure the sound from where Law Enforcement is taking its measurements.” The motions add that under the new ordinance, “persons of common intelligence have to guess at whether the music on Bob’s side of the Creek is in violation on the neighbors’ side of the Creek.”

Yet another defense in the motions is that the revised ordinance’s provisions “are so severe that [they leave] the musicians at Bob’s with no adequate means of expression of music as ... is customarily known ... at Bob’s.”

The motions also say that the ordinance is so restrictive that “it regulates sound in a way that substantially limits more speech than is necessary to achieve the goal of protecting citizens from excessive noise” and therefore constitutes a violation of the First Amendment.

## STATE RESPONSE

On May 27, Assistant Sarasota County Attorney David Pearce filed a notice with the 12th Circuit Court saying he would be serving as co-counsel on a limited basis for the Cussans case.


Assistant State Attorney Angeline Attila is handling the case for the state. Contacted on May 28, she referred the *News Leader* to Pearce.

Pearce also has been representing the county in Code Enforcement Special Magistrate hearings as Bob’s Boathouse has worked to obtain its Certificate of Occupancy. (See the related story in this issue.)

On May 27, Pearce filed a response to the Motion to Dismiss in the Cussans’ case, writing that the revised Air and Sound Pollution Ordinance “does not regulate the content of speech, and only places limitations on time, place, and manner of the speech. It achieves its regulation through narrowly tailored provisions designed to achieve its end of prohibiting unreasonable sound through objective standards. Finally, it properly limits the discretion of the person taking measurements of decibel levels.”

On May 16, he filed a motion with the same points in the Bogert case.

Pearce further asserts in his motions that the ordinance “avoids the language problems found in other ordinances struck down by the [Florida] Second District Court of Appeal over the past few decades.”

He adds, “The ordinance goes no further than necessary to protect Sarasota County’s significant governmental interest in protecting residential communities from disruptive noise.” He further points out that “Many local governments use the receiving property boundary as the location where sound measurements are taken ....” 



# WHAT ENTICES THEM TO BUY?

*Venice's quaint atmosphere has been cited by new county homeowners as one reason they chose to settle there. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **VISIT SARASOTA COUNTY SURVEYS OF REALTORS OFFER INSIGHTS INTO WHY PEOPLE CHOOSE TO RELOCATE TO SARASOTA COUNTY**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Last year, during a discussion about tourism, Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta suggested it would be interesting to survey county realtors to learn why their clients decided to buy homes in the area.

Some might have seen the community for the first time as a result of their children participating in a rowing competition at Nathan Benderson Park, for example, he said.

On Sept. 25, 2013, Commissioner Nora Patterson reported to her commission colleagues that she had discussed the idea with members of the county's Tourist Development

Council (TDC), which she chairs, and they were "enthusiastic about doing [the survey]."

Virginia Haley, president of the county's tourism office, Visit Sarasota County, told the commissioners that same day that she had worked with county staff to develop the survey. "We'll work on deploying it with the Venice [Area Board of] Realtors and the Sarasota [Association of Realtors]," Haley added.

On May 15, Haley shared the results with the TDC members, calling the responses "very, very interesting."



*A woman on Siesta Public Beach uses her smartphone to take a photo of one of its avian visitors. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

The surveys specifically asked for information about the motives of buyers who moved to the area from outside Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte and DeSoto counties, she explained, and they provided lists of possibilities.

Realtors said they rarely found a client to cite just one reason for the move, Haley pointed out.

Of the 292 responses provided by the Sarasota Association of Realtors for people offering more than one reason, Haley noted, the top choice was “Previous vacation or visit to area” (131), followed by “Family or friends in the area” (114) and “Climate/weather” (109).

Seventy-two of the responses indicated “Nature, beaches, outdoor activities,” and 66 noted “Arts or cultural amenities.”

The remaining categories had the following number of responses: “Recreational Sports” — 60; “Schools” — 60; “Vibrant downtowns” — 52; “Clean, safe environment” — 51; and “Sports training opportunities” — 49.

Twenty-seven responses went into the “Other” category.

The 411 answers from the Venice Board of Realtors, whose clients listed only one reason, showed “Climate/weather” as the top choice of 41.4 percent followed by “Previous visit/vacation” with 24.3 percent; “Family/friends in area” with 12.1 percent; “Nature, beaches, outdoor activities” with 9.7 percent; and “Clean safe environment” with 7.3 percent.

“Recreational Sports” was at the bottom of the rankings with 2.4 percent.

Both surveys offered open-ended comments, Haley told the TDC members. Among those in the Venice survey, respondents said they wanted to live on the Gulf Coast but preferred a smaller community “with all the amenities and less traffic and congestion.”


They also cited the desire to “be near family and friends with the opportunity for arts and culture with proximity to beaches.” Further comments indicated that while people chose South County because it was more affordable, they were interested in Sarasota County specifically for fishing and Spring Training baseball.

Downtown Venice also was noted for its vibrancy and quaint atmosphere, Haley explained.

Regarding the open-ended comments that members of the Sarasota Association of Realtors received, she said, people chose Sarasota because it has everything they wanted; its demographics were unique in Florida; they had friends in Sarasota and enjoyed the number of activities available; and they liked the climate and natural environment.

Those reasons line up with typical comments about why visitors come to Sarasota County, Haley added of the Sarasota Realtors’ responses.

Among other noteworthy information, Haley told the TDC, was the mention by a couple of Sarasota Realtors “that clients had been turned off by the homeless situation — seeing the people on the street corners.”

“That was very helpful,” Patterson told Haley at the conclusion of the presentation. 



## PAYING TRIBUTE

*(From left) Jeff LaHurd, Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson and Lorrie Muldowney listen as Larry Reinebach offers remarks about LaHurd. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### SARASOTA COUNTY HONORS ITS LONGTIME HISTORIAN AND PAYS A FOND FAREWELL TO ITS RETIRING FIRE CHIEF

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

For one, it was an event marking state and county recognition for his 25 years of preserving and popularizing Sarasota history. For the other, it was a time to accept an outpouring of accolades upon his retirement.

On May 20, the Sarasota County Commission honored county History Specialist Jeff LaHurd for receiving the 2014 Distinguished Service Award from the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation.

A day later, each of the commissioners

offered heartfelt thanks to Sarasota County Fire Department Chief and Emergency Services Director Mike Tobias, who was leaving after a 35-year career with the Fire Department.

On May 20, Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson gladly took the microphone from Chairman Charles Hines to tell the audience, “This is a neat moment for me, personally, because I’m a Jeff LaHurd fan,”

“*Having lived in the area since 1950, Mr. LaHurd is a walking history book of Sarasota County and an invaluable resource to the community.*”

Christine Robinson  
Vice Chairwoman  
Sarasota County Commission



*Jeff LaHurd poses with the framed 2014 Distinguished Service Award from the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

having read a number of his 15 books about the community.

Robinson said she was honored to have been asked to write a letter of support for LaHurd's nomination for the state award. Nonetheless, she continued, "It was a difficult letter to write ... because how do you encapsulate a career of ... all things Sarasota County?"

Robinson read her letter to the audience as the other commissioners joined her at the front of their chambers in the County Administration Center on Ringling Boulevard in downtown Sarasota.

"Having lived in the area since 1950," she began, "Mr. LaHurd is a walking history book of Sarasota County and an invaluable resource to the community."



*(From left) Commissioner Nora Patterson and county History Specialist Jeff LaHurd listen as Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson reads the letter she wrote to the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

His recounting of the “little-known stories of Sarasota County’s founding fathers as well as his artful ability to share stories of those who didn’t get popular credit for their contributions” has helped bring history alive, she pointed out.

His most recent book, she noted — turning to him and saying with a big smile, “This is your plug” — is *The Rise of Sarasota: Ken Thompson and the Birth of Paradise*, which was published in 2012, Robinson noted. It “explains why things are the way they are in Sarasota today,” she added, pointing out that it focuses on the longtime city manager of Sarasota and the city’s development.

“It has had a dramatic impact on the way I look at things,” Robinson told the audience.

When it was his turn to take the mic, LaHurd said, “It was very gratifying for me to get this award,” not only because it represents state-wide recognition but also because he was being “recognized by the people that I work for and the people that I work with.”

Robinson’s letter, he continued, meant as much to him as the award.

Lorrie Muldowney, Sarasota County historical resources manager, pointed out that LaHurd was nominated for the honor by the [Friends of the Sarasota County History Center](#). The



*Sarasota County Commission Chairman Charles Hines (second from right) and Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson (right) present a canvas of a photograph of retiring Fire Chief Mike Tobias (second from left) to Tobias and wife Sharon on May 21. Photo by Steve Dawson, Sarasota County Communications Department*

vice president of that group, Larry Reinebach, called LaHurd “a master storyteller who has preserved the legacy of Florida and Sarasota.”

## BIDDING ADIEU TO THE CHIEF

On May 21, the Commission Chambers was filled as board Chairman Charles Hines called Tobias and the chief’s wife of 38 years, Sharon, to the front of the room.

“We really, really appreciate what you’ve done,” Hines said after noting that Tobias, who has been a county resident since 1965, joined the Fire Department in 1979. Tobias was promoted to chief in August 2011, Hines pointed out, and then promoted to director of emergency services in July 2012.

The commissioners presented Tobias with a framed canvas of a photo of Tobias taken by Norman Schimmel, a member of the county’s



“Without a doubt, the primary feedback I have received is ‘Mike [Tobias] is going to be missed, but please hire somebody just like Mike.’

Tom Harmer  
County Administrator  
Sarasota County

”

(From left) County Administrator Tom Harmer, Commissioner Joe Barbetta, Commissioner Nora Patterson, Sharon Tobias, Chief Mike Tobias, Commission Chairman Charles Hines, Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson, Commissioner Carolyn Mason and Norman Schimmel mark the occasion of Chief Tobias’ retirement on May 21. Photo by Steve Dawson, Sarasota County Communications Department

## Tourist Development Council and Citizen Tax Oversight Committee.

After Commissioner Joe Barbetta gave Tobias what Hines characterized as “the classic retirement clock,” Hines recognized County Administrator Tom Harmer, who previously served as fire chief in Titusville.

Once people hold certain positions in their careers, Harmer explained, the titles stay with them for life. “Once a fire chief, always a fire chief,” he added, “and that’s a heck of an honor [for Tobias] to carry with him.”

Over the past six months, Harmer continued, he has met with more than 200 people, some in large group settings and others individually, as he sought their views on what attributes they want to see in the county’s next fire chief. “Without a doubt, the primary feedback I have received is ‘Mike is going to be missed, but please hire somebody just like Mike.’”

Then Harmer pointed out, “In the fire service, leadership is symbolized by a bugle.”

A firefighter promoted out of the ranks to lieutenant earns his first lapel pin bugle, Harmer explained; a chief wears five such pins on his lapel.

The bugle represents days long gone by, Harmer noted, when fire chiefs had to use

speaking trumpets in the streets to direct their teams.

“I didn’t want the chief to leave without a bugle,” Harmer added as he presented Tobias a brass bugle on a wooden base and thanked him on behalf of all the county employees.

“I know that means a lot to you,” Hines said to Tobias, referring to the remarks and the bugle.

Each of the other commissioners took turns offering thanks to the chief. Commissioner Nora Patterson said she believes the people he has led “are unanimous in respect and love for you. ... The county as a whole feels the same way.”

Barbetta called Tobias “a consummate professional.”

When it was finally his turn with the mic, Tobias thanked his wife “for encouraging me to follow my dream over 35 years ago to get into the service.”

He also expressed gratitude to all the men and women in the Fire Department and Emergency Services, adding that the county has “a terrific team in place.”

The audience members, who nearly filled the chambers, gave him a rousing standing ovation. 

### Someone you know needs Planned Parenthood

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- Annual GYN exams
- Birth control





# A TIME OF REFLECTION

*All photos by Norman Schimmel*

## **SARASOTA COUNTY RESIDENTS MARK MEMORIAL DAY**

*Staff Reports*

Hundreds lined Main Street in downtown Sarasota on Monday, May 26, to offer gratitude to the men and women who have given their lives in service to their country.

The annual Memorial Day Parade, with its theme, *Legacy of Heroes*, featured veterans, first responders, color guards, Junior ROTC groups, marching bands, military equipment and local government officials.

Following the parade, a ceremony was held at Chaplain J.D. Hamel Park, at the intersection of Main Street and Gulfstream Avenue. It featured Brig. Gen. Frank Laudano, commandant of Sarasota Military Academy, as the guest speaker.

Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel captured a variety of images from the Memorial Day events.









*(From left) Mary Kenealy-Barbetta, County Commissioner Joe Barbetta and City Commissioners Suzanne Atwell and Paul Caragiulo are followed by County Commissioner Carolyn Mason (in navy top) and (to the right of Mason) U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan.*









# *Siesta Seen*

**A PROPERTY MANAGEMENT FIRM WILL BE SOUGHT TO HANDLE THE VILLAGE UPKEEP; CRAIG SIEGEL ENTERS NOT GUILTY PLEAS AND OFFERS NO COMMENTS AT A SPECIAL MAGISTRATE HEARING; AND THE LIDO BEACH PROJECT WILL BE THE FOCUS OF THE JUNE 5 SKA MEETING**



By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

It should come as no surprise to Siesta Village business owners that the Siesta Key Village Maintenance Corp. is seeking a new company to handle the upkeep of the district the county paid to improve in 2008-09.

Architect Mark Smith, who serves as the liaison between the Maintenance Corp. and Sarasota County, told me last week that Championship Landscape Maintenance Professionals Inc. of Fort Myers, which won the upkeep contract in 2012 on a bid of

\$97,417.70, has been notified its contract will not be renewed for a second time in August.

“Things just weren’t getting done,” he said on May 22. “The level of service dropped.”

When the Village maintenance bids were opened in the summer of 2012, county staff reported being impressed with Championship’s credentials. Among them was the fact that the firm handled the maintenance at the [Resort at Longboat Key Club](#).

*Red sky on the evening of May 23 portended a good Memorial Day weekend on Siesta Key. Contributed photo by Peter van Roekens*

## ***Siesta Seen***

However, Smith said he heard Championship no longer has that contract, either. I was able to confirm that information this week.

Smith added that he had been able to convince county staff that a management company would be a better choice to take over the Siesta Village work.

In response to Commissioner Nora Patterson's request for details about the Championship situation, Lisa Cece, special district coordinator in the county's Transportation and Real Estate Department, sent all the commissioners an email on May 27. Cece explained that on Feb. 25, the Maintenance Corp. met to discuss the needs and level of service in the maintenance district (primarily the Village) under the contract with Championship.

She continued, "The [Maintenance Corp.] Board voted unanimously to not renew this contract," adding that the current term will expire Aug. 21. "The Board also discussed and voted unanimously to hire someone to oversee the current contractual services (pending)," she wrote, noting that the board further agreed "that a Property Management Company would be better suited to oversee the needs of the District moving forward ..."

Cece added, "The County delivered via certified mail a Notice of Non-Renewal Letter to Championship, LLC, May 21, 2014, to provide the necessary ninety (90) day notice [that the contract would not be renewed]. Championship LLC, has acknowledged receipt of this letter and is continuing to

provide necessary services to the District through August 20, 2014."

Cece noted that staff had sent to the county's Procurement Department documents prepared to seek bids for property management services. "This bid is slated to advertise as soon as possible, proposed for May 30, 2014," she wrote. "Plans are underway to ensure services are maintained continuously throughout the bid process to contract award."

Cece also pointed out that later this week, Chief County Engineer James K. Harriott Jr. will be sending a full report to the commissioners, detailing the maintenance of the Village under the current contract.

When I spoke with Cece on May 27, she said she really would prefer not to comment on the situation. She did note that the county is "really relying on Championship" to handle the upkeep during the summer, until a new firm can take over.

She also concurred with Smith about the current upkeep of the Village, adding that that county staff has not been pleased.

### **THE CRAIG SIEGEL CASES**

The same morning he entered written "Not guilty" pleas in [cases involving alleged battery on a county Code Enforcement officer and rental fraud](#), Siesta resident Craig Siegel also attended a Code Enforcement Special Magistrate hearing.

On May 23, Siegel, wearing shorts, a T-shirt and flip flops, appeared before Special

# ***Siesta Seen***

Magistrate Meg Wittmer in Sarasota in connection with the case that apparently led to his allegedly throwing a bucket of urine on Code Enforcement Officer James S. Holderby on April 28.

Code Enforcement Officer John Lally — the regular inspector on Siesta Key — told Wittmer that on April 1, Holderby found

furniture, debris and overflowing trash cans on the 5174 Sandy Cove Ave. property owned by 5174 Sand Cove Lane, for which Siegel is the trustee. Holderby subsequently issued a Notice of Violation, Lally added. (Lally was out on leave at the time.)

Photos taken by Holderby on April 1 were submitted into evidence. According to Lally's



*Siesta resident Craig Siegel (left) and county Code Enforcement Officer John Lally await copies of a Special Magistrate's order after a May 23 hearing. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# ***Siesta Seen***

testimony, they showed the situation on the grounds that he had described to Wittmer.

When Wittmer asked Siegel if he objected to the photos being logged as evidence, he replied, “No!”

On April 21, Lally continued, when Holderby again visited the property, some improvement was visible, but Holderby “found the side yard was full of debris.”

Siegel had no objection to more photos being submitted as evidence.

Lally then testified that he inspected the property on May 22 and found all the debris and overflowing trash had been removed, bringing the property into compliance with the county code. However, he requested that Wittmer write a finding of fact “to deter future violations.”

When Wittmer asked Siegel if he wanted to offer any testimony, he declined.

Wittmer said her order would contain the finding that the property had been in violation in the past, with accumulations of “junk and debris,” and that she was requiring the property owner to maintain it in compliance with the county code.

## **ILLEGAL RENTALS**

Before that Special Magistrate hearing began on May 23, I had time to chat briefly with Lally and Holderby.

Lally told me he was handling 15 cases of illegal rentals on Siesta.



*Craig Siegel sits in the very back row of the County Commission Chambers on May 23, awaiting his case during a Code Enforcement Special Magistrate Hearing. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

People still do not understand that, under a county ordinance, they can rent property only once in a 30-day period, he explained — a point he has made during numerous appearances before the Siesta Key Association.

People tend to get greedy, he said, adding that he finds multiple websites advertising places to rent on Siesta.

“It’s amazing how many of them aren’t even registered with the [Sarasota County] tax collector,” Holderby told me.

Anyone who rents property is required to register with that office and pay the Tourist Development Tax on money collected from lodgers.



*Siesta Key Village Association members have complained in recent months about the diminished upkeep of the Village. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# ***Siesta Seen***

## **NATURAL RESOURCES UPDATE**

Matt Osterhoudt, the acting director of the county's Natural Resources Department, will be the guest speaker at the June 5 meeting of the Siesta Key Association (SKA).

SKA Vice President Catherine Luckner told me the board members have asked Osterhoudt to educate them and audience members on his department's involvement in the [Lido Beach Renourishment Project](#).

## **A NEW RECYCLING EFFORT?**

SKA President Michael Shay contacted me late last week to say one of the organization's

new directors recently had seen a new type of combined garbage/recycling container at Beach Accesses 5 and 7. Needless to say, Shay's curiosity was piqued. He has been working with members of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) for more than a year to get a recycling initiative under way in Siesta Village.

Shay has contacted George Tatge, a manager in the county Parks and Recreation Department, for details about the new structures. After he receives an answer, he plans to bring up the matter at an SKVA meeting. (That group meets next on June 3; I had no



*The Siesta stormwater project adjacent to the public beach is expected to be completed by May 30, according to the county's public works director. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

# Siesta Seen

update from Shay by the time I was wrapping up this column on May 28.)

Shay likes the new bins. Among the questions he has emailed Tatge, he said, is a query about whether the county plans to replace all the separate garbage and recycling bins at the beach accesses with these structures. He also asked about their volume compared to the current bins at most of the accesses.

## ALL DONE ON THE BRIDGE

Some confusion initially was raised about recent Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) bridge maintenance on the key. Apparently, people thought the north bridge was the focus, but the crews actually were working at night on the Stickney Point Road bridge.

Lane closures did occur while repairs were under way to the bridge deck, concrete and machinery room, according to an FDOT memo provided to the county.

That work was completed last week, county staff confirmed.

## STORMWATER PROJECT UPDATE

The latest news on the Siesta stormwater project — officially, the Beach Road Drainage Project — is that the modular pump house has been installed and wiring for the building, the pump and associated equipment was completed on May 20.

In a report to the County Commission dated the same day, Isaac Brownman, director of the Public Works Department, wrote that Erickson Engineering, a county consultant on the project, conducted the first underwater inspection of the offshore diffuser on May 5 and found “all was satisfactory.”

The diffusing is the final part of the process before treated stormwater can be pumped into the Gulf of Mexico.

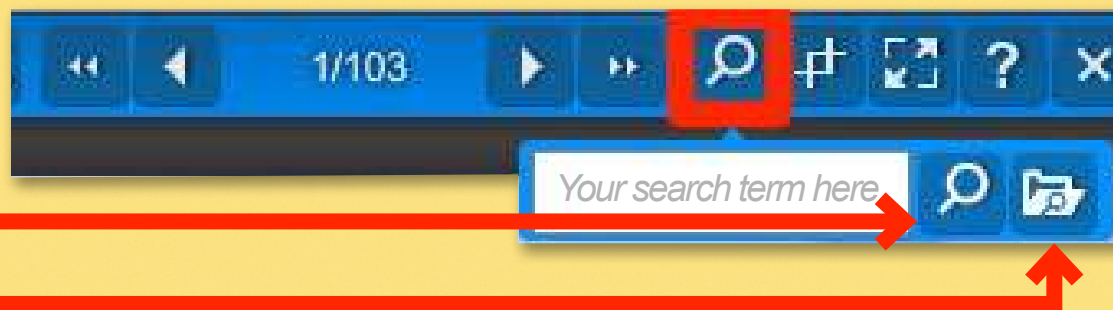
A test of the ultraviolet equipment that will be used to treat the stormwater was set for May 28, Brownman added.

“Substantial completion for the Beach Road Drainage Project is still scheduled for May 30, 2014,” he added. 

## QUICK TIP

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*Sarasota County's lifeguards will work longer hours through Labor Day weekend. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

## COUNTY'S LIFEGUARD HOURS EXTENDED THROUGH THE SUMMER

Sarasota County's operational hours for its lifeguards have been extended on all guarded beaches from 10 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. daily, the county has announced.

The hours will run through Labor Day weekend, a county news release says.

The County's guarded beaches are Lido, Manasota, Nokomis, North Jetty, Siesta and Venice beaches, the release points out. Those that are unguarded, where swimmers must enter the water at their own risk, are Brohard Beach, Blind Pass Beach, Caspersen Beach, Palmer Point Park, Service Club Park, Ted Sperling Park and Turtle Beach, the release adds.

Sarasota County public safety officials encourage all swimmers to abide by these rules:

- Always follow the instructions of the lifeguards on duty.
- Check with the lifeguards to determine swimming conditions before going in the water.
- Do not overestimate your swimming capability.
- Whenever possible, swim with a buddy.

All parking at Sarasota County beaches is free and available 6 a.m. to midnight 365 days a year, the news release notes.

For more information about how to stay safe this summer at the beach visit [scgov.net](https://www.sarasotacounty.gov); the keyword is "Lifeguards."

## COUNTY HISTORY CENTER CLOSED FOR PLUMBING REPAIRS

The Sarasota County Historical Resource Center, located at 6062 Porter Way in Sarasota, has been closed temporarily while plumbing repairs are being made, the county has announced.

The center is expected to reopen to the public no later than Monday, June 9, a news release says.

“We appreciate the community’s patience during the repairs, and we want to ensure everyone knows there was no damage to, or

loss of, any of the center’s historical collection due to the plumbing issues,” said Lorrie Muldowney, Sarasota County historical resources manager, in the release.

For community members with research questions, center staff is available by calling 861-5000 Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., the release points out.

A person also may submit a [History Center inquiry form](#) online on the county’s website, [scgov.net](#).



*The Sarasota County Historical Resource Center is located at 6062 Porter Way, near Interstate 75, in Sarasota (marked by the red flag). Image from Google Maps*

## MCKECHNIE FIELD TO HOST FLORIDA STATE LEAGUE ALL-STAR GAME

The 2014 Florida State League All-Star Game will be held on June 14 at McKechnie Field in Bradenton, organizers have announced.

A series of events, including the Pirates and Princesses 5K Home Run and the Florida State League All-Star VIP Gala, are planned on June 13, a news release points out.

Advance adult tickets for the game are \$10 per seat for infield box, infield reserve, baseline box and grandstand seats, the release adds. Left field bleacher seating costs \$8 per ticket. Tickets for children age 12 and younger are \$8 for infield box, infield reserve, baseline box and grandstand sections and \$6 per ticket in the left field bleachers, the release says.

Group tickets for the All-Star Game, which are available to parties of 10 or more, are \$7 in all sections, the release continues. Each group member will receive a commemorative All-Star Game tumbler while supplies last, it notes.

The McKechnie Field ticket office is open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. every Tuesday through Friday when Bradenton Marauders games are not being played, the release points out. If a game is taking place on a weekday, the ticket office is open from noon until the conclusion of the game. The office also opens two hours before Saturday, Sunday and morning games, the release adds.

For more information about the Florida State League All-Star Game, visit the [website](#).



*McKechnie Field in Bradenton has undergone significant renovations in recent years. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## ALL FAITHS FOOD BANK EXCEEDS CAMPAIGN GOALS

All Faiths Food Bank is extending its appreciation to members of the “compassionate and generous community” who enabled it to exceed its goals for the Campaign Against Summer Hunger.

“Together we raised an unprecedented \$1.1 million in funds and 766,253 pounds of food to feed children and families this summer!” a news release says.

Members of the community are welcome to like the food bank on [Facebook](#) “and keep up-to-date on the new and expanded summer food assistance programs” they made possible, the release adds. “For an incredibly rewarding hands-on summer hunger experience, join us as a [volunteer](#) at food distributions,” it continues.

**Thank you! Thank you!**

The Campaign Against Summer Hunger showcased just how strong and generous a community united against hunger can be. We are thrilled to announce that thanks to our donors, we have exceeded food and fund goals in the Campaign Against Summer Hunger!

Together we raised an unprecedented \$1.1 million in funds and 766,253 pounds of food to feed children and families this summer!

- We are partnering with the Sarasota School District provide a served lunch at 450 sites, including 12 in DeSoto County.
- We are adding 15 mobile food pantries throughout Sarasota and DeSoto County.
- Our new Backpack Kids summer program will be implemented at 15 at-risk sites.

**Release your inner artist!**

Come share love for Beads of Hope on Wednesday evenings, 5:30-12:00 p.m., May 28. The class is \$15. All ages levels welcome. Held at Sarasota County Technical Institute. Register today! 941.381.4892.

**WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!**

Every call for a food drive makes a really adds up in gas and drivers' time. Please drop your nonperishable food donations at a Sarasota County Goodwill. Thank you so much!

Visit the [website](#) for more information about All Faiths Food Bank. Image from the website

## BOOKER MIDDLE NAMED ONE OF THE STATE'S BEST PUBLIC ART SCHOOLS

The Florida Alliance for Arts Education (FAAE) has recognized seven Florida public schools, including Booker Middle School in Sarasota, as Arts Achieve! Model Schools, the organization has announced.

The other honorees are Osceola County School for the Arts, Ronald McNair Magnet Middle School, Pinellas County Center for the Arts at Gibbs High School, South Miami Middle Community School Center for the Arts, Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts and North Fort Myers Academy of the Arts. “Excellence in Arts Education is still very much a vital goal of the Florida Department of Education,” said Carroll Vick, executive director of the FAAE, in the release.

“Teams of school administrators and teachers from each of the Arts Achieve! Model Schools have been presented with full-conference scholarships to FAAE’s annual Leadership Summit in Orlando to further strengthen their engagement with [arts] education best practices and help them connect with other arts educators and administrators from around the state,” the release points out.

Representatives of the winning schools will receive their Arts Achieve! awards at the summit during a luncheon in their honor on June 20, the release notes.

“The spirit of this year’s conference is to celebrate the real potential arts students have for fruitful and fulfilling arts careers,” added Vick in the release. “Artists aren’t starving; they’re finding homes for their creative minds

in all sectors of the job market, including science, technology, engineering and math,” he pointed out in the release.

The Florida Alliance for Arts Education evaluates and approves schools based on criteria the organization developed in cooperation

with Florida’s professional service associations for dance, music, theater and visual arts, the release explains.

For more information about the Arts Achieve! Model School Program or the Florida Alliance for Arts Education, visit [faae.org](http://faae.org).

## CEO OF SELBY GARDENS ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT PLANS

After five years as president and CEO of Marie Selby Botanical Gardens in Sarasota, Thomas Buchter announced last week that he will retire in October.

Buchter’s decision follows restoration of the organization “to financial stability and the successful completion of construction and opening of the Ann Goldstein Children’s Rainforest Garden in 2013,” a news release points out.

“Selby is an exceptional garden with a national and international reputation for its contribution to the study and display of epiphytes,” said Buchter in the release. Since 2010, he continued, by “focusing on our customers, we’ve made sure that all guests — whether visiting botanists, a gardener from Europe or our local families — have a memorable experience that exceeded expectations.”

During Buchter’s tenure, which began in 2009, Selby Gardens has marked the following milestones:

- Achieved a balanced budget of \$3.4 million for fiscal years 2010 through 2013; 2014 is “trending very positively,” the release says.
- Established the Development Department, which, in turn, created the Chairman’s Circle to promote higher levels of contributions to the general operating fund and the Selby Gardens Legacy Society for planned giving.



*Tom Buchter/Contributed photo*

- Completed a successful \$5 million fundraising campaign that resulted in completion of the Ann Goldstein Children’s Rainforest Garden, including the vacation of a portion of Palm Avenue by the City of Sarasota.

Buchter will return to Ohio and rejoin his wife, Kent Buchter, who works for a legal firm in Kirtland, OH, the release adds.


The Gardens’ board of trustees will immediately begin the process of hiring a search firm to fill the CEO position, the release notes.

## FREE COMMUNITY CLEANUP SET FOR PROCTOR AND WILKINSON ROADS

Sarasota County's Development Services and Code Enforcement offices will hold their annual free community cleanup day for residents in the vicinity of Sarasota's Proctor and Wilkinson roads on Saturday, June 7, from 8 a.m. to noon, the county has announced.

Dumpsters will be provided at two locations so residents can dispose of discarded household items, yard waste, tree trimmings, junk and other refuse, the release adds. One will be on the northwest corner of the intersection of Ashton Road and Pinkney Avenue, just west of the railroad tracks on the north side of Ashton Road. The second will be in Bee Ridge Park at the intersection of Lockwood Ridge and Wilkinson roads, in the softball field parking lot, the release notes.

TVs, computers, other electronic equipment, appliances and tires (no larger than 25/6) will be accepted only at the Ashton Road/Pinkney Avenue location, the release adds. The county is imposing a limit of five tires per resident.

For more information, visit [scgov.net](http://scgov.net) or contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000. 



*The Wilkinson Road/Proctor Road neighborhoods will have free county assistance for a cleanup day on June 7. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

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*(Left) Tyrone Tyson/Contributed photo. (Right) Marcus Jackson/Contributed photo*

## TWO SARASOTA MEN ARRESTED ON ARMED ROBBERY CHARGES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested two Sarasota men on charges of armed robbery after the victim reported the theft of cash when he tried to purchase crack cocaine from the men, the office has announced.

After receiving a call about a robbery, deputies responded to the 3100 block of Hawthorne Street in Sarasota shortly after 7 p.m. on May 27, a news release says. They spoke with the victim, who said he had given one suspect \$100 in exchange for the crack, according to the report.

The victim identified the suspects as Tyrone A. Tyson, 21, of 2315 Spring Oaks Court, Sarasota, and Marcus J. Jackson, 22, of 2050

30th St., Sarasota, the report continues. During the exchange, the victim told deputies, Tyson displayed a handgun in his waistband, "at which point the victim ran in fear for his life," the news release adds.

While the deputies were still on the scene, the victim spotted the suspects' vehicle as it went by, the release says. Deputies stopped the vehicle, enabling the victim to identify both suspects, the release notes. Deputies did not find a firearm in their search of the vehicle, the report adds.

Both Tyson and Jackson are charged with one count of Robbery With Firearm and are being held without bond.

## VENICE MAN CHARGED AFTER CRASH IN DOWNTOWN SARASOTA

Curt Lee Rud, 29, of 988 Euclid Ave., Venice, has been charged with Leaving the Scene of a Crash with Death and Driving with a Suspended License with Knowledge in connection with the collision of his Dodge Avenger and a Yellow Cab taxi about 2 a.m. Saturday, May 24, in Sarasota that resulted in one death, the Sarasota Police Department has reported.

Additional charges for Rud are possible based on the outcome of a continuing investigation, a news release says.

James M. Elias, 51, of Acushnet, MA, died at Blake Medical Center in Bradenton as a result of injuries sustained in the crash, the release adds. The incident occurred near the intersection of Main Street and Bayfront Drive, the



*Curt Rud/Contributed photo*



*An aerial view shows the intersection and immediate vicinity of Main Street and Bayfront Drive in Sarasota. Image from Google Maps*

release says. He and four other people were in a taxi that Rud allegedly struck while driving southbound in the northbound lanes, the release continues.

Brian Krach, 44, of Sarasota, the taxi driver, was listed as stable on Monday at Sarasota Memorial Hospital; Kimberly Senna of Acushnet, MA, 43, who also was transported to Blake Medical Center, was in the Intensive Care Unit on Monday, the release continues. Lori Elias, 49, of Acushnet, MA, was transported to Sarasota Memorial for treatment

of minor injuries, and Lisa Alves, 49, also of Acushnet, MA, was treated at Sarasota Memorial for ankle fractures, the release adds.

Rud fled the scene on foot but was apprehended at the Gulfstream Avenue/Main Street intersection by law enforcement officers who spotted him running away, the release points out.

“Officers evaluated Rud for driving under the influence but he did not show signs of impairment,” the release continues.

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## **14 ARRESTED FOR DUI AND 201 ISSUED UNIFORM TRAFFIC CITATIONS**

During its saturation patrols from May 23 to May 26, the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office made 14 DUI arrests; two arrests for violating probation for a DUI and driving with a revoked license from DUI; and another two arrests for driving without a valid driver’s license and for felony driving with a suspended license, the office has reported.

Deputies also issued 201 uniform traffic citations (civil infractions), 75 warnings and one .02 violation (a person under age 21 driving after consuming alcohol but not criminally impaired), a news release says.

The office conducts saturation patrols “to remove dangerous, uninsured or impaired drivers from local roadways and keep all motorists safe,” the release explains.

“Because of the commitment to keep the public aware of these ongoing education and enforcement efforts, results are provided monthly or at the conclusion of special events,” it adds.

The Memorial Day Holiday Weekend numbers do not include DUI arrests made and citations issued by other agency personnel outside of the specific Traffic Unit initiative, the release notes.

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## **INFORMATION SOUGHT ABOUT ALLEGED METH OPERATION**


Sarasota County Sheriff’s detectives are seeking information about an alleged methamphetamine operation discovered in a Nokomis residence, the office has announced.

About 9:40 a.m. on May 24, officers arrived at 116 S. Emerald Ave. in Nokomis to execute a search warrant after receiving a report of a suspicious incident, a news release says.

After detectives began a search of the residence, the release continues, they “located

items used to make methamphetamine, which can be highly volatile.”

The release adds, “All personnel then exited the residence.”

Anyone with information about activities at that address is encouraged to call the Sheriff’s Office at 861-5800, leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 366-TIPS (8477) or going online at [sarasotacrimestoppers.com](http://sarasotacrimestoppers.com). 

# OPINION



## COUNTY CODE ENFORCEMENT NEEDS TOUGHER SANCTIONS

### EDITORIAL

For months, *The Sarasota News Leader* has been following a pair of Code Enforcement cases that have been ... well, frustrating for Sarasota County. Frustrating because efforts to bring a home at 6537 Sabal Drive on Siesta Key and Bob's Boathouse, a restaurant on South Tamiami Trail, into continuous compliance with existing regulations has proven somewhat Sisyphean.

Violations at the Sabal Drive home, owned by local chiropractor Craig Siegel as a vacation rental property, first were discovered by Code Enforcement officials in November 2012. Siegel had bricked in the open portion underneath the raised home, in violation of local and FEMA regulations, so he might collect huge weekly rents for a "12-bedroom"

house. However, in addition to flouting flood control regulations, the illegal modifications put occupants at an unacceptable risk in the event of a fire, since ingress and egress were sharply limited.

County Code Enforcement officers made several visits, tallied a long list of violations and tried — often in vain — to serve either Siegel or his attorney with notices of those violations and orders to correct all nonconforming structures.

Finally, the county took the next step. It went before a Code Enforcement Special Magistrate in the office of the Sarasota County Clerk of Court, whose job is to adjudicate disputes with noncomplying property owners. After reviewing the county's case, the Special

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Magistrate started fining Siegel more than \$500 per day until his house was brought into full compliance with all existing local and federal codes. And nothing happened.

Siegel ignored the order of the Special Magistrate as the fines accumulated into tens of thousands of dollars. In the meantime, he was continuing to rent the unsafe dwelling to unsuspecting tourists from out-of-state, collecting as much as \$4,500 for a single week.

In conversations between our reporters and county officials, a fatal flaw was revealed in how inadequate the sanctions the county could impose actually were. If a property owner refused to correct code defects involving a property and simply allowed the daily fines to accumulate without paying them, the only recourse for the county was to turn over the growing debt to a private collection agency.

Unfortunately, collection agencies take on these types of debts by pocketing half of any money they collect. And their arsenal of collection strategies consists principally of writing harsh, threatening letters and making harsh, threatening phone calls (especially during the dinner hour).

Rarely does a collection agency take a

debtor to court, because it has to pay court costs upfront and, even if it wins, the debtor might not be able to pay — or the debtor could declare bankruptcy. So the collection agency, after a few months of trying to collect the debt through letters and phone calls, typically will package up all of the debts that seem uncollectible and then sell that package to another collection agency, which will start the same process all over again. It is not unusual for a sizable but difficult-to-collect debt to be passed along to as many as half a dozen collection agencies. Meanwhile, the county does not see a dime of that money, and the recalcitrant property owner blithely continues ignoring the law and thumbing his or her nose at Code Enforcement authorities.

The silver lining for the county is its ability to attach a lien for the outstanding penalties and any accrued interest against not only the nonconforming property, but against any other properties owned by the same person. In the case of Siegel, that proved the lever that broke the proverbial logjam. He

had another house he wished to sell, but he could not do so without bringing the Sabal Drive house into compliance. Reluctantly, it appears, he had contractors tear out all of the downstairs accommodations in the house, along with

*As with the Craig Siegel properties, county Code Enforcement officers have been frustrated by not only the intransigence of Bob's Boathouse with regard to the timely completion of outstanding requirements for continued operation and adherence to the new noise limitations, but by the utter lack of meaningful sanctions at their disposal to compel that compliance.*

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# OPINION

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making other changes, to bring the house up to local and federal codes.

However, Code Enforcement officers are investigating a new series of violations at his properties, so it looks as though the cycle is beginning again.

## **YET ANOTHER CASE**

A more recent example began in late 2013 when Bob's Boathouse reopened on the former site of Royal Oldsmobile/GMC Trucks along the banks of Phillippi Creek on South Tamiami Trail. Through staff administrative errors, Bob's Boathouse was given a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy, or TCO, despite its owing tens of thousands of dollars for utility fees.

Worse, upon opening, the restaurant offered daily musical entertainment, the volume of which proved disruptive to residents in adjacent neighborhoods.

Neighbors have said they pleaded with the management of Bob's Boathouse to lower the sound, as many of them were unable to sleep at night because of the incessant noise. But those pleas fell on deaf ears.

In desperation, residents then turned to the County Commission, pointing out that the county's noise ordinance made enforcement difficult and that the noise levels it allowed were much higher than those in neighboring counties.

After discussion and a public hearing, the County Commission amended the ordinance

to make enforcement parameters clearer, and it lowered maximum allowable noise levels to those already adopted in counties from Hillsborough down to Collier.

Confronted with the more restrictive noise ordinance, one would have thought the owners of Bob's Boathouse would have moved quickly to reduce the volume of live entertainment ... and one would have been wrong.

Almost immediately, the nightclub was being cited for noise violations. Then the same problem seen in the Siegel case reared its head. Bob's Boathouse simply ignored the citations and continued allowing musical entertainment to exceed sound limits.

Because there are almost 40 times more Sarasota County Sheriff's deputies than Code Enforcement officers in Sarasota County (something, incidentally, that the County Commission desperately needs to address), it usually fell to deputies responding to noise complaints to issue citations at Bob's Boathouse when noise readings showed a clear violation of the ordinance.

After issuing several citations that were ignored, the deputies took a sterner tack: They arrested the manager on duty, charging that person with a misdemeanor violation of county noise ordinances. To date, two managers have been charged, and their cases are pending in the courts.

Throughout this ordeal, county staff has been fighting a steady battle with Bob's Boathouse to bring the establishment into compliance with existing building and site regulations

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# OPINION

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before issuing a permanent Certificate of Occupancy, or CO. The last TCO expired earlier this year, and the establishment has been in continued violation for its noncompliance ever since.

Once again, Code Enforcement officials — when faced with a recalcitrant property owner ignoring deadlines for compliance — had to turn to the Special Magistrate for relief.

At a hearing in March, James Aker, the attorney for Bob's Boathouse, pleaded with the Special Magistrate for more time for his client to complete a county-issued "punch list" of items that must be finished prior to the issuance of a CO.

The special magistrate relented, granting Bob's Boathouse up to 120 days to complete all remaining items on the punch list, with a status hearing scheduled for May 23 to assess progress.

Despite assurances by Aker that substantial progress would be made on this list, it was revealed at that May 23 hearing that 75 percent of the items remained undone. And if all items are not complete by the end of the 120-day period, a hearing in July will determine penalties that will be assessed against Bob's Boathouse for continued noncompliance. Presumably, those penalties could be daily fines, or even an order to cease operations until a permanent CO was in hand.

As with the Craig Siegel properties, county Code Enforcement officials have been

frustrated by not only the intransigence of Bob's Boathouse with regard to the timely completion of outstanding requirements for continued operation and adherence to the new noise limitations, but by the utter lack of meaningful sanctions at their disposal to compel that compliance.

The existing enforcement structure for violation of any county code works quite well for a law-abiding property owner who inadvertently runs afoul of those regulations. The problem arises with the occasional property owner who ignores those codes as well as efforts by the county to enforce compliance. Given the relative toothlessness of enforcement sanctions, it is no wonder the county is occasionally confronted by such flagrant violations. The problem is aggravated further by a woefully exiguous corps of Code Enforcement officers to ensure compliance in a county with almost 400,000 residents.

The County Commission must meet this challenge head on. First, it must provide many more Code Enforcement officers than the 11 currently available. The Sheriff's Office should not be an adjunct enforcement arm for code matters. Second, it must look at adding sterner penalties — even criminal sanctions — to address the occasional problem of property owners who openly flout both the intent and letter of local ordinances that exist to ensure the health, welfare and well being of all Sarasota County residents. Lastly, it should tie unpaid penalties assessed by a Special Magistrate to utilities service, rather than just

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the attachment of a lien against the property. If a property owner fails to pay assessed fines, the water and sewer services to that property should be terminated, along with all electrical service. Without those essential services, even the most contumacious property owner would soon pay up.

The saying “One bad apple spoils the bunch” really comes into play in this situation. How long will the majority of county residents respect and comply with existing codes and regulations when they observe a few scofflaws who flout the laws and escape with no real sanctions? **SNL**



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

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# TENNIS, ANYONE?



*Nick Bollettieri, 82, will be enshrined in the International Tennis Hall of Fame on July 12. Photo courtesy IMG Academy*

## **NICK BOLLETTIERI EARNED RENOWN FOR DOING THINGS HIS WAY, JUST AS A FRENCH FEMALE STAR DID DECADES EARLIER**

**By Barbara Dondero**  
*Contributing Writer*

On a recent morning, my quiet predawn breakfast at a local restaurant was upended by another patron, two tables away, chatting on the phone.

Isn't that Nick Bollettieri, whose [academy](#) is just around the corner, I wondered.

"Sorry to call so early!" he was saying. "When you wake up, come see me. I have something for you."

He left abruptly. Without paying? No. Out to his car then back to glad-hand a friend at the breakfast counter. Minutes later, our collision

course at the cash register must have been arranged by the tennis gods.

“Nick Bollettieri?” I asked.

“Yes!”

“I have some first edition tennis books that need a good home. Do you have a library at the academy?”

“Tell you what! I’ll take them with me to the International Tennis Hall of Fame, where I am to be inducted on July 12,” he replied.

“Congratulations, Nick!” I said. “What an honor!”

Then Bollettieri sprang into action. “I’ll autograph *my* new book, *Changing the Game*. Do you have \$20 on you?”

“I do,” I said. (I must be careful with that phrase, I reminded myself. He has been married eight times.)

“The books are in my car.” Out we went. He opened one book and rifled through the table of contents. Listed were some of his prodigies, who had reached world No. 1 status: Andre Agassi, Maria Sharapova, Jim Courier and Monica Seles. I had followed their careers during my own lifelong addiction to the game.

He autographed my book, adding a personal note.

We shook hands.

“Grazie mille!” I said.

“Prego! Ciao!” he waved wildly as he drove away.



An artist's rendering shows a new facility under way at the International Tennis Hall of Fame in Newport, RI. Designed by McKim Mead and White in 1880, the original building, The Casino, is a club for tennis enthusiasts worldwide. It covers 6 acres, and features 13 grass courts and a museum with features honoring the greats of the game. Since 1987, the original structure has been a National Historic Landmark. Image from the [website](#)

*Suzanne Lenglen*



PLATE I

MADemoiselle SUZANNE LENGLEN, FRENCH, 1899-1938

*Mademoiselle Suzanne Lenglen (1899-1938) was a French tennis champion. Illustration by Barbara Dondero*



PLATE II

TENNIS OUTFIT

DESIGNED BY PARIS COUTURIER JEAN PATOU

*This tennis outfit for Suzanne Lenglen, shown on a paper doll, was designed by Paris couturier Jean Patou. Illustration by Barbara Dondero*



## PLATE IV

*This illustration shows an elegant off-court ensemble for Suzanne Lenglen. Illustration by Barbara Dondero*

All this before sun up.

## THE INTERNATIONAL TENNIS HALL OF FAME

Built in 1880, the Newport Casino was a playground for the “mega-rich.” From their oceanfront “summer cottages” along Bellevue Avenue, the Astors, Whitneys and Vanderbilts flocked there with their guests. The new game of lawn tennis was all the rage. The U.S. Championships took place at the Casino until 1915, when World War I swept away the Gilded Age.

Tennis decamped for larger quarters — Forest Hills, NY. Today they are played at New York’s Flushing Meadows.

## ON THE WAY UP

Bollittieri has hobnobbed with the well- to-do throughout his long career. In his book, he tells about his coaching gig at Puerto Rico’s Dorado Beach Resort, owned by Laurance Rockefeller and family. Bollettieri describes how he transformed the golf-heavy resort into a tennis Mecca by using his “street smarts.” After a stint coaching at the Rockefeller estate in Tarrytown, NY, his career path was set: developing exceptional students. Several are already in the Hall of Fame, with more on the way.

## TENNIS GUYS AND (NEWSPAPER) DOLLS

In Newport, RI, Bollettieri will be enshrined in the *Contributor* category. Only 39 of the 240 honorees over the years have been acknowledged for “outstanding contributions to the game off-court.”



*Suzanne Lenglen won several Olympic medals in tennis for France. Photo from Wikimedia Commons*

The *Players* category represents star performers past and present, including Frenchwoman Suzanne Rachel Flore Lenglen (1899-1938). She was inducted in 1978.

“La Divine,” the French press called her. Lenglen created a sensation. On the Riviera, tennis fans scrambled to nearby rooftops to watch her ballet-like grace. At Wimbledon the queues stretched for over a mile. In 1922, a new (and current) stadium was built to accommodate her legions of admirers.

Her father molded her into a dedicated champion. Along with two Olympic Gold medals and one Bronze, Lenglen won 81 singles, 73 doubles and eight mixed championship titles. Papa soothed her nerves between games by throwing her brandy-coated sugar cubes.

Not all spectators were impressed with her scandalous designer outfits. In fact, some spectators walked out of her matches.

Martina Navratilova (Hall of Fame, 2000) once said, "I would give anything to have seen her play."

If you watch the TV coverage of the French Open tournament (through June 8), notice that matches are played on *Court Suzanne Lenglen* and see the women's champion receive the *Coupe Suzanne Lenglen*.

Like Lenglen, Bollettieri broke the modern mold. He did so by focusing on a baseline power game.

A few days ago, I ordered from Bollettieri a book for a friend.

"Can you tell me something special about her before I autograph it?" he asked

"Yes. In the 1960s at the Dorado Resort, Randy showed up for a lesson on your court wearing high heels, to get even with her mother."

Bollettieri enjoyed that bit of street smarts!

He wrote, "Dear Randy, I hope you're not looking for a refund."

On July 12, at Newport, Bollettieri will not be shirtless, working on his legendary tan. For this momentous occasion, he told me, "My wife wants me to wear a light tan suit."

When the festivities are over, he will carry on in "Bollettieri mode," soaking up life from sun up to sundown.

For further information visit [tennisfame.com](http://tennisfame.com) and [bollettierithebook.com](http://bollettierithebook.com). 

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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>30+</b> MAY	<b>Venice Theatre and Loveland Center present <i>The Century of Music</i></b> Through June 1; times vary. Venice Theatre MainStage, 140 W. Tampa Ave., Venice. Tickets: \$15. Program features original script for the Loveland Players. More information: 488-1115 or <a href="http://venicestage.com">venicestage.com</a> .
<b>30+</b> MAY	<b>Artists Series Concerts presents <i>Opera and More!</i></b> Through June 1, 7:30 p.m. Historic Asolo Theater, 5401 Bay Shore Road, Sarasota. Tickets: \$25 to \$45. Information: 360-7399 or <a href="http://ArtistSeriesConcerts.org">ArtistSeriesConcerts.org</a> .
<b>30+</b> MAY	<b>Asolo Repertory Theatre presents <i>I Loved, I Lost, I Made Spaghetti</i></b> Through June 15; times vary. Cook Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$25 and up. Information: 351-8000 or <a href="http://AsoloRep.org">AsoloRep.org</a> .
<b>30+</b> MAY	<b><i>Unconventional Inventions, Vanishing, Black Box Projects: Summation and Perspectives</i></b> Through June 27. Art Center Sarasota, 707 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Free. Exhibits include 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 an all-media juried show. Information: 365-2032 or <a href="http://www.artsarasota.org">www.artsarasota.org</a> .
<b>30+</b> MAY	<b>Allyn Gallup Gallery presents <i>A Few Great, Big Pictures</i></b> Through July 28; times vary. 1288 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Information: 366-2454 or <a href="http://AllynGallup.com">AllynGallup.com</a> .
<b>01+</b> JUNE	<b>UUCS Presents <i>Jane Shannon: Works in Fabric</i></b> 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 <a href="#">website</a> .
<b>03</b> JUNE	<b>Tikkun Liel Shavuot Commemoration</b> June 3, 7:30 p.m. Southgate Community Center, on the Tuttle Avenue traffic circle between Bee Ridge Road and Webber Street, Sarasota. Free. Hosted by Congregation Kol HaNeshama. Event to include a service, study session and Yizkor service. Information: 244-2042, email at <a href="mailto:office@conghk.org">office@conghk.org</a> or <a href="http://conghk.org">conghk.org</a> .

**YOUR LIFESTYLE GUIDE TO THE SUNCOAST**

# THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>04+</b> JUNE	<b>Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>Pump Boys and Dinettes</i></b> June 4-29; times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$34 to \$44. Information: 366-9000 or <a href="http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org">FloridaStudioTheatre.org</a> .
<b>06</b> JUNE	<b><i>Everything You've Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism</i></b> June 6, 10 to 11:30 a.m. Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road. Free. Ryan T. Cragun, a sociologist, will discuss his research, hosted by the UUCS Free-thinkers. More information: David Ryan at 365-4027 or <a href="mailto:d2mryan@verizon.net">d2mryan@verizon.net</a> or visit <a href="http://uusarasota.org">uusarasota.org</a> .
<b>06</b> JUNE	<b>Hermitage Artist Retreat presents open studio photography show and beach reading</b> June 6, 6:30 p.m., weather permitting. Hermitage Artist Retreat, Manasota Key. Free. Tours of the historic Hermitage House, studio show featuring works of <a href="#">Sophie Lvoff</a> and beach readings by <a href="#">Trenton Doyle Hancock</a> and <a href="#">Josh Barkan</a> planned. Visitors welcome to bring beach chairs and refreshments and to stay for sunset. More information: 475-2098 or <a href="http://HermitageArtistRetreat.org">HermitageArtistRetreat.org</a> .
<b>07</b> JUNE	<b>Faith Lutheran Church presents the U.S. Army Brass Quintet</b> June 7, 7 p.m. Church located at 7750 Beneva Road, Sarasota. Free. Concert to feature patriotic selections, Broadway hits and other popular pieces. More information: 924-4664 or <a href="http://faithsarasota.com">faithsarasota.com</a> .
<b>07+</b> JUNE	<b><i>Baritones Unbound: Celebrating the Uncommon Voice of the Common Man</i></b> June 7-29; times vary. Asolo Repertory Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$20 and up. Information: 351-8000 or <a href="http://AsoloRep.org">AsoloRep.org</a> .
<b>07+</b> JUNE	<b>FST Improv: <i>Out of Bounds Match Up</i></b> 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 <a href="http://www.FloridaStudioTheatre.org">www.FloridaStudioTheatre.org</a> .
<b>10+</b> JUNE	<b><i>Black Is the Color of My Voice</i></b> June 10-22; times vary. Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$21.50. Information: 366-1505 or <a href="http://wbttstrq.org">wbttstrq.org</a> .
<b>10+</b> JUNE	<b>Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>At the Hop</i></b> June 10 through July 6; times vary. Court Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$32 to \$36. Information: 366-9000 or <a href="http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org">FloridaStudioTheatre.org</a> .
<b>12+</b> JUNE	<b>Players Theatre presents <i>The Dixie Swim Club</i></b> June 12-22; times vary. 838 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$18. Information: 365-2494 or <a href="http://ThePlayers.org">ThePlayers.org</a> .

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# C'MON, DINNER!



## SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS



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