

THE SARASOTA

Vol. 2, No. 38 — June 6, 2014

News Leader



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SNIP, SNIP

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A.K.A. HELP

SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher

Rachel@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

Cooper@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

Stan@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Roger Drouin

County Editor

Roger@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Norman Schimmel

Staff Photographer

NSchimmel@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Fran Palmeri

Contributing Writer

FPalmeri@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Harriet Cuthbert

Contributing Writer

HCuthbert@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Elinor Rogosin

A&E Writer

ERogosin@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

John Riley

Editorial Cartoonist

Riley@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Vicki Chatley

Copy Editor

Vicki@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Letters To the Editor

Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Cleve Posey

Production Manager / Graphic Designer

Cleve@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Robert S. Hackney

Opinion Editor / General Manager

Robert@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Advertising Sales

Sales@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Subscription Services

Subs@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Press Releases & News Tips

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Welcome

Some weeks, when not as much seems to be happening, we almost have a sense of “scrapping” with other publications for stories. Our goal is not just to find topics other reporters seem to be missing but also to seek different angles on events that have drawn the competition.

Of course, every editor likes to think her staff members are the best at what they do. I certainly feel that way about my team! And I feel more than justified in my view, given the efforts they put into their work.

This issue does have a number of variations on recurring themes, but I believe they are worth your perusal because of the way we have approached them. One of my biggest recurring themes in this space is our striving to help you be as well informed about your community as you possibly can be. And some of the tidbits in those stories can make for interesting discussion among you and your friends — from a mass transit advocate’s take on moving the downtown bus transfer station to New College’s reaction to Gov. Rick Scott’s budget vetoes to the latest twists on the effort to implement recycling in Siesta Village.

Amid the “Yogi Berra” articles, you will see Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker’s report on World Environment Day. We were grateful the program’s timing enabled us to cover it for this issue. As far as I am concerned, climate change is one of the most pressing concerns the Earth faces. All of us who reside in this coastal county truly need to be aware of what is happening.

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher





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SPLASH!

Patricia Beneke, the director of the United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Office for North America, at Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium's World Environment Day event. Photo by Cooper Levey-Baker

RISKS FROM CLIMATE CHANGE, SEA LEVEL RISE JUST TWO OF THE TOPICS ADDRESSED AT THIS YEAR'S WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Issues related to climate change and rising sea levels dominated discussion at a World Environment Day forum held this Thursday, June 5, at Mote Marine, an event that included the unveiling of a new United Nations report detailing the challenges facing small island nations around the globe, many of them shared by coastal communities such as Sarasota.

The findings and recommendations of the report were summarized by Patricia Beneke, the director of the United Nations Environment Pro-

gramme's Regional Office for North America. The organization chose Sarasota as the site to release the report because of the many similarities between our region and the developing island nations that are the subject of the new study.

"Sarasota County has done wonderful work with respect to sustainable development and I think there are many lessons to be learned

here," Beneke said. She credited the county for seagrass restoration projects, green building



The next 20 to 30 years are critical.

Barbara Lausche
Director
Marine Policy Institute
Mote Marine Laboratory



commitments, efforts to filter stormwater and more.

The report itself makes the salient point that small island nations produce a tiny percentage of the world's greenhouse gases and yet will suffer the worst impacts from climate change and rising sea levels. Those impacts include a loss of biodiversity and forests and declining fisheries that provide sustenance to native populations. The increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather events are a concern, too, as is damage to the islands' tourism industries. Small islands are also 90-percent dependent on imported oil for their energy requirements, Beneke pointed out, describing their need to develop solar, wind and geothermal resources.

Sarasota may not be an island, but it will feel the force of rising sea levels, too. Barbara

Lausche, the director of Mote's Marine Policy Institute, ran through a number of practical suggestions for how Sarasota County can mitigate damage from rising seas. But we need to begin now, she said. "The next 20 to 30 years are critical."

Sara Kane, the public outreach manager for the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program, said her organization estimates that property near Sarasota Bay or the Gulf of Mexico is worth \$3.6 billion and that one out of every 17 jobs in the area depends on the bay. Those numbers demonstrate the massive financial losses that could affect the community if the sea level rises too much.

But not everyone was buying it. Blogger Richard Swier, who publishes at drrichswier.com, called the report "flawed" because the "Pacific Ocean is actually cooling and the sea



A NASA photo shows the polar ice cap in 1980. Image from NASA

level is dropping,” citing testimony given to the U.S. Senate by Daniel Botkin. Beneke, who only recently left a position with the Senate after 20 years, said the body likes to hear from a “diverse set of views” and that Botkin is “standing out there” against the scientific consensus on climate change.

Swier tried to rebut Beneke’s response, but he was rebuffed in a contentious moment by Mote President and CEO Michael Crosby, who urged Swier to let her finish her answer. “Sea level rise is a fact,” Beneke said, “and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has concluded there is scientific evidence that human influence, in particular greenhouse gas emissions, is a dominant factor.”

Sarasota County School Board candidate Randy McLendon, who founded the Englewood tea party group Taking Our Country Back, was also on hand, with a

white paper issued by the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow, a Washington, D.C., nonprofit that spreads doubt about the human role in climate change. The release called the Mote panel participants “alarmists” who are trying to “put power in their hands and, in some cases, money in their pockets.”

The organization specifically accused the U.S. Green Building Council — which was represented on the panel — of being made up of “self-dealers who feather their nests under the guise of protecting the environment.” (I found the flyer stuffed in the door handle of my car when I left the event, along with a sheet warning about the UN’s [Agenda 21](#). The latter, according to the flyer, turns Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong and Che Guevara into “heroes” while working “to indoctrinate and prepare your children to live under global rule.”)



A 2012 photo shows how much the polar ice cap has shrunk. Image from NASA

The skepticism about the event displays one of the challenges facing communities that will be forced to deal with encroaching saltwater. How can those concerned about the problem make a community realize the importance, even the reality, of the issue? One anonymous question, asked via notecard during the panel discussion, included the comment, “Our elected officials seem ambivalent or fearful.”

While she was able to stay around only for 30 minutes or so, Sarasota County Commissioner Carolyn Mason did emphasize the county’s dedication to sustainable practices. Thirty-two percent of the county has been set aside for conservation, she pointed out, and nitrogen in the bay has decreased 64 percent since the late 1980s.



Image courtesy Sarasota County

Beneke herself called for greater “collaboration among policymakers and academics” and argued that the international community needs to “gear up its actions.” Research and reports will only go so far, she added. “There are certainly opportunities for further work and solutions in all of these areas.” 

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Gov. Rick Scott. Photo courtesy flgov.smugmug.com

PROJECTS AT NEW COLLEGE, BRADENTON CHARTER SCHOOL AMONG THOSE ELIMINATED THIS WEEK BY GOV. RICK SCOTT

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Florida Gov. Rick Scott on Monday, June 2, signed the state Legislature's \$77 billion budget. And in the process, he axed \$68.9 million of line-item projects, eliminating money for renovations at New College and a young Bradenton charter school that serves low-income families, among other things, while at the same time preserving funding for a new Sarasota County

Technical Institute facility in North Port and \$5 million for the for-profit [IMG Academy](#).

Scott's veto total added up to much less this year than in years past. In 2011, he vetoed \$615 million from the budget, **blasting** "special interests" for their "shortsighted, frivolous, wasteful spending."

“ *I could scream and yell, but I must point people to the positive.*

Darryl Rouson
Member
Florida House of Representatives
District 70

”

But while the amount vetoed this year is only a fraction of what it was back then, more than one local project was eliminated this week. New College of Florida, for example, is losing out on \$1.6 million that was allocated by the Legislature for renovations to the Hamilton Center, a 1960s-era building that sits on the eastern half of the college's campus.

According to John Martin, New College vice president for finance and administration, Hamilton houses student affairs offices and classrooms, and it needs work. Much of the plans for the \$1.6 million included simply bringing the structure up to code. "That building actually doesn't have restrooms," Martin tells *The Sarasota News Leader*. "You've got to go out of your building, across the plaza, into another building."

The college keeps a running list of capital improvement projects it would like to make; this was the second year the Hamilton upgrades have been on that list. The campus as a whole features a number of aging buildings: 40 percent of its space is more than 50 years old, and seven of its buildings were constructed in the 1920s.

One saving grace: Scott did preserve \$2.8 million intended for utilities and infrastructure upgrades at the college. That means the school can upgrade its electrical system, its plumbing — "the very basic needs" in Martin's words. He says the college can use some of that funding to make up for the loss of money for the Hamilton Center upgrades.

"I don't want to make it sound like we didn't need that \$1.6 million," Martin adds, "but it's



A map of the New College of Florida campus. Photo courtesy [New College](#)

not like we can't do anything over there." He says the Hamilton Center project could remain on the college's list of needs next year, or new, unanticipated improvements could displace it. "It's always sort of a moving target."

A second local education cut is hitting Bradenton's Visible Men Academy, a year-old charter school that **caters** to boys from low-income families in kindergarten through second grade. Scott's veto eliminated \$50,000 in funding for the academy. Visible Men Principal Neil Phillips did not respond to *News Leader* voicemails seeking information about how that money might have been spent, but a budget document compiled by the Florida House lists the project as "School and Instructional Enhancements."

John Tupps, a spokesman for Scott, points out to the *News Leader* that New College did receive \$2.8 million in funding for other improvements, and Visible Men Academy already receives state money through the state's K-12 funding distribution formula.

State Rep. Jim Boyd, the Republican whose district includes half of the New College campus, did not respond to *News Leader* questions about the reasons for the cuts to New College and the academy. (Parts of the campus lie in the district of state Rep. Darryl Rouson, a St. Petersburg Democrat, as does Visible Men.)

So what did survive Scott's veto flurry? A number of cultural grants, millions for the airport, money for road resurfacing and \$3 million for

Potential Career Development Opportunities in North Port

- Automotive Service Technology
- Business Technology
- Construction Technology
- Cosmetology
- Culinary Art
- Dental Assisting
- EMS (EMT and Paramedic)
- Manufacturing
- Nursing (CNA and LPN)


A slide presented to local elected officials during the Sarasota County Convocation of Governments in January listed a number of career opportunities that a Sarasota County Technical Institute campus could provide in North Port. Image courtesy Sarasota County Schools

a new North Port campus for Sarasota County Technical Institute (SCTI), needed because more than 200 North Port high school students commute daily to the main Sarasota SCTI campus in Sarasota. A strategic plan developed by the City of North Port identified the lack of a technical or vocational school as a major municipal weakness.

Sarasota County Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson, whose district includes North Port, called the decision to preserve the funding a “game changer” for the city. “Having skilled workforce training located where the majority of our workforce lives will only increase the opportunity for economic development,” she wrote in an email to the *News Leader*. “This translates to more jobs for North Port.”

Five million dollars will also go to IMG Academy, the for-profit Bradenton sports

training and education center whose parent company was sold for a reported \$2.3 billion last December. IMG sits in the district of state Rep. Boyd. While he did not respond to *News Leader* queries either, he told the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday, without citing a source, that IMG generates “over half a billion dollars of economic impact.” He called that “significant.”

State Rep. Rouson characterizes the New College and Visible Men projects that were cut as “very worthy,” but he praises Scott for vetoing less this year than the governor has after past legislative sessions. He says even though he’s a Democrat, he was consulted on local projects and kept apprised of those being funded. “I could scream and yell,” he tells the *News Leader*, “but I must point people to the positive.” 

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NEW NOISE ORDINANCE COMING

Mattison's City Grille, which provides outdoor entertainment only, has not been the subject of noise complaints in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE CITY COMMISSION WILL HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING IN THE FALL

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

For decades, there has been a division downtown. To play on the words of an old beer argument: more music, less noise. For more than a year, City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo tried to find a magic brew to bridge the two sides. But compromise was not on tap.

On Monday, June 2, City Attorney Bob Fournier trotted out a rewrite of the city's Sound Control Ordinance, commonly referred to as the noise ordinance. "It takes into

account the citizens' comments, and there were a lot of them," he said. The commissioners agreed to set a public hearing in the fall for the new plan.

Once again, the "usual suspects" trooped to the microphone. "Music is my livelihood," said singer Twinkle Yochim.

"We'd like to work with you to bring this to some kind of doable conversation that doesn't put us out of work."

“We haven't had any complaints; we haven't had any issues. The one time we had a complaint, we weren't even open. It was someone else.”

Paul Mattison
Owner
Mattison's City Grille
Downtown Sarasota



"I do not feel because I live downtown that my home should be penetrated by loud music," said Carol Reynolds. "Last year, you decided to postpone the public hearing until most of the downtown residents were gone [for the summer]."

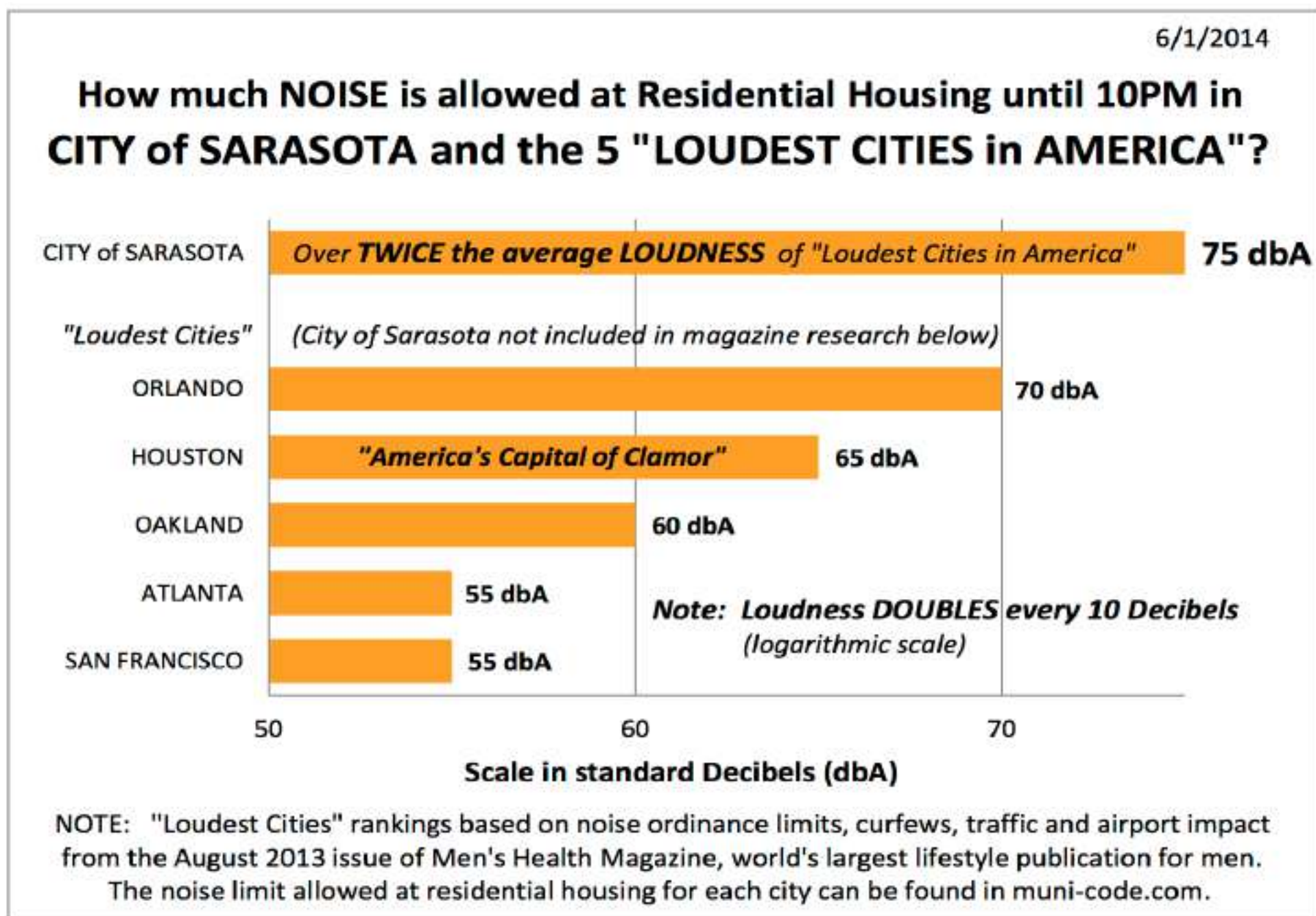
On one factor, both sides agree: Enforcement of decibel levels with a sound meter is a waste of time. Lurking in the background is another agreeable fact: The restaurant that plays live music outdoors only is the same one that has not received any complaints.

"We don't have an indoors to move into at 10 p.m.," said restaurateur Paul Mattison. His namesake grill is an open-air café at the

corner of Lemon Avenue and Main Street. "Since we opened and [began operating] to 11 p.m. and midnight [the latter closing time is on the weekends], I have kept a hand on the volume control. We haven't had any complaints; we haven't had any issues," he added. "The one time we had a complaint, we weren't even open. It was someone else."

In other words, responsible and responsive management can present live outdoor entertainment downtown without riling the early-rising neighbors in the surrounding condominiums.

To convince the managers of other establishments to comply with the proposed new



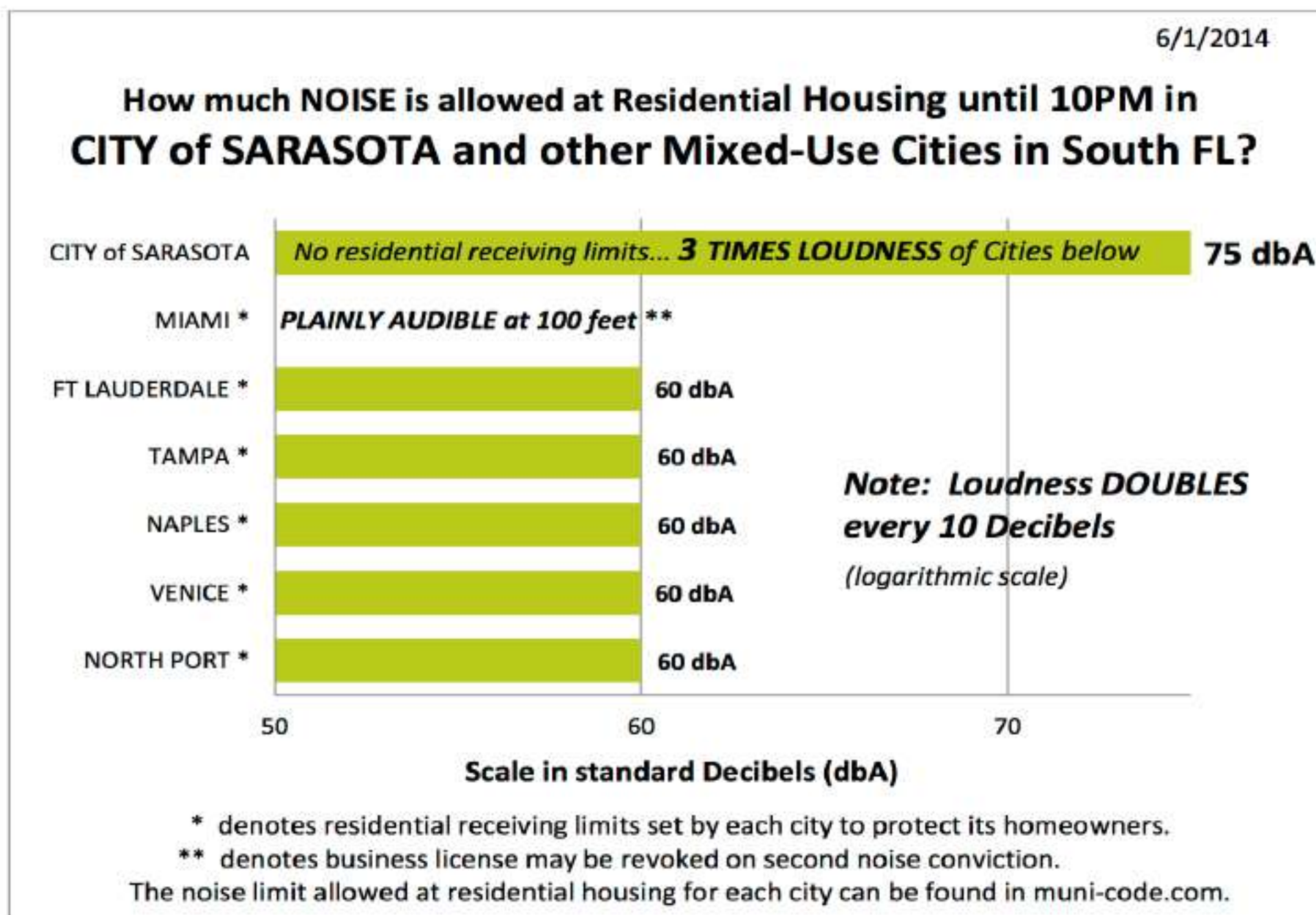
Jim McWhorter offered this slide as evidence that the current (and proposed) 75 decibel limit on downtown noise is totally too loud. He says it makes Sarasota the noisiest city in the nation. Image courtesy Jim McWhorter

ordinance, Fournier said it would include a new “plainly audible” standard. A police officer standing between two side-by-side music venues may be able to tell with his own ears which is louder, even if the sound measuring device cannot. And penalties will be stiffer. Final details will be ironed out following the public hearing later this year.

City commissioners suggested Fournier take a different tack entirely. Instead of using an ordinance with empirical measurements, perhaps the controls should be linked to land use, specifically zoning and special exceptions. Commissioner Shannon Snyder suggested bar and nightclub operators might be more

circumspect if the city had the power to find them in violation of zoning restrictions and shut them down. “This is the downtown core, and it’s more about land use and hours,” added Commissioner Suzanne Atwell.

But according to county resident Jim McWhorter, it is not about land use or hours. It’s about sound. He said Sarasota is the loudest town around. He has been battling Bob’s Boathouse on the South Tamiami Trail, and he pointed out that the 75-decibel limit is the highest noise level allowed in the entire nation for residential property. “It has destroyed our quality of life,” he said. **SNL**



A second slide presented Monday to the City Commission compares the City of Sarasota’s allowable decibel level in residential areas to those permitted in other south Florida cities. Image courtesy Jim McWhorter



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A 'HOT' REACTIVATION



Vice Mayor Susan Chapman and Mayor Willie Shaw listen to a presentation during the May 19 City Commission meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ANALYSIS: CITY COMMISSION REVERSAL PROMISES THOUGHTFULNESS ON HOMELESSNESS AND VAGRANCY

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

When then-Mayor Shannon Snyder ordered the city manager to present an update on homelessness at every regular commission meeting starting April 21, he actually created a forum on the topic.

Not only did this regular agenda item offer the public a chance to talk about the issue, it also provided an opportunity for individual commissioners to report on their research, experiences and thoughts. On Monday, June 2, the discussion resulted in

an about-face in commission policy, untying police officers' hands.

Last year, the Sarasota City and County commissions jointly hired Texas-based consultant Robert Marbut to develop a plan to address a growing problem with homeless and vagrant people. While camps for homeless and vagrant people have sprouted all over Sarasota County, the primary focus is downtown. Marbut's report calls for creation of a come-as-you-are shelter offering two

“ *It will be nine to 12 months before a shelter opens, if everything is smooth sailing.* ”

Tom Barwin
Manager
City of Sarasota

tiers of service. The first would provide simple shelter and personal hygiene options in an outdoor setting; the second would offer individualized case management and shelter under air conditioning.

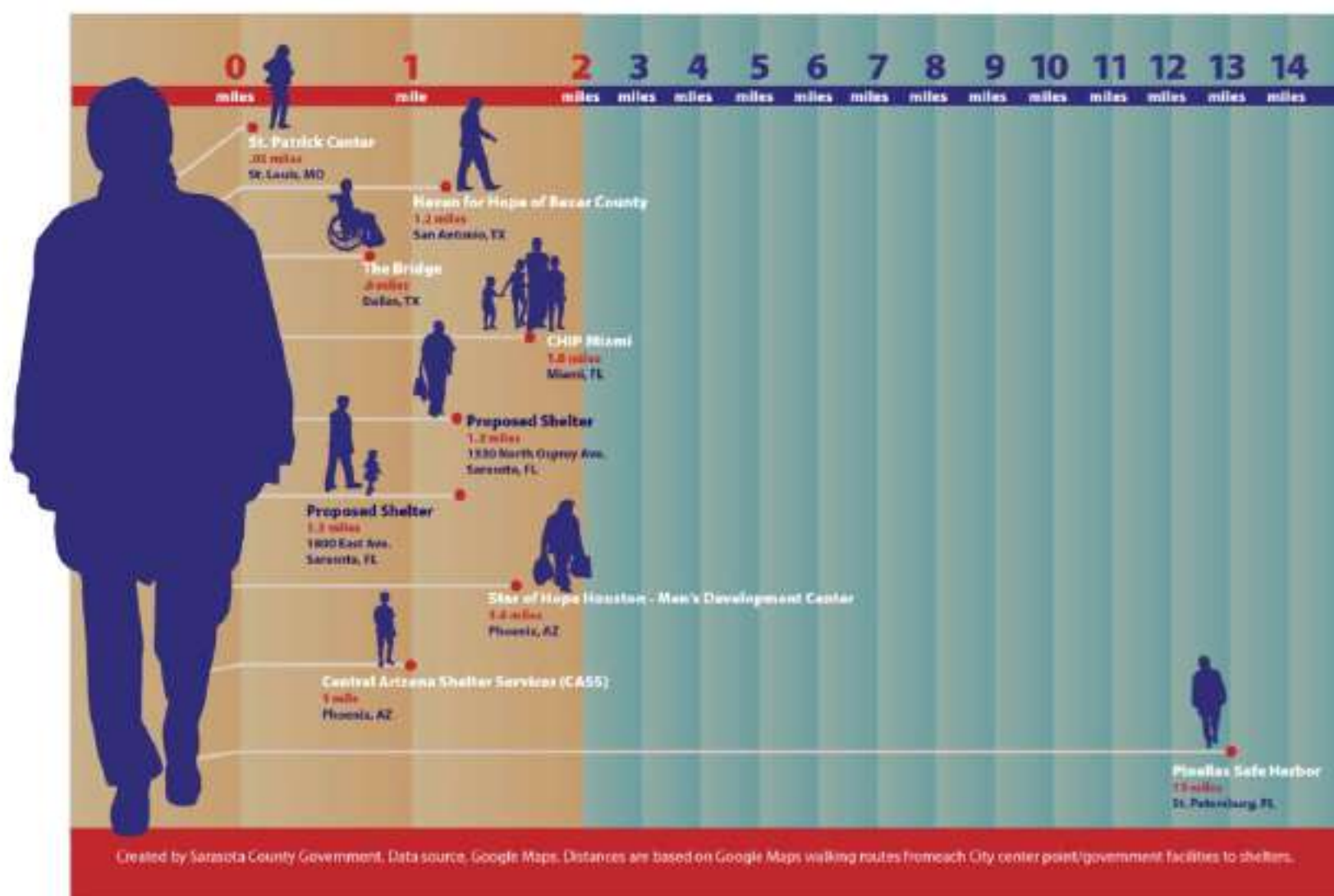
He proposed two sites in north Sarasota, both within walking distance of social service agencies, the courts, the jail and the rest of downtown. It could be as long as two years before the facility is built. Meanwhile, public pressure continues to grow among downtown residents, merchants and business patrons for more immediate relief from panhandling, public defecation and a host of other problems.

On March 11, Sarasota Police officers and human services representatives, working as a Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), swept through a homeless camp near the Oakland Park Cemetery between 10th and 12th streets, west of U.S. 301. They offered the people they found there 30 days of free lodging at The Salvation Army facility in north Sarasota, plus a variety of social services in an attempt to break up the camp.

Valerie Guillory operates Trinity Without Borders, a sanctuary for homeless people, near the site of that camp. She later reported, "There were 33 people there, including nine



PROXIMITY TO DOWNTOWN – COMPARISON TO OTHER SHELTERS



A graphic presented during an April 22 joint meeting of the City and County commissions showed the proximity of homeless shelters to downtowns in various cities. Image courtesy Sarasota County

couples. Three couples obtained housing. Three couples are unknown; they moved on. And two couples were assisted by [Resurrection House](#) into motels, but they are back [to] tenting out in the county. That left three women. One got a live-in job, one was a sex-trafficking victim — and I drove her to [Safe Harbor in Pinellas](#) — and one moved away. Of the men, one went to The Salvation Army, three moved, four left and returned, and three never left.”


When a reporter from the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* reached Marbut, seeking comment about the HOT team’s efforts to abolish the camp, he called the attempt counterproductive and possibly in violation of a Miami federal judge’s ruling in the [Pottinger case](#). The City Commission reacted with a 3-2 vote, banning not only the use of such teams but cautioning against police visits to homeless people’s and vagrants’ encampments. This was seen

by some vagrants as a “hands-off” city policy. The City Commission asked Marbut for a written reply to a series of questions, but to date he has not responded.

In the 10 weeks since the “hands-off” decision, the visibility and aggressiveness of vagrants and the homeless in the downtown area have increased, as has public unease, evidenced by a virtual parade of speakers at every City Commission meeting since then. City police officers have stepped up their visibility downtown, but the City Commission’s decision to stop HOT activity, as well as enforcement of outdoor lodging ordinances, meant police officers had to witness a violation before taking action.

A FEELING OF HOPELESSNESS

During City Manager Tom Barwin’s latest mandated update on activity concerning homelessness and vagrancy, he said a newly



“Can we create a process that we won’t be accused of stalling?”

Willie Shaw
Mayor
City of Sarasota

(From left) County Commissioner Joe Barbetta, City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo, County Commissioner Nora Patterson, then-Vice Mayor Willie Shaw, County Chairman Charles Hines and then-Mayor Shannon Snyder listened to a speaker during a joint session on April 1. Photo by Norman Schimmel

hired caseworker for the city is gathering case histories, and staff is working with The Salvation Army to define subgroups within the overall homeless population.

“[City Police Chief Bernadette] DiPino and I continue to try and refine our approach,” he said. “It will be nine to 12 months before a shelter opens, if everything is smooth sailing.” He added that the annual “point-in-time census” of the homeless in Sarasota County identified 167 of them as veterans. “I’m looking for your assistance and direction on how to structure our efforts locally,” he told the commission.

Barwin then said he would recommend two priorities: “One is a focus on homeless vets. ... No. 2, the dozen or two toughest mental health challenges. Some [homeless people] are flat-out diagnosed with schizophrenia, but we can only get them off the street two or three days.”

Barwin added that he has met with the public defender in the 12th Judicial Circuit, the state attorney, the court administrator, representatives from mental health agencies and others. “The single largest gap is in the mental health arena. It is a huge weakness.



On Nov. 25, 2013, consultant Robert Marbut presented his recommendations on handling the community's homelessness issues. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Even when we can make a case, we cannot find a mental health bed,” Barwin continued. “Florida is 49th or 50th in its contribution to mental health services.”

Mayor Willie Shaw responded, “We have a third category, the drug-addicted fraction. [First Step](#) is bursting at the seams. Is anybody looking beyond the immediate [needs]?”

Vice Mayor Susan Chapman recounted a recent visit to Gillespie Park around noon. “I saw 45 people inebriated on something. Just 10 days ago, *The New York Times* had a piece about homelessness increasing in San Antonio. Are we coming up with any solution that will help our community?” she asked.

San Antonio is Marbut’s home, where he started the first of several come-as-you-are

shelters and began his homelessness consultancy. One of the shelters he recommended is in Pinellas County (Safe Harbor), but both St. Petersburg and Clearwater are reporting an increase in the “visibly homeless,” the category Marbut claims his shelters reduce.

PENDULUM SWING

On June 23, the City and County commissions are scheduled for their third joint meeting focused on homelessness and vagrancy. It actually seems as though that one will be the fourth such session, because one joint meeting on another topic was “hijacked” for more than three hours by people’s public comments about the impact of downtown homelessness on their lives and businesses.



A panel including Police Chief Bernadette DiPino (left) and Sheriff Tom Knight (right) addressed the City and County commissions on April 1. Photo by Norman Schimmel



City Manager Tom Barwin. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Meanwhile, county commissioners have complained repeatedly about what one deems “stalling” and “sabotage” in the process of establishing a shelter. Two city commissioners — Shaw and Chapman — have consistently voted against putting the shelter on the north side of the city. And both voted against the “hands-off” policy.

The formal process is on track, despite county commissioner allegations. Because federal money will be used to create the shelter, an environmental assessment must be undertaken of the proposed sites. Early evaluations turned up pollution problems on both parcels, so a more intensive study is under way. The results should be released at the June 23 joint meeting.

Mayor Shaw hopes that session will be productive because of the city commissioners’ preparations for it. “Can we create a process that we won’t be accused of stalling?” he asked on Monday. “We each are coming up with more information. That discussion should be a paramount discussion. We need to come to a place where our conversation benefits all who are concerned.”

City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell remains steadfast in support of a north Sarasota shelter site. “We both hired Dr. Marbut,” she said, referring to the county and city boards. “I will not cut this off at its knees. We don’t know what is going to happen.”

(Marbut is not a physician. He holds a doctorate in political science; his thesis was on the ultra-orthodox Wahhabi sect of Islam.)

The other two members of the City Commission supporting the north-side shelter are running for the same seat on the County Commission,

with a face-off coming in the August primary. Snyder and Paul Caragiulo are jockeying for the seat being vacated under term limits by County Commissioner Joe Barbetta. Under the state’s “resign-to-run” rule, both have tendered their resignations from the City Commission effective in mid-November.

Snyder made a motion Monday to reinstate HOT teams “in a very prudent manner.” It passed unanimously, reversing the hands-off policy instituted earlier.

Chapman then made a motion to create a formal advisory board for vagrancy and homelessness issues. Snyder seconded the motion. Caragiulo said he would support the drafting of a resolution to create the board, “but this is not an endorsement of the final product.” Again, the vote was unanimous. They represent the first unanimous votes on any homelessness issue of consequence this year.

It will take time to re-enable the Homeless Outreach Team. Other social service agencies need to be re-engaged, and the city’s new homeless caseworker needs to be integrated as well. It will mean a greater police presence in and around the numerous city camps of homeless and vagrant people.

But the establishment of a permanent advisory board could prove the long-lasting contribution to the debate. It may move the “forum” off the regular City Commission agenda and into the hands of appointees who have both compassion and real knowledge about the problems of homelessness and vagrancy.

The shelter so far has been a “vote first, discuss later” issue. After Monday’s decisions, it appears the “discussion” segment may regain its priority in the establishment of city policy. 



My Sunday Paper...

...two days early!

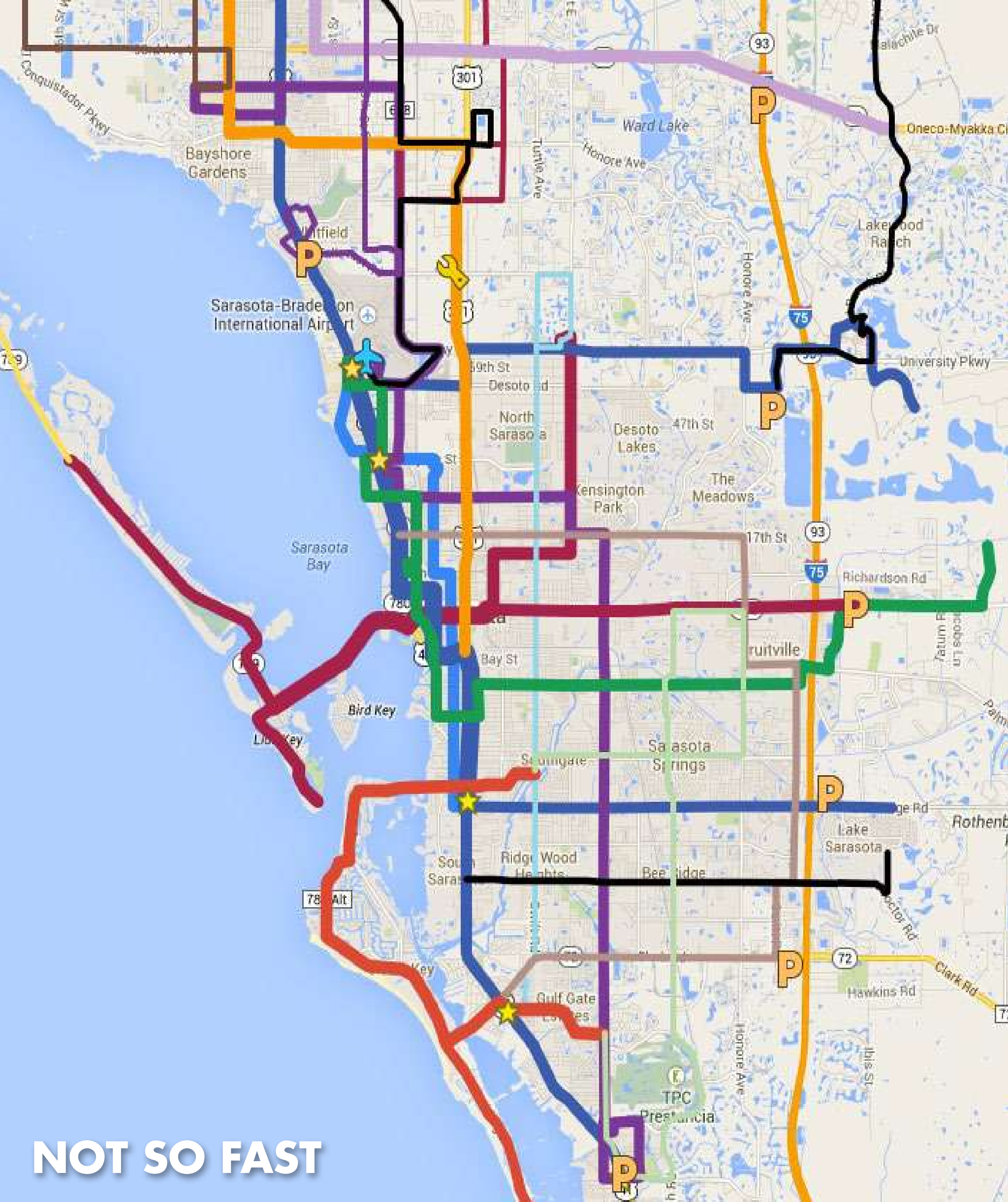
One of my favorite things to do is spend all day Sunday relaxing with the Sunday newspaper, reading it from cover to cover. Unfortunately, my old Sunday paper is mostly classified ads, real estate ads, ad inserts and very little in the way of real, informative news.

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.

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NOT SO FAST

A 'SMART System' does not include a primary downtown bus transfer station. There are numerous routes and 'transfer points' in lieu of such a station. Image from the Sarasota-Manatee Transit Group [website](#)

CRITICS QUESTION WHETHER THE COUNTY EVEN NEEDS A DOWNTOWN BUS TRANSFER STATION AND, IF SO, WHETHER ITS RELOCATION IS NECESSARY

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

The County Commission's exploration of relocating the Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) downtown Sarasota bus station has raised new questions, including whether such a facility is even necessary.

During the Monday, June 2, Sarasota City Commission meeting, Richard Thomas, an advocate for public transit in Sarasota and Manatee counties, called the current SCAT operation in downtown Sarasota a "botched mess." He urged city officials to work with the county on a new overall plan that does not include a downtown terminal.

Using an overhead projector, Thomas showed the city commissioners a 2002 plan for a "SMART System" of bus routes. "As you can see, there is no [downtown] terminal," Thomas pointed out. "You just have a bunch of transfer points. This solves the circulator problem."

Under the SMART System, the primary 23-mile connector would provide links from north Palmetto to Sarasota Square Mall on U.S. 41, with a network of routes through downtown. Thomas thinks now is the time to implement that plan instead of proceeding with

"Hate for us to do this same rodeo in another decade."

Kelly Kirschner
Former Sarasota Mayor
Alta Vista Neighborhood Leader



Sarasota County Area Transit's downtown transfer station is at the intersection of Lemon Avenue and First Street. Photo by Norman Schimmel

an estimated \$2.2 million project to relocate the bus transfer station from Lemon Avenue to a site near the intersection of Ringling Boulevard and School Avenue, about a mile east.

During their May 16 budget workshop, the county commissioners unanimously voted to continue studying the [proposed move of the downtown SCAT station](#). The plan calls for hiring a consultant to “fine-tune” some of the operational details.

Proponents of the relocation say it will open up redevelopment possibilities for the parcel at Lemon Avenue and First Street at the same time an upgraded station will provide space for more buses at a given time.

But the discussion is likely to intensify as residents are invited to express their views.

During the May 16 workshop, county commissioners asked when SCAT passengers will be able to start offering their comments. After a consultant comes up with concepts for the new station, staff said, public meetings will be held on the proposal.

THE CHALLENGES

Kelly Kirschner, a lifelong Sarasotan and past mayor of the city, lives in the Alta Vista neighborhood, one of the residential areas close to the proposed site of the new transfer station. He also spoke at Monday’s City Commission meeting.

Kirschner said the 2002 SMART proposal, which he described as a “spaghetti overlap” of bus routes, is similar to other transit systems that have been proven to reduce headways



An aerial view shows the proximity of the downtown transfer station to other properties. Image courtesy Sarasota County

and thus increase ridership. (Headway is the amount of time riders wait at a stop for the bus to arrive.)

Kirschner added that he thinks the “city really needs to have a place at the table” when plans for the station relocation are being discussed.

“It is critically important for the city to step up and take a role in that conversation,” he pointed out.

With that estimated cost of \$2.2 million, perhaps the biggest challenge is how to fund the new facility. Other important factors are the logistics of the move and the need to seek neighborhood support for it.

In an email he sent to County Commissioner Joe Barbetta on June 1, the day before the City Commission meeting, Kirschner reminded Barbetta of the debate about 10 years ago over where to build the downtown transfer station. At the time, residents who live near Ringling Boulevard, the area originally considered for the facility, objected to the plan, saying it would add traffic and create danger for pedestrians.


“Hate for us to do this same rodeo in another decade,” Kirschner wrote in his email.

In his reply, Barbetta stated reasons for considering the move. “The bottom line is that our Staff tells us that we have totally outgrown the downtown facility with no room at that location to expand, that they are in need of a larger one to accommodate the increased ridership and additional [buses], and we have a superb location on Ringling at our Parking Garage, which is much more accommodating and fits into a Master Plan for that area.”



Kelly Kirschner/Contributed photo

Barbetta added, “Also, the existing location, when vacated, could be put back on the property tax rolls and be an excellent location for strong economic development such as a downtown Drug Store, Retail, etc., with upper story rental residential, sorely needed in the downtown core.”

Barbetta also said it would make sense for the city to implement a downtown “circulator” system, employing smaller vehicles akin to trolleys. People would use the circulator to move around the city and to reach SCAT stops. 

TAXABLE VALUES CLIMB



Both the real estate market and property values have bounced back from the recession. File photo

THE SARASOTA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS WILL DISCUSS POTENTIAL MILLAGE RATES DURING UPCOMING BUDGET WORKSHOPS AS THEY PREPARE TO SET A TENTATIVE TAX RATE IN JULY

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

Estimated taxable values in Sarasota County have increased for the second straight year, but this time the upswings are higher overall.

For the county itself, the estimated taxable value of property has risen 6.43 percent, compared to a 4.22 percent uptick last year.

Estimated taxable values also increased in the cities: 8.99 percent in North Port; 6.35 percent in Venice; 5.52 percent in the City of Sarasota; and 5.14 percent in Longboat Key. Those rates were higher when compared to the increase

in final taxable values for Fiscal Year 2013, when the City of Sarasota saw a 4.8 percent rise and Venice values climbed 3.87 percent, for example.

The 2014 estimates were released last week by the Sarasota County Property Appraiser's Office; the final figures will be available in July, said County Fiscal Consultant Karen Fratangelo.

“*Rolling back the rate would mean a reduction in services.*”

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County

While higher property values are a sign of a strengthening local economy, they also, depending on the decisions of local

government boards, could be indicators of bigger tax bills for homeowners, especially those who do not have homestead exemptions. The latter lessen the impact of millage rate rises.

Even if elected officials keep their tax rates the same, higher property values translate into higher tax bills. However, if elected officials “roll back” their tax rates, the bills would remain the same.

In Sarasota County, there does not appear to be much support among the commissioners for lowering the millage rate.

If the board keeps the present rate the same, the increase in property values would mean an additional \$6.9 million for the county’s general fund, Fratangelo said. The county

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Read the list of all the 2014 estimated property values.

commissioners will discuss the millage rate during upcoming budget workshops as they prepare to set a tentative tax rate in July. By law, the final rate cannot be higher than that figure, though the board can choose to lower it.

For Commissioner Nora Patterson, lowering the millage rate is not a realistic option because, even with \$6.9 million added into the 2015 fiscal year budget, it is likely the commissioners once again will still have to use “rainy



New home construction also is adding to Sarasota County’s tax rolls. File photo

Sarasota MLSSM Statistics - April 2014

Unit Sales



Median Sale Price



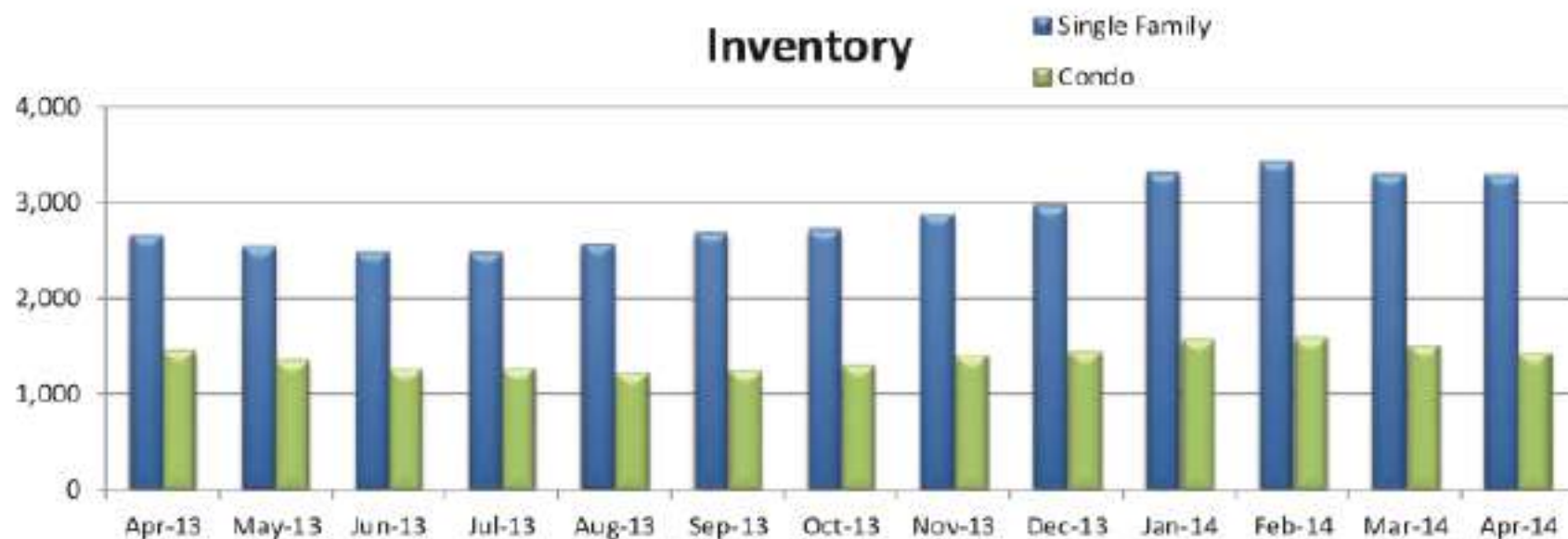
Single Family

	#Active	#Sold	%Sold	Average DOM	Median Sale Prices	Median Last 12 Months	Months of Inventory	Pending Reported	%Pending	# New Listings	% Price Original
This Month	3,297	759	23.0	75	\$196,250	\$189,900	5.3	715	21.7	966	92.1
This Month Last Year	2,665	703	26.3	89	\$188,000	\$165,000	4.6	710	26.6	797	93.3
Last Month	3,298	698	21.2	83	\$189,472	\$188,000	5.3	818	24.8	960	92.9
YTD	-	2,492	-	78	\$192,000	-	-	2,881	-	4,054	-

Statistics were compiled on Sarasota County properties in the MLS as of May 15th, 2014. Single-family statistics are tabulated using the property style single-family home. Median sales price is the middle value, where half of the homes sold for more, and half sold for less. Listings sold were closed transactions during the month.

Sarasota MLSSM Statistics - April 2014

Inventory



Pending Sales



Condo

	#Active	#Sold	%Sold	Average DOM	Median Sale Prices	Median Last 12 Months	Months of Inventory	Pending Reported	%Pending	# New Listings	% Price Original
This Month	1,431	436	30.5	94	\$183,500	\$169,000	4.7	325	22.7	400	92.1
This Month Last Year	1,456	429	29.5	101	\$160,000	\$156,000	5.0	365	25.0	402	92.5
Last Month	1,512	352	23.4	85	\$170,900	\$166,529	5.0	430	28.6	445	92.6
YTD	-	1,316	-	90	\$175,000	-	-	1,434	-	1,827	-

Statistics were compiled on Sarasota County properties in the MLS as of May 15th, 2014. Condo statistics include condo, co-op, villa and townhouse. Pending sales are sales where an offer has been accepted during the month, but the sale has not yet closed. DOM indicates the average number of days that sold properties were on the market before a contract was executed.

day” funds to cover operating costs. “We still have to take money from reserves,” Patterson told *The Sarasota News Leader*, “albeit a lot less now.”

Patterson said the County Commission has kept the millage rate stable — even in the bleakest years of the recent recession — and she wants it to stay the same during the upcoming fiscal year.

“Rolling back the rate would mean a reduction in services,” Patterson pointed out.

The county still needs to catch up on road repaving and reinstating services it cut during the recession, such as days of operation at the libraries, she noted. Such changes should happen before the county’s millage rate is reduced, Patterson said. However, she is optimistic about what she calls a “soft landing” in the near future, when the county’s growing expenses will match up with total revenue.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta said that although he is not sure how the upcoming budget presentations and discussions will go, he, too, believes holding steady on the millage rate is the best course.

“I wouldn’t support any millage increase,” Barbetta added.

The \$6.9 million in additional revenue would help the county with future fiscal planning, he added.

A big objective for Barbetta has been continued funding of initiatives that will lead to more economic

development, including projects designed to spur sports tourism. Future board action along those lines could include constructing facilities such as a conference center. “That brings more tourism and jobs and more people relocating here,” Barbetta said.

“I think we are in good financial shape,” Barbetta added. “We [have] the lowest millage rate in the state, out of 67 counties. That is pretty incredible when you consider the services here.”

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

The County Commission began its budget workshops in February, an atypically early start as the commissioners and county staff focused on addressing a projected shortfall in 2016. That deficit has been shrinking, though, Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson pointed out in an interview last week with the *News Leader*, as county staff has cut spending and shifted excess revenues.

The anticipated \$6.9 million in general fund money could be used to plug up more of that hole.

The board has upcoming workshops on June 17, June 25, June 27, June 30, July 1 and Aug. 20.

Although the tentative property tax rate will be set in July, the final millage rate will not

be set until after public hearings in North and South County in September, said county spokesman Curt Preisser.

 *I don't think it's a secret that our market bottomed around 2010.*

Catherine Seress
Realtor
Coldwell Banker



'SLOW BUT STEADY'

Rising property values come as home sales are steadily climbing and retirees are once again moving to the region.

On May 20, the Sarasota Association of Realtors released statistics showing that April 2014 saw the second highest number of home sales in the county's history. A total of 1,195 transactions occurred during that month.

"That figure was topped only by the 1,223 sales reported a decade ago, in April 2004, just preceding the real estate boom that saw rapid price escalation," said a press release from the Sarasota Association of Realtors (SAR).

In April 2014, 759 single-family home sales closed, and 436 condo sales were completed. Those totals were higher than March's figures, (698 and 352, respectively) and last April's totals (703 and 429, respectively).

In addition to the ongoing spring surge, distressed property sales have remained far below the levels the county experienced four years ago, indications of a market returning to historic norms, according to the SAR press release. In April 2014, 16.6 percent of transactions were short sales or foreclosure sales, compared to 22 percent in April 2013. The biggest contributor to the drop in distressed properties changing hands was a significant decrease in short sales, with only 45 registered this April compared to 107 last April.

"I don't think it's a secret that our market bottomed around 2010," Coldwell Banker realtor Catherine Seress told the *News Leader*. "Since

then, there has been across greater Sarasota a slow but steady increase in property sale prices of about 5 to 6 percent every year."

Seress, who tracks the movement of home sales in the Sarasota area, says she is seeing fewer investors and more traditional buyers, such as retirees, including some people choosing to head south after this "horrendous winter."

One important statistic, however, has been largely static, according to the SAR data. The overall inventory of properties, considered one of the best indications of housing market health, has not changed much over the past year. (See the accompanying graphics.) Overall, housing inventory actually increased nearly 13 percent from April 2013 to this April.

The number of condo units on the market declined to a 4.7-month supply in April 2014, compared to a 5-month supply in April 2013. The inventory of single-family homes, however, was up slightly, at the 5.3-month mark, compared to a 4.6-month supply in April 2013. [Experts consider a six-month supply a healthy one.](#)

Although inventory has remained mostly flat, a good indication of a real estate recovery is that individual properties are staying on the market for less time, Seress pointed out.

Residential properties are selling after an average of 75 days, compared to 89 days on the market last April, according to the SAR data. Condos, meanwhile, are staying on the market an average of 94 days compared to 101 last April. 



FORMAL LIST OF VIOLATIONS

People sat on chairs in the pool at Bob's Boathouse five days after the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County issued the business a 'Cease and Desist' order regarding use of the pool. Contributed photo

A REPRESENTATIVE OF BOB'S BOATHOUSE SAYS IT WILL KEEP PEOPLE OUT OF ITS POOL WHILE IT WORKS TO GET THE WATER BODY PERMITTED FOR PUBLIC USE

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Witnesses have told *The Sarasota News Leader* they continued to see people in the [pool at Bob's Boathouse](#) after the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County sent an initial "Cease and Desist" order to representatives of the restaurant last month.

However, on May 30, a legal assistant with the Aker Law Firm, which represents Bob's Boathouse, notified Tom Higginbotham, the environmental health director for the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County, that "Bob's is considering petitioning for a

“ Continued operation of your public swimming pool without an operating permit will result in civil and or administrative enforcement action, including fines up to \$500.00 for each day the violation continues to exist.

Tom Higginbotham
Environmental Health Director
Florida Department of Health
Sarasota County Office
In Letter to Bob's Boathouse
Registered Agents

”

variance and waiver” under Florida State Statute 120.542. That law allows for the granting of variances and waivers “when the person subject to [a uniformly applicable rule] demonstrates that the purpose of the underlying statute will be or has been achieved by other means by the person and when application of a rule would create a substantial hardship or would violate principles of fairness.”

For purposes of that section, the statute continues, “‘substantial hardship’ means a demonstrated economic, technological, legal, or other type of hardship to the person requesting the variance or waiver.”

“In the meantime,” Amanda Kenney wrote, “Bob’s has taken and is taking action to keep patrons out of the fountain.”

Higginbotham told the *News Leader* last month that his department had received reports of people in the approximately 20-foot-long body of shallow water near the bar and part of the restaurant’s dining area. In checking with county staff, Higginbotham added, he learned that the pool was indicated as a fountain in construction plans submitted to the Sarasota County Building Department and that the county had issued a permit to the business to use the structure as a fountain.

In her May 30 letter — which Higginbotham told the *News Leader* he had received only by email as of June 2 — Kenney noted that Higginbotham’s May 20 Cease and Desist order “refers to the fountain at Bob’s as a swimming pool. It is not a swimming pool.” Kenney added, “I have reviewed the construction plans for the subject fountain submitted



A photo posted on the Bob’s Boathouse Facebook page in April showed a man sitting in the pool. Photo courtesy Florida Department of Health

James E. Aker, Attorney and Certified Mediator
240 S. Pineapple, Suite 803
Sarasota, FL 34236
Phone: 941-780-2809
Fax: 941-462-2022
E-mail: jimaker2537@gmail.com

May 30, 2014

Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County
Attention: Tom Higginbotham, Environmental Health Director
4000 South Tamiami Trail, Room 121
Venice, FL 34293-5076
By mail and email to: Tom.Higginbotham@flhealth.gov

Re: Bob's Boathouse

Dear Mr. Higginbotham:

E. Dusty Aker of Aker Law Firm, P.A. and myself represent Bob's Boathouse ("Bob's"). I am in receipt of your letter of May 20, 2014 to Robert Lighthouse, as Registered Agent for Skipper Bob's LLC, D.B.A. Bob's Boathouse. My client advises another Fed-Ex was recently delivered to Bob's from the Department of Health, which I have not yet received nor had time to review, but I assume it is same as the letter referenced immediately above. If not, I will separately respond to it.

Your letter of May 20, 2014 refers to the fountain at Bob's as a swimming pool. It is not a swimming pool. I have reviewed the construction plans for the subject fountain submitted to Sarasota County and it is referred to as a "Grotto Fountain." The plans were approved by the County. No one questioned the structure until one or two neighbors on the North Side of Philippi Creek complained to you that it was a swimming pool. This is patent evidence of their intent to run Bob's out of business.

There are many other fountains in Sarasota County and from time to time, persons go into the fountains. I doubt that you have charged the owners of the fountains with maintaining a swimming pool without a permit.

to Sarasota County and it is referred to as a 'Grotto Fountain.'"

On June 3, the *News Leader* checked with Greg Yantorno, the county's building official, who confirmed Higginbotham's earlier comments to this publication. The body of water was granted a county permit to function as a fountain, Yantorno said. It was "not intended for swimming/bathing purposes," he pointed out.

According to Yantorno and Higginbotham, the water is no more than 2 feet deep.

Higginbotham also told the *News Leader* last month that he felt it would be difficult for the business to transform the water body into a swimming pool that could meet state regulations, based on its design and proximity to

food and drink service areas. Higginbotham made the same point in the May 20 Cease and Desist order sent to a registered agent of Bob's Boathouse. Further, he wrote, "Should you be unable to obtain an operating permit, you would be barred from operating the above referenced pool indefinitely."

In bold letters, Higginbotham continued, "You must cease operation of this pool immediately upon receipt of this notice by not allowing business patrons and/or the public to enter the water body."

He added, also in bold, "Continued operation of your public swimming pool without an operating permit will result in civil and or administrative enforcement action, including fines up to \$500.00 for each day the violation continues to exist."



Improperly installed pool skimmer.
Extends above pool deck, trip hazard.

“Bob's has taken and is taking action to keep patrons out of the fountain.

Amanda Kenney
Legal Assistant
Aker Law Firm

”

A Health Department inspector's photo showed the pool skimmer was installed improperly. Image courtesy Florida Department of Health

If the Bob's Boathouse staff does not keep people out of the water, Higginbotham told the *News Leader*, "It may be something that we end up going to Circuit Court with to seek an injunction."

'CEASE AND DESIST'

Higginbotham sent the original Cease and Desist order on May 20 to Robert Lighouser as registered agent for Skipper Bob's LLC, dba Bob's Boathouse. Subsequently, he told the *News Leader*, he learned that although "Lighouser" was the name Health Department staff found in researching agents for the business, that spelling apparently was incorrect.

Therefore, he had a second Notice of Violation and Cease and Desist order delivered on May

28 to four registered agents associated with the business. They are Richard Walkowiak of Bob's Boathouse LLC; Robert C. Leithauser Jr. of Skipper Bob's LLC; Skipper Bob's LLC, registered agent for The Best Restaurant on 41 LLC; and Thomas J. Lefevre of Best Restaurant on 41 (sic)/Bob's Boathouse. All of them were listed with the address of 5515 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota.

An additional copy went to Leithauser as registered agent for Skipper Bob's LLC at 39541 Garfield Road, Clinton Township, MI.

Higginbotham says in both notices that, beginning on April 23, the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County began receiving "numerous complaints regarding an unpermitted public swimming pool and/or public



A Health Department inspector took this photo in early May, showing chairs in the pool and mounting holes in the shell for other pieces of furniture. Image courtesy Florida Department of Health

water attraction” in the restaurant located at 5515 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota.


According to documentation provided with the order, a Health Department inspector visited Bob’s Boathouse on May 7 and found a number of violations. At the bottom of the form listing them, a notation next to the line saying, “Copy of Report Received by” reads, “Declined to sign.” It is dated May 14.

The comments and instructions the inspector provided included the following:

- “Pool wastewater is not properly plumbed to sewerage system.”
- “A maintenance log must be kept for the pool. At a minimum, please keep a daily record of chlorine, pH, and flow rate.”

- “Erosion tablets must not be used in skimmer basket.”
- “A flowmeter must be installed on the water return line.”
- “Provide a life hook in the pool area.”

Following a page of details about state swimming pool regulations, the order includes several photos showing people and furniture in the pool, as well as food debris.

Higginbotham told the *News Leader* the Health Department would allow Bob’s Boathouse a certain amount of time to comply with the Cease and Desist order. Then, if further violations are reported, he said, he will consult with the department’s legal staff to determine his next steps. 

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The Rev. Brook Bello conducts an open-air press conference to announce a new initiative targeting demand for sex with children. Behind her are (from right) Roger Lee with SRQ Hope House, Mayor Willie Shaw and Pastor Jim Minor with Harvest Tabernacle. Obscured behind Bello is Derek Thompson. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

SARASOTA GROUP WANTS TO SPARE CHILDREN FROM ABUSE

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Derek Thompson read off a string of numbers at a Payne Park press conference on Wednesday morning, June 4: 43, 31, 22, 26, 35, 14, 24.

“These are the number of men arrested in sex sting operations along the Florida Gulf Coast recently,” he said. “They were fully expecting to have sex with children 13 or 14 years old.”

Thompson is working at the More Too Life Foundation to stop sex trafficking, and he’s trying a new tactic – slowing demand.

“Who are these people?” he asked. “Are they social outcasts or drifters?” Quite the contrary, he said. Most are middle-class, middle-aged married men with no criminal background, he added.

In late April, the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office arrested 12 people who traveled here “with the intent to have sex with a male or female child,” a press release stated. “One of the suspects is an armed security guard who thought he was going to have sex with a mother and her 12-year-old daughter.”

Their ages ranged from 20 to 43. They were from Sarasota, Clearwater, Tampa, Ruskin, Palmetto, Englewood and Bradenton. They all responded to Internet posts and then engaged in “explicit written and verbal conversations,” the release said. Each contact was to culminate in a discrete suburban rendezvous, but inside the house, deputies were waiting.

Thompson works with Brook Bello at

the [More Too Life Foundation](#). Bello was a runaway teenager in California who became ensnared in human trafficking for sex. Once free and her addictions broken, Bello became a passionate advocate for those too young and helpless to resist. “We must end the demand,” she said. “Men are the biggest part of the problem with trafficking.”

Thompson says the problem is “indicative of a much larger story — the demand for commercial sex in America. We live in a society grooming a generation of men to be buyers, users and addicts. If we chose to do nothing, what can we expect? It will get a lot worse.”


“We need to educate men on the role they can play to put an end to it,” continued Thompson. “Young boys are getting the message every day, hundreds or thousands of times a day: Sex is something that can be bought and consumed. We need to make a difference in the lives of young boys.”

The group will provide training on Saturday, June 7, at 8:45 a.m. at the Harvest Tabernacle, located at 209 N. Lime Ave. for all interested persons. It will be free with refreshments and lunch served, though donations will be appreciated. To RSVP, email programs@more-toolife.org.

The training will touch on victim identification, Florida’s human trafficking laws and empowering community leaders.

Said Bello, “We cannot give up on our children even if they gave up on themselves.” 

 ***We must end the demand.***

Brook Bello
CEO/Founder
More Too Life Foundation 



NEW GROUP OF CRIME FIGHTERS

Waste Management is stepping up its drivers' efforts to help law enforcement officers. Image courtesy of Wikipedia

WASTE MANAGEMENT HAS TRAINED 155 DRIVERS TO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR ILLEGAL OR SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Is privacy a bad thing? There are a few laws and judicial decisions indicating people have a right to privacy, but no constitutional amendment deals directly with the topic. We all know you need a warrant to tap a land-line phone. And most people understand the National Security Agency is recording cell phone calls to and from overseas. Fewer people have heard of the FBI's Carnivore program, which can track Internet usage. But any TV viewer knows the FBI can grab your

garbage and pick through it for evidence, no warrant necessary.

Even municipalities are butting in now. The City of Sarasota has a parking enforcement vehicle that automatically recognizes license plates and can check them against a database. Ostensibly, the software is looking for parking scofflaws, but it also checks for expired registration, stolen vehicles and — maybe — keeps a record of who is parking where. A covert

“ *I will never look at a Waste Management truck the same way again.* ”

Mark Cunningham
Assistant County Administrator
Sarasota County

version of this in an unmarked car might be the next step.

Now you can knock another chip off your privacy block. On Wednesday, June 4, officials with Waste Management announced they have trained 155 trash-truck drivers in the area to report crime, violence and suspicious behavior.

Former FBI Special Agent Joe Vidovich, who is director of corporate security for Waste Management, said drivers are not spying and prying. Instead, they should be considered a kind of mobile neighborhood watch.

“We’ve had drivers report bank robberies, fires, children and seniors wandering the street, dog attacks,” he noted. “We are asking

our drivers to be aware and report any suspicious activity.”

Dawn McCormick, the company’s director of communications and community relations, was also at the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office in downtown Sarasota for the press conference. Unlike the FBI, she said, drivers will not be going through your trash bags. But they do have cameras on their trucks, which can send a video clip to headquarters. “Each truck has a forward-facing camera looping a video,” she added. “It can do a ‘force-send,’ or they can push a button and save the clip.”

The garbage trucks are in radio contact with headquarters and are capable of



(From left) Jason White of Waste Management; Joe Vidovich of Waste Management; Sen. Bill Galvano, District 26; Mayor Willie Shaw of Sarasota; state Rep. Ray Pilon, District 72; Col. Stephen Moyer of the Sarasota Police Department; Mark Cunningham, assistant Sarasota County administrator; and Sheriff Tom Knight mark the launch of Waste Watch. Photo courtesy Sheriff's Office

handling “be-on-the-lookout alerts” if necessary (BOLOs for crooks; Amber Alerts for missing children). “Our drivers are feeling like they’ve been empowered to be that extra set of eyes in the community,” noted McCormick.

Sarasota is not the first community to experience the “empowered” drivers. The company points to many instances when drivers called for emergency help for car fires, wounded people, dog attacks, unattended children and other scenes of distress.


“I will never look at a Waste Management truck the same way again,” said Assistant Sarasota County Administrator Mark Cunningham. “Is my grass mowed? Are my tags up-to-date? Seriously, it is so cost-effective and we are glad to be a part of it.” 



Image courtesy morguefile.com

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PRESERVING A COUNTY TREASURE



Photos from the 2007 Old Miakka Neighborhood Plan show the 1914 schoolhouse surrounded by residents involved in an array of activities. Image courtesy Sarasota County

THE COUNTY COMMISSION AWARDS A GRANT TO PAY FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE HISTORIC OLD MIAKKA SCHOOLHOUSE

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

About eight years ago, residents of Old Miakka gathered with representatives of the Sarasota County Neighborhood Services Department to work on a plan largely designed to preserve the rural character and nature of their community.

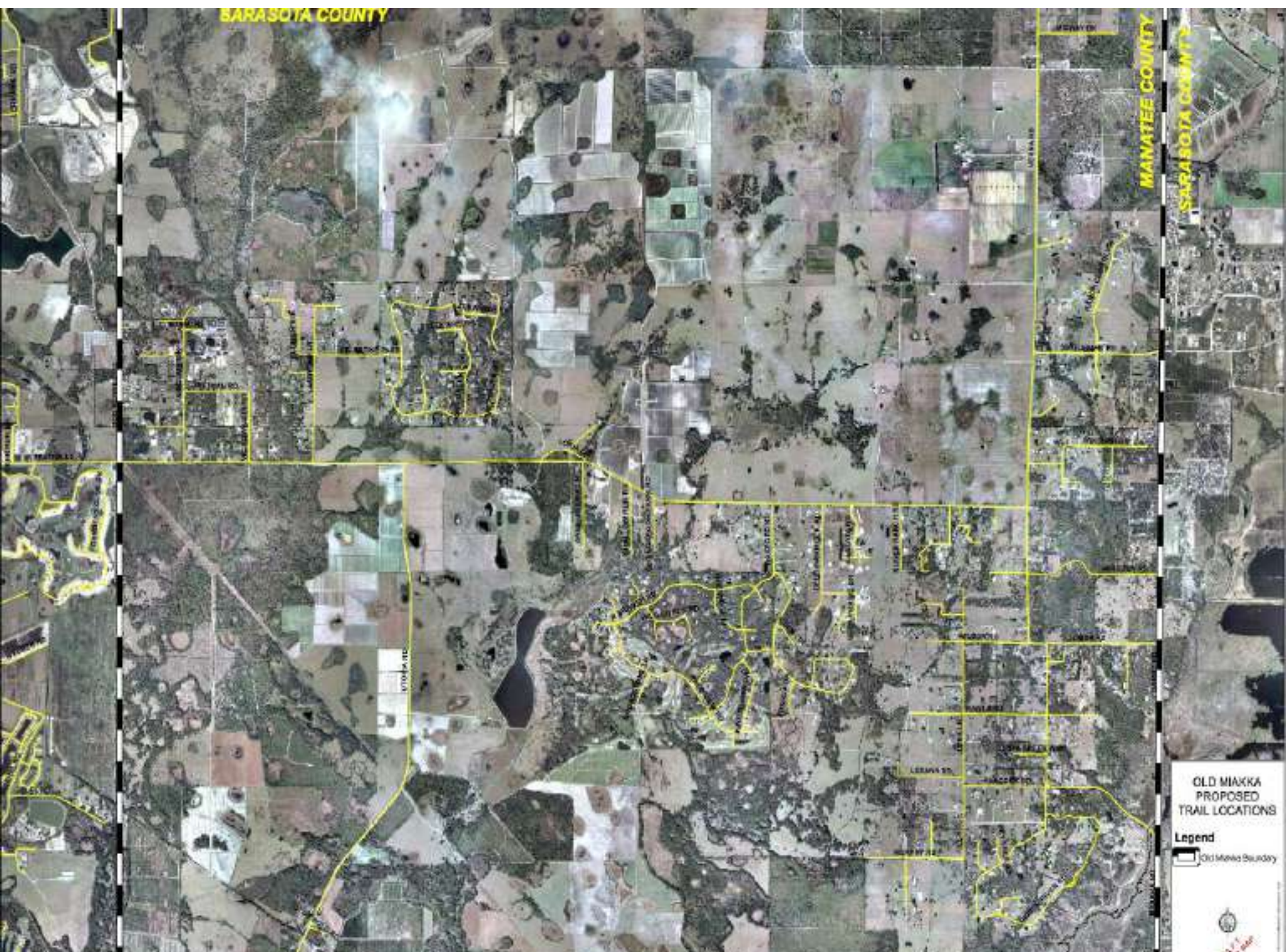
“Old Miakka is particularly rich in local history,” says the document resulting from that initiative, the Old Miakka Neighborhood Plan. The community comprises about 57 square miles, or 36,590 acres, in the Myakka River Watershed, according to the document.

Its western edge is approximately 5.8 miles from the City of Sarasota, in the northeastern corner of the county, the Neighborhood Plan continues.

“The area was first inhabited by Native Americans, particularly Seminoles,” the document notes. After European settlers drove out those early residents, surveyors began assessing the land to identify resources that could be used for potential new settlements. Among the surveyors was John M. Irwin, who, in 1849, led a crew into the Old Miakka area

and observed, “It is ... good only for its fine timber and being a good range for cattle and hogs,” according to J. Raymond Williams in *A Historic Resources Survey of Old Miakka and Selected Portions of the Myakka River, Sarasota County, Florida*, published in 1989.

Later, cattle freely roamed the thousands of acres, with their ownership identified by branding. Ranchers relished what they called the “finest grazing lands in the State, known as the Miakka bottoms,” Williams pointed out in his book.



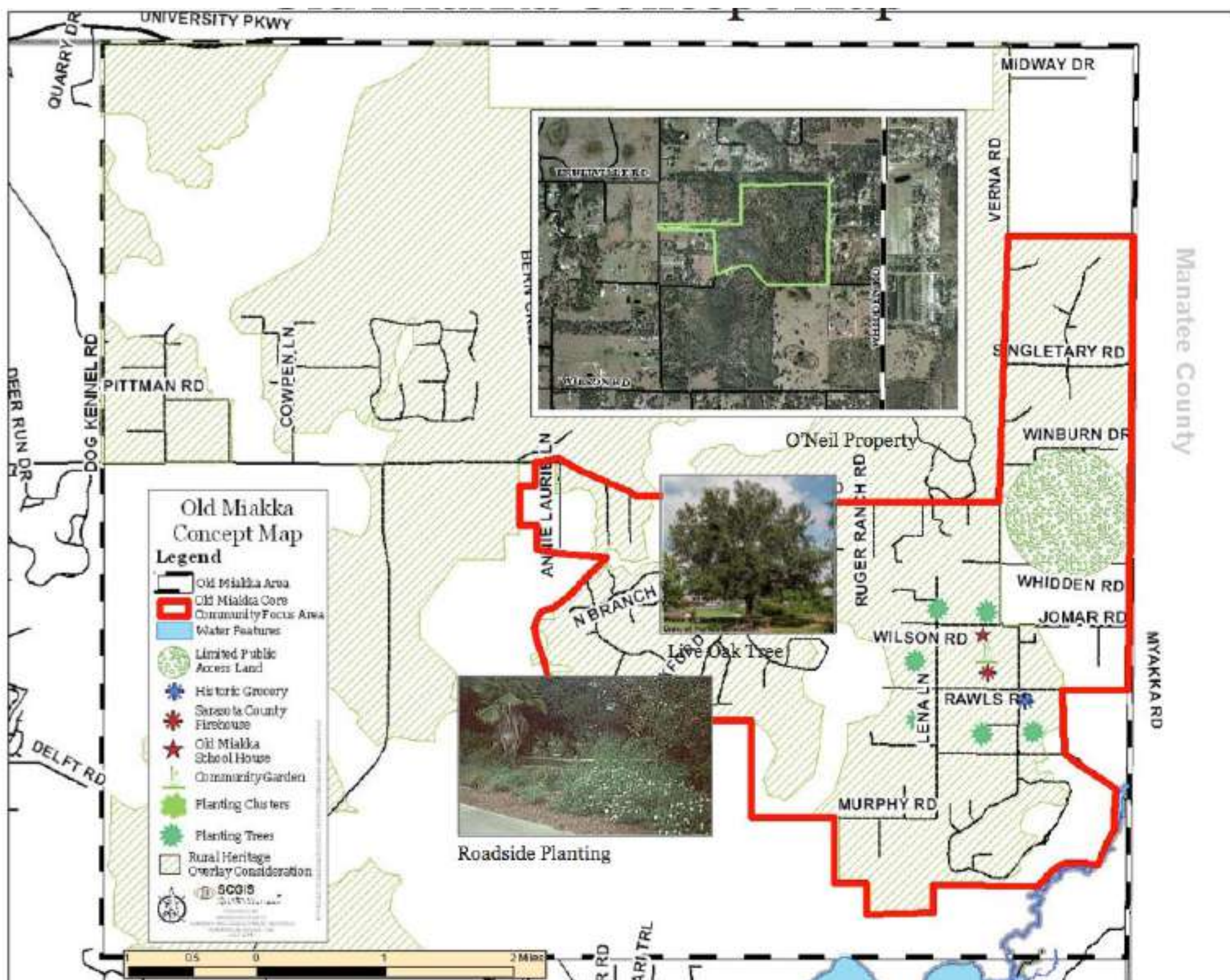
A map shows the focal area for the Old Miakka Neighborhood Plan. Fruitville Road is the primary east/west route in the center of the map. The county names (upper right corner) are transposed. The area is in Sarasota County. Image courtesy Sarasota County

But development began to get under way, and in February 1914, residents voted to take advantage of recent state legislation to build “a school house that would be an ornament and credit to the community and merge some of the smaller schools into this one,” Williams added.

That school was completed in September of the same year, and it remained in operation until the mid-1940s. “Fortunately, the school house remains today,” the plan points

out. It serves as a meeting place for community members and the setting for a variety of events and activities, “remaining the ‘ornament’ it was envisioned to be.”

On May 21, the County Commission approved a grant of \$39,377.32 to the Miakka Community Club for new efforts to preserve the schoolhouse, which has both national and local historic designation, as Jane Grogg, manager of the county’s Neighborhood Services Department, noted.



A graphic in the 2007 Old Miakka Neighborhood Plan shows concepts conceived by residents for the community. Image courtesy Sarasota County

During a Nov. 18, 2013, meeting hosted by Grogg's department, a May 21 memo to the board explained, part of the discussion focused on the fact that the schoolhouse is not a county asset. Therefore, the proposal was made that the commission grant the funds to the club, a 501(c)(4) nonprofit corporation that owns and maintains the property.

During the May 21 County Commission meeting, Grogg told the board the club members have worked with contractors, "including those skilled in historic restoration, and architects," to assess what needs to be done to preserve the schoolhouse.

"[T]o remove or properly encapsulate ... lead paint and then apply new paint to the main room/classroom, back room, front porch and exterior is estimated to cost between \$23,800 and \$32,255, depending on whether paint and materials are donated and which contractor is selected," a May 21 memo to the board noted. The county's procurement policies will be used for the project, it added.

The estimate for work on the wood of the structure is \$10,528, the memo noted. Club members also hope to repair the bell tower so it can support use of the bell, Grogg told the board.

The club is seeking donations to offset the expenses, the memo continued, with the hope that the work can be completed before the organization holds a 100th anniversary celebration of the schoolhouse in October.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

The \$39,377.32 is all that remains from a \$62,000 allocation the County Commission approved in February 2007 to implement the Old Miakka Neighborhood Plan, the May 21 memo explained.

Since 2007, \$23,357.68 has been spent in the community on roadside tree planting and on improvements to public access points for the Old Miakka Preserve, the memo pointed out.

The commission also awarded an earlier \$6,375.42 grant to the effort to preserve the schoolhouse, the memo added.

Originally, residents envisioned a community garden and farmers market at the site of the school, the memo said. However, the farmers market would have required a special exception to the zoning code. Further, the opening of a market at the nearby [Crowley Museum and Nature Center](#) eliminated the need for one at the schoolhouse, the memo pointed out. Residents also decided to focus on their own gardens instead of a community facility, it added.

During the Nov. 18 community meeting hosted by county staff, discussion focused on how best to use the remainder of the funds allocated for the neighborhood plan. Staff also took comments by phone and email during November and December 2013, the May 21 memo noted.

Based on the community meeting and correspondence, the memo continued, four new priorities were recommended:

- Preservation and improvements to the Old Miakka Schoolhouse.
- Park amenities at Old Miakka Preserve and the possible addition of the adjacent 40 acres under consideration for county purchase through the Neighborhood Parkland Program or Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program. The new property could be used for horse trails, horse trailer parking and picnic areas, the memo noted.
- Improvements to Myakka Road, such as increased width and the additions of a paved shoulder and sidewalk.
- Roadside tree planting.

On May 21, no speakers asked to address the board during a public hearing on the awarding of the grant.

After Chairman Charles Hines closed the hearing, Commissioner Carolyn Mason made the motion to approve the awarding of the funds to the Miakka Community Club.

“Thank you to Becky [Ayeche, president of the club] and her group for all their hard work,” Mason said. She extended her appreciation to Grogg as well.

“Let’s get to work,” Mason added.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta seconded the motion. Of the schoolhouse, he said, “This is a treasure, and the community out there is a wonderful community.”

The motion passed unanimously. 

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MORE THAN JUST THE FACTS

The Sarasota County Commission delves into infrastructure issues during its March 25 budget workshop. Photo by Norman Schimmel

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S NEW BUDGET WORKSHOP FEATURE OFFERS INSIGHTS INTO WIDE ARRAY OF OPERATIONS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Did you know that Sarasota County issued 13,000 new library cards in the 2013 fiscal year or that the Fire Department responded to 51,000 calls in the same period of time?

Those are just two examples of the “fast facts” Sarasota County Administrator Tom Harmer has provided since the County Commission began its current round of budget workshops on Feb. 21.

“We’re talking about resources in the budget process,” Harmer explained that day by way of introducing this new feature. The county’s billion-dollar-a-year operations make possible a vast array of services, Harmer pointed

out. Yet, members of the public who benefit from them probably never think about what does take place, he continued.

For example, people who call 911 just want “someone to show up that’s qualified, experienced and handles their issue,” Harmer added. “They don’t look closely at the patch on the uniform.”

Likewise, he said, when county customers turn on their water faucets, “they expect clean, safe water to come out,” and when they flush their toilets, they expect the contents to end up in the appropriate place.

May 16, 2014 Budget Workshop – Fast Facts**General Demographics**

- Fourth oldest county in the U.S. with a median age of 53 (Charlotte is oldest with 61.6)
- Home ownership rate is 75.3% (compared to 68.1% in Florida)
- Over 48,600 Veterans reside in Sarasota County
- There were 68,784.5 volunteer hours logged in October through March collectively for the departments of Parks, Libraries and Extension Services (Equivalent to 66.14 FTEs)

About the Organization

- 2,124 employee positions
- Average years of service for SCG employees is 10.7 years
- 649 employees eligible to retire in the next 5 years (30.6%)
- 12.1% annualized turnover rate as of March 31, 2014
- 49.6% of employees are represented by a bargaining unit
- 140 employees in DROP (12 in 2014, 20 in 2015, 47 in 2016, 28 in 2017, 33 in 2018)

Health and Safety

- 12 water rescues by SCG lifeguards through the end of Q2 FY14
- 97.1% of contents and 94.1% of property was saved after structure fires responded to by SCG Emergency Services in Quarters 1 and 2 of FY14
- The average number of mosquitoes is down 54% over the course of the nine year average (26 per trap in 2014 vs. 9-year average of 56 per trap)

Quality of Life Statistics

- 649 acres and 35 miles of beach
- 52 tons of artificial reef materials deployed in 2013
- 5 dog parks
- 32.4% of county publicly protected conservation lands (26% is publicly owned)
- Annual Library circulation is 3,003,849
- 1.9 million library visits in 2013
- Library holdings 922,235
- 215 internet terminals used 241,635 times

Housing/Planning

- 229,785 Housing Units
- 76,584 building department inspections (97% completed on time)
- 10,000 environmental health inspections conducted in 2013
- 2,635 Code Enforcement Cases through March 31st, 2014
- 91% of Code Enforcement complaints addressed within 48 hours
- \$58 Million in construction value of new commercial permits in Quarters 1 and 2 of FY14

“All these things happen day-to-day behind the scenes,” Harmer pointed out.

The Fire Department statistics were first on his Feb. 21 list. He told the board the average response time is five to six minutes. Further, almost 90 percent of the calls are related to a health problem. That is not unreasonable, he added, given the fact that many seniors reside in Sarasota County. (His May 16 list followed up on that comment, pointing out that Sarasota County’s population is the fourth oldest in the nation, with a median age of 53.)

Among the other statistics he offered on Feb. 21 were the following:

- Sarasota County Area Transit logged 2.8 million passenger rides in the 2013 fiscal year.

- County summer camp participants numbered 3,600 during the same period.
- Seventy percent of the county’s residents have a library card. “That’s amazing to me,” he told the commissioners.
- During the 2013 fiscal year, the Building Department logged 76,000 inspections, 97 percent of which were completed on time.

Other items on Harmer’s May 16 workshop list included the following:

- More than 48,600 veterans live in the county.
- The county has 229,785 housing units.
- The average years of service for a Sarasota County employee is 10.7.



County Administrator Tom Harmer. Photo by Norman Schimmel

- Code Enforcement staff handled 2,635 cases from Oct. 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014, and 91 percent of the complaints were addressed within 48 hours.

As soon as Harmer completed his first recitation of the facts, on Feb. 21, Chairman Charles Hines requested a copy of them. Many times when commissioners go out to speak to the public, Hines pointed out, they learn their audiences have little understanding of the services the county provides.


Being able to offer those statistics would be very helpful, Hines added.

“We’ll share those with the board,” Harmer promised.

“I would actually like them fairly quickly,” Commissioner Nora Patterson said, “because I have to give a talk and some of those would be dead-on.”

In a brief interview with *The Sarasota News Leader* last week, Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson agreed with Harmer and Hines about the value of the “Fast Facts.” “I think they’re important to help people understand all the things we do,” she said.

Although the board members “frequently delve into one subject ... at length” during a budget workshop, she pointed out, “these touch on a broad spectrum of [county matters].”

Robinson added that Harmer’s inclusion of them at the outset of discussions “sets the tone for the rest of the meeting.” 

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Siesta Seen

CONCERNS AIRED ABOUT WHEN THE SIESTA VILLAGE RECYCLING PROGRAM WILL START; THE SIESTA CHAMBER IS BUSY RAISING FUNDS FOR THE JULY FOURTH FIREWORKS SHOW; AND THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE NEEDS NEW VOLUNTEERS



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Although a county staff member has asserted that a missed deadline will mean no Siesta Village recycling initiative can begin in the 2015 fiscal year, County Commissioner Nora Patterson has offered to find out whether that is true.

During the June 3 meeting of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA), Michael Shay, president of the Siesta Key Association (SKA), explained that he had received an email from Lisa Cece the previous day telling him, "The whole concept of [recycling in the Village] missed the boat for next year."



Even with season officially over, plenty of people come to Siesta Public Beach to watch the sun sink into the Gulf of Mexico each evening. Photo contributed by Peter van Roekens

Siesta Seen

In that email, Shay pointed out, Cece, who is the special district coordinator in the county's Transportation and Real Estate Department, wrote that she had an opinion from county legal staff saying recycling services could not be added to the 2015 budget for Village upkeep because the Siesta Key Village Maintenance Corp. (SKVMC) failed to communicate a desire for those services by the March 15 deadline for any district modifications for the next year.

"That's news to me," said SKVA Vice President Mark Smith, "because I thought the [county] staff had put [recycling] in for the district [budget for the next fiscal year]."

Smith is the liaison between the Maintenance Corp. and the county.

However, Patterson, a guest at the SKVA meeting, pointed out that the commissioners have not finalized the county's 2015 fiscal year budget.

Shay promised to provide copies of Cece's email to Patterson and Smith.

"I'll look into it," Smith added. "I thought we had everything in place."

After the meeting, Smith told Shay and me he had talked several times with Cece about incorporating a recycling initiative into that



Employees of Championship Landscape Maintenance Professionals work on landscaping in Siesta Village on June 3. A new firm will be hired to start work in August, county staff says. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

next budget, so he did not understand why she responded as she did to Shay on June 2.

Shay also raised the point during the SKVA meeting that even though recycling is mandatory for county businesses and homeowners, he never had been able to get an answer as to why “the Village has a pass on it.”

He asked Cece about that in a follow-up email, he said, but he had not received a response prior to the start of the SKVA meeting.

FIREWORKS

With July Fourth only about a month away, the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce is in full fundraising mode to cover the cost of its 24th annual fireworks spectacular.

Alana Tomasso, the 2014 event chairwoman, stressed in an interview this week that no grant or government funds help pay for the show. The approximately \$35,000 cost is covered solely by money the Siesta Chamber raises during special events and from selling VIP picnic tickets and, especially, sponsorship packages.

The cost comes down to slightly more than \$1,000 per minute for the 28-minute show, she noted; plus, the Chamber has to cover other expenses, such as renting tents for use at the VIP picnic it hosts that day at the beach.

Chastanna Nieman, events and office manager for the Siesta Chamber, made some of those same points during the June 3 SKVA meeting. The funding “has to be generated by the community,” she said.



The Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce has unveiled its logo for the 2014 Siesta Beach fireworks show on July Fourth. Image courtesy Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce

Further, “The Chamber does not make any money on [the July Fourth events],” Tomasso pointed out. Many people do not understand that, she added. As always, the Chamber is offering its VIP packages for \$150. This year they include on-site parking at Siesta Public Beach; a catered dinner for two with beer, wine and soft drinks; live musical entertainment by Ted Stevens & the Doo-Shots; and a preferred viewing area for the fireworks celebration.

“Some people buy [the packages] just for the parking,” Tomasso noted. Nonetheless, “it’s a really good time,” she said of all the festivities.

Co-chairs of the event this year are Brad Stewart of Captain Curt’s Crab & Oyster Bar

Siesta Seen

and Kay Kouvatsos of Village Café, she added. As representatives of two very well known restaurants on the key, they will ensure delicious fare from a variety of restaurants for the picnic.

Event sponsorship levels range from \$5,000 and up (Grand Finale) down to \$350 (Rockets Red Glare), with various degrees of business promotion offered according to the amount paid.

People may register for sponsorships and VIP packages by calling the Chamber at 349-3800, emailing info@siestakeychamber.com or visiting the Chamber [website](#).

As it has since 2011, the Chamber also will hold a raffle whose winner will be able to start the fireworks, akin to Wile E. Coyote detonating explosives in the beloved *Roadrunner* cartoons.

The raffle ticket party has been scheduled from 5 to 7 p.m. on Thursday, July 3, at South Bridge Plaza — home to the New Balance Store, Abel's Ice Cream and Stonewood Grill & Tavern — just west of the intersection of Stickney Point Road and U.S. 41 South. Tickets are \$5 each or five for \$20.

People also may purchase VIP packages at that event, Tomasso told me.



A party will be held on July 3 at South Bridge Plaza, at the intersection of Stickney Point Road and U.S. 41, with sales of tickets for a raffle whose winner will get to start the July Fourth fireworks on Siesta Key. Photo courtesy Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce

Siesta Seen

Additionally, the Chamber is selling Tervis Tumblers with the 2014 Fireworks Celebration logo for \$20 each. Those are available at the Chamber office at 5114 Ocean Blvd. (Davidson Plaza) in Siesta Village and at [Midnight Cove](#), where Tomasso is the general manager; they, too, will be sold at the July 3 party.

When we talked on June 3, Tomasso explained that she began volunteering at the Chamber's visitor center about 11 years ago; this is her fourth year on the Chamber board and her third year chairing the fireworks committee.

"Even before I was involved [with the Chamber]," she continued, "I always preferred the Siesta [fireworks show]."

The same person has been handling the pyrotechnics for the past 10 years, she added. He comes down to the key from north of Tampa.

Although it may sound corny, Tomasso said, given all the work that volunteers put into the July Fourth picnic and fireworks show, watching people enjoying the event "just really makes it worth it," especially seeing how much delight children take in the sky



County staff appears close to implementing a parking plan the County Commission approved on April 9 for North Shell Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County



Sgt. Scott Osborne is seeking new volunteers to help out in the Sheriff's Office's Community Policing Station in Siesta Village. File photo

Siesta Seen

show. “We hope to continue to do it for many years to come,” she added of the event.

BEACH ACCESS 1 UPDATE

On May 28, James K. Harriott Jr., the county’s chief engineer, provided the county commissioners an update on plans to create parking spaces along North Shell Road, where Beach Access 1 is located.

Since the board members [approved the parking plan](#) on April 9, he wrote, “we have been discussing with two property owners some modifications to a couple of spaces. Although, the property owners suggested changes that would maintain the 16 parking spaces on the approved plan, we could not accomplish the changes without creating other undesirable problems.”

Harriott added that as of May 28, “it would appear that everyone is settled on the plan approved by the Board ... We are currently finalizing negotiations with the contractor. Included in those negotiations is the length of time it will take to complete the project. All indications are that construction


will take less than a month. We will notify the Board and property owners once we have a firm date on the start of construction and completion date.”

HELP WANTED

Sgt. Scott Osborne, who heads up the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office’s Community Policing Station in Siesta Village, is in need of new volunteers to help staff that office, he told me this week.

Volunteers work in three-hour shifts, he explained. He needs someone willing to man the desk on Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and on Mondays from 1 to 4 p.m.

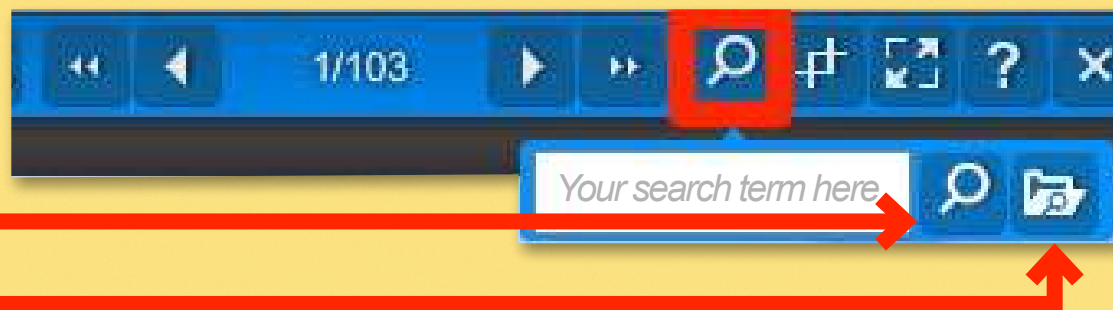
The volunteers answer the phone and assist walk-ins, Osborne pointed out.

Anyone interested may stop by the office in Siesta Center and fill out an application. A limited background check is part of the process, Osborne said. For more information, call the office at 349-2900 and ask for Osborne or Joan Steber, who coordinates the work of the volunteers. 

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NEWS BRIEFS



Kids' Summer Beach Runs will bring families to Siesta and Brohard beaches. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

KIDS' SUMMER BEACH RUNS TO BEGIN AGAIN ON JUNE 10

The Kids' Summer Beach Runs will be offered again every week this summer beginning Tuesday, June 10, at Siesta Public Beach, located at 948 Beach Road on Siesta Key; and Wednesday, June 11, at Brohard Beach, located at 1600 Harbor Drive in Venice, Sarasota County has announced.

A one-time registration fee of \$1 allows a child to participate in as many beach runs as he or she desires, the release notes.

At Siesta Beach, registration will be near the main concession facilities next to the pavilion on the west side of the park; in Venice, registration will be near Fins at Sharky's, a news release explains.

Registration at each location will start at 5:30 p.m., the release adds. The 1-mile run will

commence promptly at 6:30 p.m., the release points out

The Siesta Beach Run will be offered every Tuesday, while the Venice run will be held every Wednesday.

Youngsters who complete four runs at either location receive a free event T-shirt and a 50-percent off voucher for a pair of New Balance Kids shoes, the release adds. Each runner receives a ribbon and a free ice-pop after every event, the release continues.

For more information, call the Sarasota County Contact Center at 861-5000 and ask about the Kids' Summer Beach Runs or visit parksonline.scgov.net.

ANIMAL SERVICES OFFERING ADOPTION SPECIAL FOR KITTENS

Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Animal Services is reminding people that it is "kitten season," which means "an excess of our feline friends" in need of homes.

More than 90 kittens in foster homes soon will be in need of permanent homes, a news release explains. "This does not include all of the cats and kittens already at the Animal Services Bee Ridge location," the release adds. A video showing some of those animals is available at this [link](#).

For the month of June, the adoption fee for cats over 1 year of age is \$20, and all kittens are offered under a special provision of "Adopt one; get one free," the release notes. All cats adopted are spayed or neutered, micro-chipped and completely up-to-date on their vaccinations, the release adds.

For more information, call the Animal Services Adoption Line at 861-9523, visit the Animal Services section of the webpage [here](#) or visit the cats in person at 8451 Bee Ridge Road in Sarasota.



These three kittens at the Sheriff's Office's Animal Services facility are in need of good homes. Contributed photo

HOG CREEK BRIDGE BEING REPLACED NEAR VAN WEZEL

A project is under way to replace the Hog Creek pedestrian bridge, which connects the area of the former G.WIZ property on Boulevard of the Arts to the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, the City of Sarasota has announced.

Four observation decks on Sarasota Bay behind the Van Wezel also will be replaced, a news release says.

“The Hog Creek Bridge, which is 20 years old and warped from exposure, will be replaced first,” the release adds. New lighting also will be installed. The project is expected to be finished by Friday, June 27, the release notes.

Work on the observation decks is scheduled to begin after Tuesday, July 8, the release continues. “The wood decks and railings are in poor condition and have become a public safety concern,” it points out. “They will be replaced with a concrete boardwalk material,” it says. That project is scheduled to be completed by mid-September, the release adds.

The total project is budgeted for \$236,600 and is being funded via the Local Option Sales Tax III, which was approved by Sarasota County voters in 2007, the release notes.



The bridge from the former G.WIZ property to the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall is being replaced, the City of Sarasota has announced. Photo by Norman Schimmel

CANDIDATE QUALIFYING FOR ALL OFFICES TO BEGIN JUNE 16

Candidate qualifying for all statewide, multi-county, county and district offices (other than judicial and federal offices) will begin at noon on Monday, June 16, and end at noon on Friday, June 20, Supervisor of Elections (SOE) Kathy Dent has announced.

Judicial and federal candidates qualified the week of April 28 through May 2, a news release explains.

Candidates for county and district offices are required to qualify at the Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Office, while candidates for statewide and multi-county offices will qualify with the Office of the Secretary of State in Tallahassee, the release points out.

“Florida law provides that the qualifying officer may accept and hold a candidate’s qualifying papers beginning 14 days prior to the first day of the qualifying period (June 2), to be processed and filed during the qualifying period,” the release says.

The following county and district seats will be filled during the General Election:

- Sarasota County commissioner, Districts 2 and 4.
- School Board, Districts 1, 4 and 5.
- Charter Review Board, Districts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.
- Public Hospital Board, Central District Seat 2, Northern District Seats 1 and 2, and Southern District Seats 1 and 2.
- Sarasota Soil and Water Conservation District, Groups 2, 3 and 4.

- Bobcat Trail Community Development District (CDD), Seats 1, 2 and 4.
- Lakeside Plantation CDD, Seats 1, 2, and 3.
- Stoney Brook at Venice CDD, Seats 3 and 5.
- The Woodlands CDD, Seats 1, 2 and 3.
- Venetian CDD, Seats 2 and 4.



The Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Office is in the Terrace Building in downtown Sarasota. File photo

SARASOTA SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE HOUSE TOUR PLANNED AS BENEFIT

On June 12, the Lu Andrews III house will be open for tours and a set of brief lectures titled *Form Follows Reflective Function: The Lived Experience of the Sarasota School of Architecture*, a program whose proceeds will benefit the Sarasota Community Studio, the Studio has announced.

The house, which was designed in 1959 by the architectural firm of Ralph Twitchell, “is recognized as one of Sarasota’s most important mid-century modern properties,” a news release points out. As a 900-square-foot, single-family residence on the Tahiti Park lagoon, “it is a prime example of the Sarasota School of Architecture,” the release adds.

Owner Allison Pinto will begin the June 12 lectures with an introduction to the house “and a description of the ways in which the Sarasota School of Architecture relates to place-based community change efforts in Sarasota today,” the release continues. Pinto

is executive director of Sarasota Community Studio and a clinical child psychologist.

The Studio is a nonprofit organization focused on changes in the Central Avenue/Cocoanut Avenue neighborhood in Sarasota to enable it and, especially, its children to thrive, the release explains.

The evening will begin with a wine and cheese reception and tours of the house from 5:30 to 6 p.m. The lectures will be offered from 6 to 7 p.m., with the reception and tours resuming until 7:30 p.m., the release adds. A \$10 contribution to Sarasota Community Studio is requested, with no cost for Central-Cocoanut neighbors, the release notes.

The house is located at 1695 Lowe Drive in Sarasota. To register for the event, call 315-8343 or email studio@SRQStudio.org.

For more information about Sarasota Community Studio, visit sarasotacommunitystudio.org.



A tour of the Lu Andrews III house will benefit the Sarasota Community Studio. Contributed photo

NEW PRINCIPAL NAMED FOR LAMARQUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Sarasota County Schools Superintendent Lori White has named an assistant principal as the next principal of Lamarque Elementary School in North Port, the district has announced.

Brandon Johnson, who has served as assistant principal of Brentwood Elementary School since July 2012, is scheduled to begin the job as Lamarque's new leader on July 1, pending School Board approval, a news release says. He will succeed Sally Mancheno, who is retiring from the district after leading the school since before it opened in August 2006, the release adds. Lamarque Elementary has about 875 students.

Johnson, 33, began working with the Sarasota County Schools in the summer of 2005 as a teacher for children with special needs in grades three through five at Emma E. Booker Elementary in Sarasota, the release continues. "He also served that school as a fourth-grade teacher and as a resource for teachers of special needs students," it adds.

Johnson became an assistant principal intern at Emma E. Booker Elementary in February 2010 through a district program that trains teachers to be administrators, the release notes. He also served as an assistant principal intern at Bay Haven School of Basics Plus in Sarasota before being named assistant principal at Brentwood.

"I'm incredibly excited and grateful for this opportunity to be part of the Lamarque school community," said Johnson in the release.



Brandon Johnson/Contributed photo

As assistant principal at Brentwood, the release points out, he was a summer school administrator, data coach and test and volunteer coordinator. He also served on district committees to create a new elementary report card and to update the *Student and Family Handbook*, the release notes. Additionally, he has served as a mentor for children, working with Big Brothers/Big Sisters and Take Stock in Children programs. He also was a member of the NAACP Youth Advisory Counsel.

Johnson is married to Rashea Johnson.

THE OAKS CLUB IN OSPREY RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS HONOR

The Oaks Club in Osprey has been named the recipient of the prestigious Distinguished Gold Club of the World award under a program conducted by *BoardRoom* magazine, “one of the most respected trade publications serving private clubs,” a news release says.

The Distinguished Clubs award program uses a rating system based on an extensive evaluation process that distills and measures a club member’s experience, the release explains.

“This honor showcases our member experience at the highest level,” said Jeff Hartigan, general manager of The Oaks Club, in the release. “We are the only club in west central Florida with this designation and are extremely proud of the staff and leadership who are an integral part of our success,” he added in the release. “This year marks our 30th anniversary and our membership is at an all-time high.”

As defined by the Distinguished Clubs program, “member experience” is the combination of qualities a private club provides. It is not just the quality of service or facilities or the products provided, the release notes; it is also the quality of the staff and management and the overall club governance they deliver. The most important quality, however, is that of the intangible, the release points out. While difficult to measure, the latter comprises “those magic moments experienced,



Oaks Club General Manager Jeff Hartigan (left) and Board of Governors President John Bogatay. Contributed photo

the members befriended, the memorable events and famous tournaments attended, as well as the club traditions, history and heritage proudly recognized.”

Additionally, five department heads at The Oaks Club were honored for Gold Distinguished Achievement in Leadership. They are Susan Greene, director of membership and marketing; Holly Caviglia, director of clubhouse operations; Tim Beckwith, director of golf; Nick Kearns, director of greens and grounds; and Tom Whitten, director of tennis.

Press Releases & News Tips
News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

SARASOTA BAY WATER FESTIVAL TO FEATURE CLYDE BUTCHER

Clyde Butcher, the acclaimed photographer of Florida's remaining wild places, will share insights and answer questions during the third annual [Sarasota Bay Water Festival](#) set for Saturday, Nov. 1, at Ken Thompson Park in Sarasota, organizers have announced.

Butcher will also sell and sign copies of his latest book, a news release says.

"The Sarasota Bay Water Festival celebrates the importance of Sarasota Bay to the region's environment, economy and quality of life," the release points out. It is the region's largest event "focused on the welfare of Sarasota Bay and its impressive recreational amenities," the release adds.

Among other festival highlights will be live music, dragon boat races, a display of submissions from the *I Love Sarasota Bay Photo Contest*, panel discussions, artists and

photographers selling gift items, food trucks and offerings of local restaurants, activities for children, displays of vintage and new boats, and hands-on exhibits promoting recreational boating, fishing, kayaking, paddleboarding and scuba diving, the release points out. A free boat taxi service provided by Freedom Boat Club will operate between Marina Jack in downtown Sarasota and the Sarasota Sailing Squadron at 1717 Ken Thompson Parkway, the release continues.

A new festival event for 2014 will be an after-party at Circus City Architectural Salvage, featuring live music and a fashion show, the release says. "Imagine playful fashions made entirely of plastic," it adds of the show. "The idea is to remind people that discarded plastic items harm birds and marine life. Proceeds from the party will benefit [Save Our Seabirds](#) and [Sea to Shore Alliance](#)," it notes.



Clyde Butcher/Contributed photo

41ST CITIZENS LAW ENFORCEMENT ACADEMY CLASS GRADUATES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office graduated another 22 people from the 41st class of the Citizens Law Enforcement Academy (CLEA) during a ceremony on May 29, the office has announced.

The CLEA, which is held one night a week for 11 weeks, gives residents an inside look at Sheriff's Office operations, a news release points out. The course includes sessions on jail operations, courthouse security, criminal investigations and SWAT and Forensics operations. Demonstrations presented by K9 and

Mounted Patrol units and activities such as firearms training and a ride-along with a deputy on patrol are also part of the course.

The Sheriff's Office has conducted the CLEA twice a year for the past 20 years, with some 800 people having graduated, the release notes. The next class, scheduled for fall, is full, the release adds, but applications are being accepted for the spring 2015 session, which will begin in April. Visit SarasotaSheriff.org and then under the "About" tab, click on "Citizens Academy (CLEA)."



Members of the 41st Citizens Law Enforcement Academy class gather with representatives of the Sheriff's Office. Contributed photo

SARASOTA MEMORIAL PHYSICIAN RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS HONOR

Longtime Sarasota psychiatrist Dr. Parlane Reid was honored with the highest distinction the psychiatric profession bestows — Distinguished Life Fellow status — during the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) annual meeting in New York in May, Sarasota Memorial Hospital has announced.

During his more than 35 years as a practicing psychiatrist, Reid has been recognized locally, regionally and nationally “for his clinical excellence, teaching and administrative leadership,” a news release points out.

On May 5, the APA recognized him “for a lifetime dedicated to improving the lives of people with mental illness through clinical practice, research, community outreach and public policy/advocacy work,” the release adds.

Over the years, Reid has worked with adults, couples, adolescents and families, both in private practice and in hospital and residential treatment settings, the release explains. He has held a number of leadership positions at Sarasota Memorial during the past 20 years, including vice president of medical affairs, chief of staff and medical director of the health system's Bayside Center for Behavioral Health, the release notes. He continues to work with Sarasota Memorial's First Physicians Group, providing psychiatric care



Dr. Parlane Reid/Contributed photo

for patients at Bayside, and as a volunteer for mental health causes, the release says.

Before coming to Sarasota Memorial, he worked in private practice in Venice from 1989-1998 and served as medical director of Venice Hospital Psychiatric Institute for eight years, until June 1997, the release continues.

Reid is a native of the city of Avalon on Catalina Island in California, the release notes.

Take Your Time

You Have All Week

Enjoy The News Leader Anytime - Day or Night

MCCOURTNEY PHOTO EXHIBIT FEATURED IN TERRACE BUILDING

Black-and-white images taken by photographer J.B. McCartney, which chronicle more than seven decades of “Old Florida,” are on display in the Terrace Building, located at 101 S. Washington Blvd. in Sarasota, the county has announced.

A lifelong resident of Sarasota, McCartney “has dedicated more than 30 years to capturing the heritage of Southwest Florida,” a news release explains.

“The 41 photographs in the exhibit showcase some of the people who helped shape

Sarasota County,” the release adds. Among those figures are James Platt, the only licensed alligator trapper in the area; Rita Roehr, the City of Sarasota’s first female commissioner and mayor; Lou Jacobs, circus clown legend; Mack Doss, a Florida rancher; and Syd Solomon, who with his wife, Annie, founded the Sarasota School of Art.


“In an honest look at the people who have created Sarasota’s diversity, the portraits and accompanying narratives are a celebration of the area’s rich culture spanning the 20th



Photographer J.B. McCartney discusses his work during a Sarasota County Historical Resources program on May 28. Photo by Norman Schimmel

century,” said Lorrie Muldowney, manager of Sarasota County historical resources, in the release. “They are likewise a tribute to many of the citizens who have helped make Sarasota County the distinct and notable place that it has become today.”

The permanent exhibit, which can be seen weekdays from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., is made possible by the estate of Barbara Caren McCourtney, the Sarasota County Commission, Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent, Sarasota County Tax Collector Barbara Ford-Coates and Sarasota County Property Appraiser Bill Furst, with assistance from Sarasota County Historical Resources, the release explains.

For more information, call the Sarasota County Contact Center at 941-861-5000 or visit scgov.net. 



Members of the public take their time looking at the photos on display in the Terrace Building. Photo by Norman Schimmel

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



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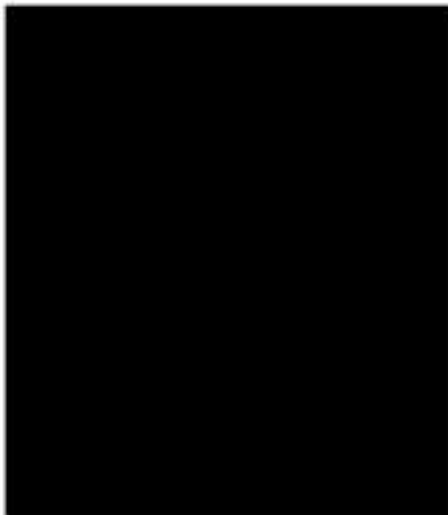
CRIME BLOTTER



Operation Impact II

Total Number Persons Arrested - 77

Total Number Charges Filed - 130



Juvenile

DOB

Arrest_Date 5/23/2014

Charge_1 Larceny: Theft is 300 or More But Les

Charge_2

Charge_3

Criminal History

Felony Charges 1

Felony Convictions 0

Misd Charges 0

Misd Convictions 0

Incarcerations 0



Jesse Lipman

DOB 5/11/1993

2710 53rd St

Sarasota

Arrest_Date 5/23/2014

Charge_1 Contempt/FTA Liquor Possess by Per

Charge_2

Charge_3

Criminal History

Felony Charges 0

Felony Convictions 0

Misd Charges 1

Misd Convictions 0

Incarcerations 0



Mairi Lamson

DOB 11/25/1988

1125 Villagio Ci Apt 201

Sarasota

Arrest_Date 5/23/2014

Charge_1 DUI

Charge_2

Charge_3

Criminal History

Felony Charges 0

Felony Convictions 0

Misd Charges 2

Misd Convictions 1

Incarcerations 0

OPERATION IMPACT FOCUSES ON COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office made 77 arrests during Operation Impact, "a multi-agency effort to prevent crime and enhance community safety through an increased law enforcement presence in north Sarasota County," the office announced this week.

From May 23 to June 1, the agency worked with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE); Florida Highway Patrol; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); and the Florida Department of Corrections Bureau of Probation and Parole "to eliminate the perception that the environment [in that part of the county] is supportive of criminal behavior," a news release explains. "Several similar operations have been conducted since January 2012," it adds.

"Using the Sheriff's Office's Intelligence to Action (I2A) model of intelligence led policing, the operation included a 'place-based' strategy to eliminate street crimes," the release notes, and it included highway interdiction efforts such as DUI and traffic enforcement.

"The operation also addressed crime and noise complaints by residents and business owners and reinforced community partnerships built through ongoing initiatives," the release says.

In all, 77 people were arrested on 130 charges, "and the arrest history of many of the suspects is of great concern," the release points out. The 77 arrestees have a combined 569 prior felony charges and 693 prior misdemeanor charges, it says. "Only 14 of those suspects have ever been to prison," the release continues. "Eight arrestees are prolific offenders," it adds.

Personnel also conducted 60 probation checks and issued 68 criminal traffic citations and 948 civil traffic citations, the release notes.

"We are committed to improving the quality of life that residents of north Sarasota County expect and will continue with this crime prevention strategy to eliminate anything that makes the area appear to be fertile for crime," said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release.

UNDERCOVER STREET REVERSE OPERATION RESULTS IN 10 ARRESTS

On Friday, May 30, the Sarasota Police Department Narcotics Unit, with the assistance of the Street Crimes, Criminal Investigations and Patrol units, arrested 10 people while conducting Undercover Street Reverse Operation in Fredd Atkins Park in north Sarasota, the department has announced.

The park is located at 2581 N. Washington Court.

During the sting, a news release explains, undercover police officers posed as drug dealers and sold substances to "individuals looking to purchase illegal narcotics in

the park," the release says. The buyers were arrested immediately, it points out.

Another person, Charles C. Claridy, 39, a transient, was arrested "as officers observed him selling marijuana" in another section of the park, the release continues.

Three more suspects were transients, according to the reports, and a fifth person's address was listed as unknown. One 27-year-old man resides in Bradenton.

A 28-year-old transient woman, Kimberly A. Collins, who was charged with Purchase of

Cocaine and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia, also was being sought by Hillsborough County law enforcement authorities on a warrant for Felony Prostitution, the report says.

Like Collins, 65-year-old transient Earnest Newsome was arrested on charges of Purchase of Cocaine and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia, according to the report.

Six of the cases involved purchases of marijuana. Along with Newsome and Collins, Harry Moore, 54, of 2727 Washington

Court, Sarasota, was arrested for Purchase of Cocaine.

“This is an ongoing effort by the Sarasota Police Department to target both the sellers and the buyers of illegal narcotics within the City of Sarasota to create a safer atmosphere for our citizens,” said Lt. Pat Ledwith of the Criminal Investigations Division in the news release. “This operation is in response to complaints from city residents,” he added.

Charles Johnson B/M (09/23/86) 3004 25th St. W. Bradenton, FL

Purchase of Marijuana

FTA (Possession of Marijuana less than 20 Grams)



Danny Limongelli W/M (05/08/66) 1320 Blvd. Of the Arts #403, Sarasota

Purchase of Marijuana



Harry Moore B/M (05/01/60) 2727 Washington Court, Sarasota

Purchase of Cocaine



Edward P. Doherty W/M (09/17/58) 1320 Blvd. of the Arts #516, Sarasota

Purchase of Marijuana



Details are provided for four of the suspects the Sarasota Police Department arrested during Undercover Street Reverse Operation. Image courtesy Sarasota Police Department

SARASOTA PAWN SHOP FIRST TO BE SHUT DOWN BY STATE OFFICIALS

Jim Smith, owner of Jim's Pawn at 6526 B, S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, has officially surrendered his license for the shop, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office reported on June 2.

According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, an incident in mid-May involving the shop was the first time the Agriculture Department shut down such a business and revoked the owner's license, a news release explains.

On May 14, the Sheriff's Office announced the state action, noting that Smith was the central figure in Operation Recommit, "an investigation that resulted in the arrest of six members of an organized crime ring." The release added, "Smith knowingly bought



James Smith/Contributed photo



Lt. John Jernigan (pictured) and Detective Anthony Colonna of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office and William Daniels, senior financial investigator with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, discussed the Jim's Pawn case in May. [Video](#) courtesy of the Sheriff's Office

stolen property through his pawn shop and directed crime ring members to bring products to him by giving them itemized lists.”

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

On June 2, a Sheriff’s Office news release noted that Agriculture Department officials typically try to work with owners to bring businesses into compliance, but “in this

case shutting down was necessary,” according to the Agriculture Department, because of the egregious nature of the activities uncovered by the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office investigation.

In May, the Sheriff’s Office reported that Smith will not be eligible for further licensure for five years. He was charged with two felony counts of Organized Dealing in Stolen Property and one misdemeanor count of Pawn Broking Violation. If convicted of a felony, he would face three years in prison, and he would be ineligible for a state license for 10 years, the release added.

MAN CHARGED AFTER EXPOSING HIMSELF NEAR DOWNTOWN SARASOTA

David Wade Hall, 41, a transient, has been charged with a felony count of Obstruction with Violence and a misdemeanor count of Exposure of Sexual Organs after exposing himself near the area of Osprey Avenue and Main Street in Sarasota on May 30, the Sarasota Police Department has reported.

About 5 p.m. on May 30, an officer was dispatched to the area of Osprey Avenue and Main Street in response to a report about a man allegedly exposing his genitals, according to the report.

The officer located Hall on the east side of the structure at 1777 Main St., sitting on a wall and facing an office of Michael Saunders and Co., the report adds. When the officer walked up to Hall, the report continues, the officer noticed Hall “had notably bulky pockets.” To help ensure the man had no weapons on him, the report adds, the officer asked Hall to stand up. At that point, Hall took off his jacket and then lifted up his T-shirt, exposing his genitals to the officer, according to the report.

When the officer grabbed Hall’s left arm to try to handcuff him and “yelled at him to stand



David Hall/Contributed photo

up,” the report says, Hall “swung around and took a fighting stance” in front of the officer.

It ultimately required two police officers to take Hall into custody, the report notes. After the second officer arrived, the initial one on the scene “hit [Hall] twice with a closed fist” aimed at his right shoulder, so the pair could get Hall’s right arm behind him, the report says.

Hall was transported to the Sarasota County Jail and ordered held on a \$2,000 bond.

WOMAN CHARGED WITH TRAFFICKING IN OXYCODONE

The Sarasota Police Department has charged a 36-year-old Sarasota woman with trafficking in Oxycodone and illegal possession of prescription drugs, the department has reported.

On Wednesday, May 28, members of the Sarasota Police Department Narcotics Unit, with the assistance of the Intelligence Unit, “conducted an undercover operation to purchase prescription pills from a known target in the 3500 block of South Tamiami Trail in Sarasota,” a news release explains. An undercover detective allegedly purchased 50 Oxycodone pills in exchange for \$1,400 in U.S. currency, the release adds. The target of the investigation, Tera R. Rose of 1701 Livingston St., Sarasota, was arrested following the transaction, the release says.

Detectives seized 7.9 grams of Oxycodone and 1 gram of Xanax, the release continues.

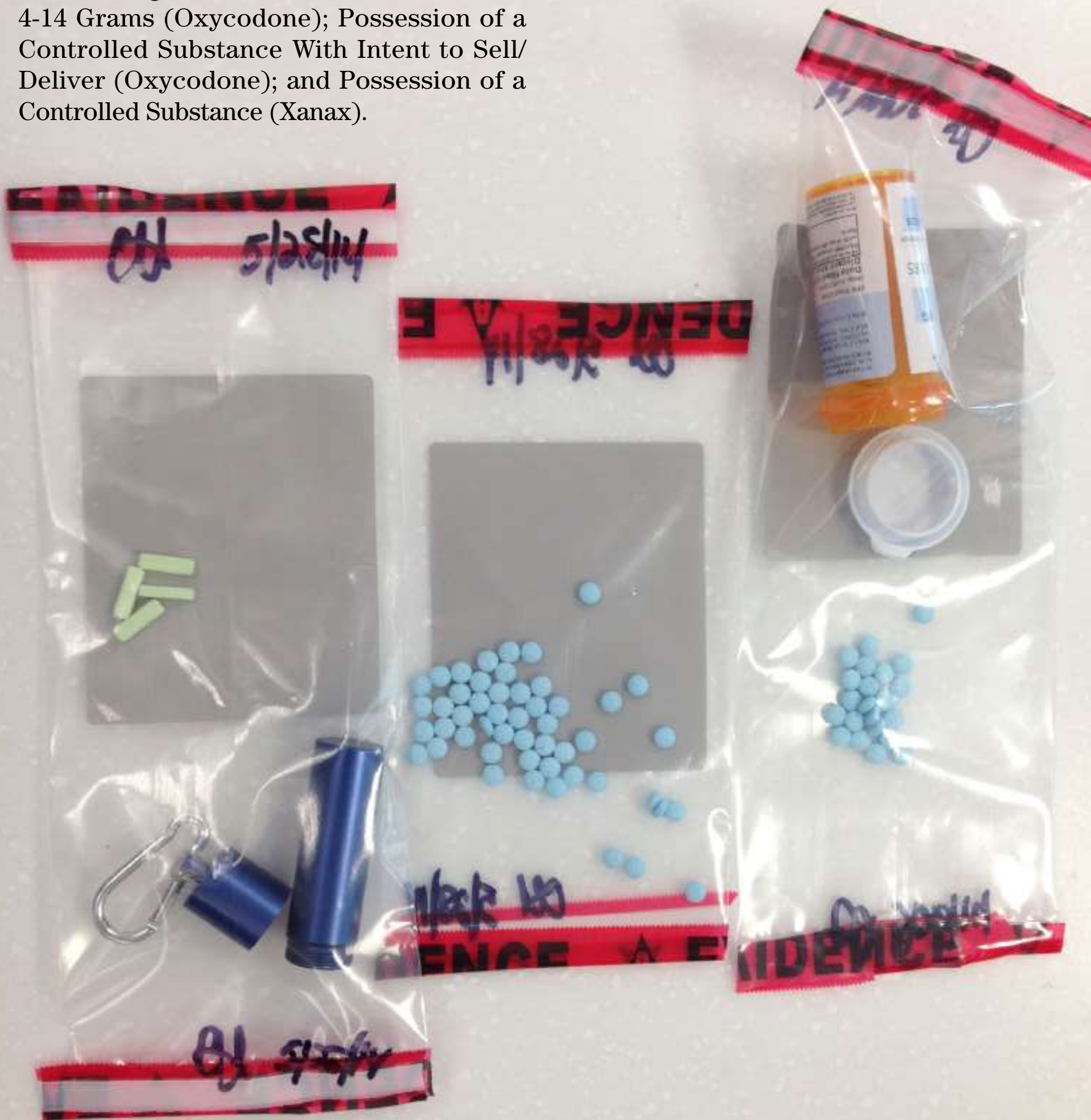


Tera Rose/Contributed photo



Detectives recovered \$1,400 in cash from the suspect in an undercover prescription medication transaction, the Sarasota Police Department reported. Photo courtesy Police Department

Rose was charged with one count of Trafficking in a Controlled Substance 4-14 Grams (Oxycodone); Possession of a Controlled Substance With Intent to Sell/Deliver (Oxycodone); and Possession of a Controlled Substance (Xanax).



A Sarasota Police Department officer allegedly bought Oxycodone and Xanax from a woman on South Tamiami Trail on May 28, the office reported. Photo courtesy Sarasota Police Department

MAN SOUGHT IN CONNECTION WITH NORTH PORT STABBING

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is seeking help in locating a suspect who allegedly was involved in an aggravated battery incident at a residence in the 12000 block of Rosaro Avenue in North Port, the office has announced.

About midnight on June 1, the office received a report of a verbal altercation in the driveway of a residence on that block, a news release says. After the argument escalated, the release adds, the suspect reportedly used a small knife to stab the victim in the abdomen. "The suspect then fled behind the house," the release says.

The victim, a 43-year-old man, was transported to the North Port Emergency Room with non-life threatening injuries, the release points out.

The North Port Police Department K-9 unit assisted a Sheriff's Office K-9 unit and personnel in the Sheriff's Office helicopter in trying to track the suspect, the release continues, but they were unable to find the man.

The suspect was described as a 28-year-old Hispanic male who was wearing a purple jersey and blue jeans at the time of the incident, the release says. He is reported to be 5 feet 11 inches tall and weighs about 165 pounds.

Officers "had a difficult time gathering information" at the scene because of "a language barrier," the release notes.

Anyone with information is encouraged to call the Sheriff's Office at 316-1200, leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 366-TIPS (8477) or going online at crimestoppers.com.



An aerial map shows Rosaro Avenue in North Port. Image from Google Maps

STORE CLERK ARRESTED FOR ALLEGED SALE OF SYNTHETIC DRUGS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested Tipu H. Ali, 27, of 1050 Capri Isles Blvd., Apartment P303, Venice, on charges of Sale of a Controlled Substance, Possession with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance (Synthetic Cannabinoids) and Violation of a County Ordinance, the office has announced.


On May 28, detectives with the Special Investigations Section executed a search warrant at Beneva Tobacco & Beer, located at 1295 Beneva Road in Sarasota, and arrested Ali for allegedly selling "OMG," a synthetic cannabinoid, to an undercover detective on May 16, the report says. "This sale was made after Ali had signed an official notice advising him that it was illegal to sell these substances," a news release notes.

Detectives executing the search warrant discovered additional suspect synthetic cannabinoid in a box in the rear storage room and in an open safe under the cash register, the release continues. Detectives also seized more than \$18,000 in U.S. currency from the business and from Ali, the release adds. The investigation is ongoing.



Tipu Ali/Contributed photo

This is the second arrest for the sale of synthetic drugs at a local business in just over a month, the release points out.

"We are committed to the ongoing eradication of these harmful substances from our community" said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. 



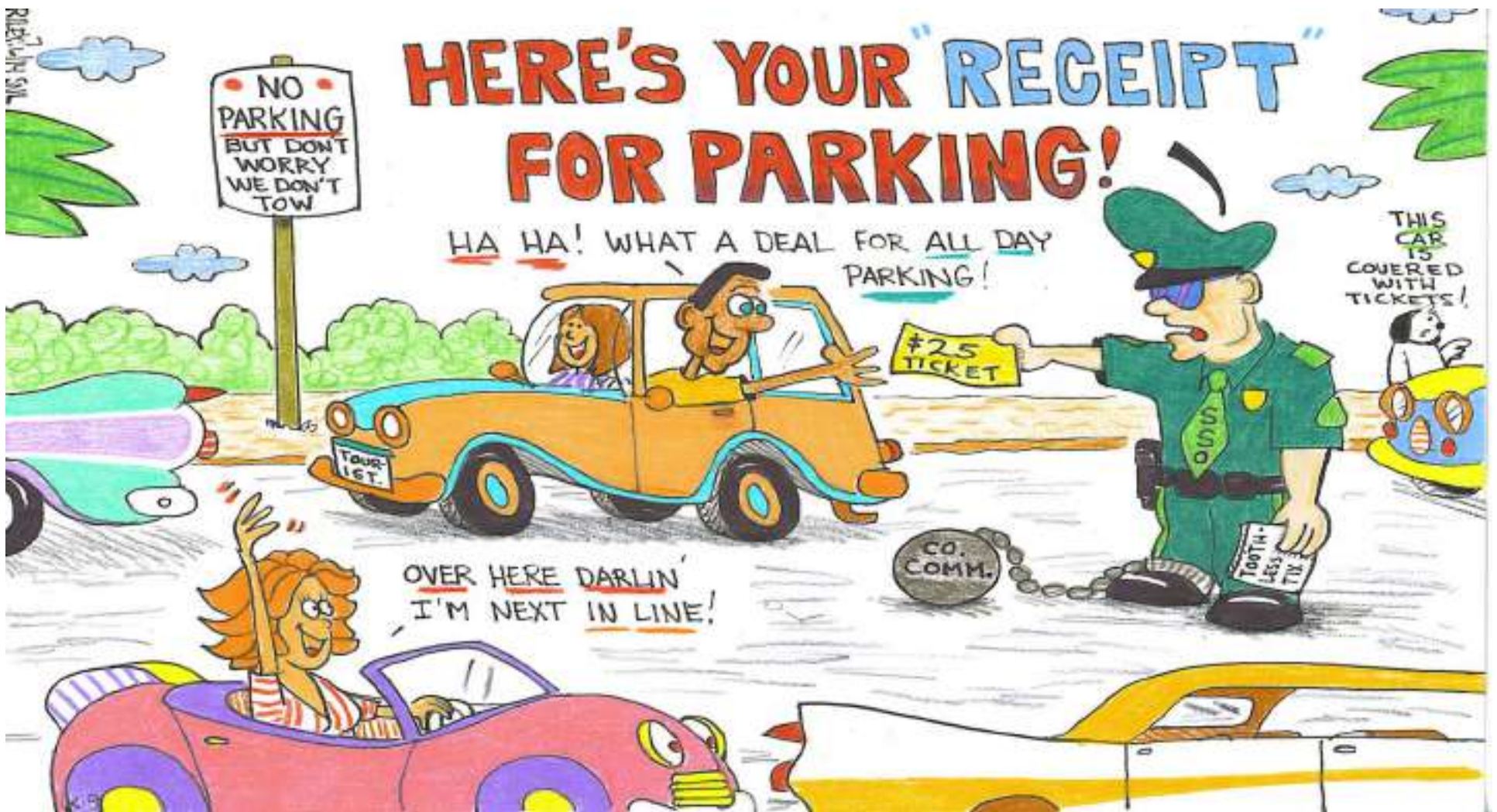
Simply put, Crime Stoppers relies upon the cooperation between the police the media and the community to provide a flow of information about crime and criminals.

Call: (941) 366-TIPS (8477)

Click: SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com

Text: Text "TIP109" plus your message to CRIMES (274637)

OPINION



SIESTA KEY PARKING WOES NEED A STRONGER SOLUTION

EDITORIAL

Last fall, long-time Siesta Key resident Marlene Merkle was elated. After almost a year of pleading, first with the Sarasota County Traffic Advisory Council and then with the County Commission, the commissioners finally voted on Oct. 23 to ban parking on either side of Avenida de Mayo from Canal Road to Avenida de Cortez. But her elation was short-lived.

First, the commissioners voted to allow parking on the remainder of Avenida de Mayo, from Avenida de Cortez to Avenida del Norte, in alternating 500-foot swaths. That was clearly a mistake, since those same commissioners had been informed by Fire Chief Mike Tobias that emergency vehicles needed at least 20 feet of clear roadway for safe ingress

and egress. Yet, the entire length of Avenida de Mayo is barely more than 20 feet, so any parking along that road would reduce the navigable width to dangerous levels.

Worse, despite the pleas of officers of the Siesta Key Association that any parking ban be backed up by the threat of towing, the commissioners eschewed this option.

Recalling complaints the County Commission had encountered over the towing of vehicles several years earlier — but ignoring the fact that the Legislature subsequently had resolved almost all of those concerns — Commissioner Nora Patterson gravely intoned, “I don’t want [towing] to happen on Siesta Key unless our backs are to the wall.” Past problems with towing had hurt tourism, she maintained.

OPINION

We are not sure what would put Patterson's back "to the wall," but we believe a heart attack patient dying because EMTs could not reach him or having residents perish in a house fire because the blocked street prevented fire trucks from getting to the conflagration are the sorts of risks that should have made the commissioners feel their backs already were "to the wall."

The commission was confronted with a well-vetted problem. It had been discussed for many months, the county's fire chief had weighed in that continued parking created a public safety hazard, residents and Siesta Key organizations had voiced their opinions in support of eliminating the hazard ... and yet the board still dealt with it in a slapdash manner.

Perhaps even worse than refusing to allow towing as an enforcement tool for the parking ban, the commissioners allow a laughably small fine for parking infractions — only \$25.

And, as should have been expected back in October, the influx of tourists during season translated into no reduction in illegal parking along the length of Avenida de Mayo. No one really could blame the tourists. Parking along Avenida de Mayo puts one very close to the center of Siesta Key Village, where

available parking spaces during high-traffic periods are almost a myth. Scoring a close-in spot for only \$25 must have seemed like a bargain to most visitors to the island, certainly as evidenced by the almost nonstop illegal use of the "no parking" zone for months after the commissioners established it.

Pity the poor deputies of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, who were given the pointless task of writing tickets that were received almost with relief by parking scoff-laws. It seems a rather inappropriate use of the capabilities of a trained law enforcement professional to second him as a parking lot attendant.

So, after months of complaints and investigation by county officials, the County Commission dropped the ball and did virtually nothing to ameliorate the problem of illegal parking on Avenida de Mayo. The public safety hazard still exists. Residents are still frustrated by blocked driveways and wall-to-wall vehicles along the right of way of the street. Where do we go from here?

The commission was confronted with a well-vetted problem. It had been discussed for many months, the county's fire chief had weighed in that continued parking created a public safety hazard, residents and Siesta Key organizations had voiced their opinions in support of eliminating the hazard ... and yet the board still dealt with it in a slapdash manner.

First, the fines imposed for illegal parking need to be increased significantly and tiered. The first infraction should carry a \$50 fine, the second should carry a \$100 fine and the third infraction should carry a \$150 fine, plus the car should be towed. According to

OPINION

state law, that towing fee is capped at \$125, making the total cost for a third offense \$275.


Moreover, when a deputy writing a ticket determines the vehicle already has an outstanding ticket that has not been paid, the car should be towed immediately. If the culprit can slink back to Michigan or Ohio (or wherever) without paying all of those accumulated parking fines, he or she might think an additional bargain had been scored.

Patterson's sympathy for the poor tourists who might have their cars towed for illegal parking is misplaced. Her responsibility is to the residents of Sarasota County in general and Siesta Key in particular. And allowing the perpetuation of a public safety nightmare is not how one looks after one's constituents.

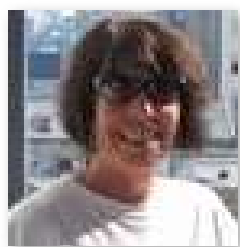
She needs to take the lead on the County Commission to insist that the fines for illegal

parking anywhere on Siesta Key — not just on Avenida de Mayo — be significantly increased on a tiered basis. In addition, those considering parking illegally need to be alerted to the fact that towing will be enforced to secure compliance.

Her fear that towing parking scofflaws might discourage tourism — “If you park on a street and get towed away, you're probably never coming back,” she naïvely predicted in October — is unfounded. It also begs the question: Why do we want lawbreakers coming to our county in the first place?

The County Commission's haphazard efforts to correct the illegal parking problems on Avenida de Mayo have failed. It is time the board members did their jobs and resolved this matter once and for all. 

WHERE DID GOOD MANNERS GO?



By Harriet Cuthbert
Contributing Writer

COMMENTARY

Where did our good manners go? When did we decide to forgo responding to invitations? Where did this “divine right” originate? I am sure it is not from the royals; they have impeccable manners.

When you think about it, the act of being invited to someone's event is a high form of flattery. It means the host wants you to be at his/her gathering to help contribute to its success.

In many cases, a good bit of expense is involved on the part of the person issuing an invitation. The host has counted on you to be there (or at least reply, indicating your plans). Hosts spend money on food, drinks, servers, etc., guessing that you will come if they do not hear otherwise.

It should not be their job to chase you down to get a response.

OPINION

I have a friend who recently hosted a huge reception for his daughter's marriage. He told me there were a few people who never responded to the invitation, costing my friend extra money and definitely extra stress.

Let us move on to gifts, as in those for weddings, confirmations, birthdays, etc. People no longer feel obligated to thank the giver for his/her generosity. Why has it become OK to just take the gift and use it, spend it or wear it without acknowledging the giver? I get very upset when I do not get a thank-you note, and I refuse to rationalize the other person's bad

manners, saying to myself, "Oh, they're too busy. It's not that important." Yes ... it is.

Having good manners — knowing the right thing to do — is not a generational characteristic. And it is not a regional one, either. In addition, it generally does not cost anything to learn how to behave correctly. We usually get lessons in manners from our parents.

It is just a matter of taking a little extra time to let your friends know how much you appreciate them, as they have shown their feelings for you.

Thank you very much for listening. 



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

06
JUNE

Everything You've Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism

June 6, 10 to 11:30 a.m. Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road, Sarasota. Free. Ryan T. Cragun, a sociologist, will discuss his research, hosted by the UUCS Freethinkers. More information: David Ryan at 365-4027 or d2mryan@verizon.net or visit uusarasota.org.

06
JUNE

Hermitage Artist Retreat presents open studio photography show and beach reading

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 [Sophie Lvoff](#) and beach readings by [Trenton Doyle Hancock](#) and [Josh Barkan](#) planned. Visitors welcome to bring beach chairs and refreshments and to stay for sunset. More information: 475-2098 or HermitageArtistRetreat.org.

06+
JUNE

2014 Modern Pentathlon World Cup Championship

June 6-8; times vary. [Sarasota Polo Club](#) at Lakewood Ranch. Tickets: \$12 for adults; \$5 for children, students, seniors and veterans; \$35 for a three-day pass. Information: [Sarasota-Bradenton Pentathlon](#).

06+
JUNE

Asolo Repertory Theatre presents *I Loved, I Lost, I Made Spaghetti*

Through June 15; times vary. Cook Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$25 and up. Information: 351-8000 or AsoloRep.org.

06+
JUNE

Unconventional Inventions, Vanishing, Black Box Projects: Summation and Perspectives

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 www.artsarasota.org.

06+
JUNE

Florida Studio Theatre presents *Pump Boys and Dinettes*

Through June 29; times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$34 to \$44. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org.

06+
JUNE

Allyn Gallup Gallery presents *A Few Great, Big Pictures*

Through July 28; times vary. 1288 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Information: 366-2454 or AllynGallup.com.

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

06+ JUNE	UUCS Presents <i>Jane Shannon: Works in Fabric</i> Through Sept. 4; times vary. Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, Lexow Wing Gallery. 3975 Fruitville Road, Sarasota. Free. Information: 371-4974 or the church website .
06+ JUNE	Dabbert Gallery presents <i>Summer Showcase</i> Through Sept. 29; times vary. 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Featuring works by three sculptors, one printmaker, 15 painters, one pastel artist and one photographer. Information: 955-1315 or dabbertgallery.com .
07 JUNE	Faith Lutheran Church presents the U.S. Army Brass Quintet 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 faithsarasota.com .
07+ JUNE	Baritones Unbound: Celebrating the Uncommon Voice of the Common Man June 7-29; times vary. Asolo Repertory Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$20 and up. Information: 351-8000 or AsoloRep.org .
07+ JUNE	FST Improv: <i>Out of Bounds Match Up</i> June 7 through Aug. 23, 7:30 p.m. Browne's Lab Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$15. Information: 366-9000 or www.FloridaStudioTheatre.org .
10+ JUNE	<i>Black Is the Color of My Voice</i> June 10-22; times vary. Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$21.50. Information: 366-1505 or wbttstrq.org .
10+ JUNE	Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>At the Hop</i> June 10 through July 6; times vary. Court Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$32 to \$36. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org .
12+ JUNE	Players Theatre presents <i>The Dixie Swim Club</i> June 12-22; times vary. 838 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$18. Information: 365-2494 or ThePlayers.org .
16+ JUNE	Venice Theatre presents aactWorldFest June 16-21; times vary. 140 W. Tampa Ave., Venice. Tickets for shows: \$20 and up. Event features workshops, plays and social events. More information: 488-1115 or venicestage.com/international .
26+ JUNE	Banyan Theater Company presents <i>The Price</i> by Arthur Miller June 26 through July 13; times vary. Jane B. Cook Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$28.50 for a single performance; \$52 for two of Banyan's summer season plays; and \$70 for three shows. <i>The Style of the Blind Pig</i> by Phillip Hayes Dean to follow in July and <i>Collected Stories</i> by Donald Margulies in August. Information: banyantheatercompany.com .

FAREWELL TO THE CHIEF



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.

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

WE CARE.

DEEPLY. WITH RESPECT. WITHOUT JUDGMENT.

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

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