

THE SARASOTA

Vol. 2, No. 41 — June 27, 2014

News Leader

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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

News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com



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Welcome

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Due to a production error, an article appearing in our June 6 issue was incorrectly attributed to David Staats instead of Cooper Levey-Baker, our associate editor and actual author of the article. Mr. Staats was a voluntary contributor to our publication during our first year, but we no longer have any association with him. Under no circumstances did we intend for any of our readers to believe that any of our articles in that issue were authored by David Staats. We regret the error.

From birds to budgets, Warm Mineral Springs to downtown Sarasota, this week has seen its share of disappointing news.

I mention this occasionally, but I especially commend to you articles our staff has put together this week about topics covered in other publications. For example, Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker has done a masterful job of explaining what happened in regard to Warm Mineral Springs, with up-to-date details. For another example, County Editor Roger Drouin has no peer in covering the homeless shelter saga. And City Editor Stan Zimmerman has a gift for analysis.

For every human who recognizes we share this Earth with many other precious creatures, news from Siesta Key over recent days was tragic. As we “went to press,” Sarasota Audubon volunteers and law enforcement officers were working to find the perpetrator(s) of terrible destruction in a beach nesting area.

On a happier note, new contributor Carolann Cahill offers a delightful look at Mote Marine’s celebration of World Oceans Day.

Finally, while I fail miserably in plugging the work of editorial cartoonist John Riley, I urge you to check out his latest offering. To say he is gifted is a vast understatement.

Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor and Publisher





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VANDALS STRIKE NESTING AREA



Newly hatched Least Tern chicks enjoy a meal delivered by their parents. Contributed photo by Catherine Luckner

AMID A RECORD-BREAKING SEASON, SARASOTA AUDUBON VOLUNTEERS ARE CONTENDING WITH PEOPLE DAMAGING POSTED ZONES AND DESTROYING EGGS

The mood of cautious elation earlier this month shifted into heart-wrenching agony on June 20 and again this week for Sarasota Audubon volunteers. They saw what they had called an extraordinarily successful nesting season so far on Siesta Key devolve into scenes of vandalism and broken eggs.

“We have a pretty amazing thing going on,” Siesta Key Association (SKA) Vice President Catherine Luckner told the approximately 30 people present at that organization’s June 5 meeting. She was referring to the

dozens of endangered Snowy Plovers and Least Terns, joined by Black Skimmers, nesting in the vicinity of Beach Accesses 4 and 5.

Altogether on the beach this season, she continued, Sarasota Audubon volunteers had counted eight Snowy Plover nests, with one chick hatched already, and 31 eggs that could mean more “cotton balls on toothpicks” by the

middle of the month. The description of the baby birds was offered by Luckner’s husband, Bob, who coordinates the work of the volunteers on Siesta Key. Additionally,

“ *This is going to be the most exceptional breeding season Siesta Key has known [perhaps in centuries].* ”

Allan Worms
Sarasota Audubon Volunteer
Siesta Key

Catherine Luckner reported, 75 Black Skimmer nests were counted on the beach the previous week, and 42 Least Tern nests had been sighted, with three hatchlings so far.

Just 15 days later, the news turned tragic, as Audubon volunteer Allan Worms notified his colleagues that someone apparently had driven a motorcycle through the area near Accesses 4 and 5, which was marked off by tape and posted with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) signs to alert the public about the nests. Sarasota Audubon representatives believe now that an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) was the culprit.

A second incident occurred on the night of June 23, Bob Luckner reported the following morning. Sgt. Scott Osborne of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office told *The Sarasota News Leader* that it appeared a golf cart had been used this time, though he was inclined to believe a motorcycle was the culprit last week. When he spoke with the *News Leader* on June 24, he was getting ready to head to the scene to meet Lt. Rob Gerkin, an FWC officer, to survey the damage.

A news release issued by Sarasota Audubon later that day said law enforcement officers were checking closed circuit video from nearby condominium complexes with the hope of identifying the vandals.

Anyone with information about the incidents is asked to call the Sarasota County Sheriff's office at 316-1201 or the FWC hotline at 888-404-FWCC (3922).

Both the Snowy Plovers and Least Terns are protected by state and federal law because the species are endangered, Bob Luckner pointed out in the news release. Audubon



Siesta Key's first Snowy Plover chick of this season fledged on June 13, ready to fly away on its own. Contributed photo by Catherine Luckner



A Least Tern adult shepherds two chicks on the beach. Photo courtesy Sarasota Audubon



Least Terns, Snowy Plovers and Black Skimmers scrape out a small indentation and lay their eggs directly on the sand, which makes the eggs vulnerable to passersby. Photo courtesy Sarasota Audubon

volunteers are working on new security measures, he indicated.

Allan Worms, a wildlife biologist, wrote that at 6:15 a.m. on June 20, a Sarasota Audubon volunteer spotted tire tracks indicating the two-wheeled vehicle had entered the posted nesting zone on the south side and exited it on the north side. All of the signs and stakes on the south side had been taken down and carried back into the section of the beach where the Least Terns were nesting, Worms continued.

In retrieving the signs and stakes, Worms wrote, the volunteer “also noticed numerous [Least Tern] eggs were destroyed” and that perhaps 30 fewer Least Terns remained inside the nesting area.



Tire tracks and paw prints both were discovered in the vandalized beach nesting area near Accesses 4 and 5 on Siesta Key. It is illegal, under county law, to take a dog onto the beach. Photo courtesy Sarasota Audubon



A wide variety of birds has been observed over the past months at a 'watering hole' near Beach Accesses 4 and 5 on Siesta Public Beach. File photo

In a June 23 interview with the *News Leader*, Worms said Sarasota Audubon volunteers encountered more problems over the weekend, especially Saturday night. They worked to keep people who seemed inebriated from literally stumbling into the posted area near Accesses 4 and 5, and they asked a number of bicycle riders not to enter the zone.

Worms summed it up succinctly. "There was a lot of stuff going on out there at the beach."

Then early on the morning of June 24, volunteers found evidence of the latest incident. According to an email Bob Luckner sent the *News Leader*, the posted area suffered extensive damage, with more nests disrupted. At least 13 of the 46 Least Tern eggs were destroyed, Luckner reported in the news release.

After the first incident, Worms told the *News Leader*, many nesting Least Terns relocated west of the posted area, so volunteers have put up more tape and signs to keep people from walking into that section of the beach. However, he added, some residents of The Terrace condominium complex, which is landward of the new site, are not happy about the situation.

Because Least Terns are very protective of their chicks and nests, he pointed out, they will not hesitate to peck at anyone who approaches them too closely. He has tried to tell people to make a wide berth of the nesting area "if you're not wearing a helmet," he added with a chuckle. "They've had an attitude ever since that incident [last week]," he said of the Least Terns.



Black Skimmers were abundant in the Access 4 area until a person apparently drove a motorcycle through the buffered area, Audubon volunteers report. Contributed photo by Catherine Luckner

While many of those birds did relocate, Worms told the *News Leader*, the Black Skimmers that were nesting in the posted zone simply have left.

APPARENT SURVIVORS FOR NOW

Fortunately, the Snowy Plover that Catherine Luckner mentioned during the SKA meeting fledged on June 13 and “is going wherever he wants to go,” Worms reported. Additionally, an undetermined number of Least Tern hatchlings were still making themselves at home on the beach as of June 23.

In his June 20 email to his Sarasota Audubon colleagues, Worms said he had spotted another Snowy Plover hatchling on a mud bar southwest of Access 4 that morning, near the “senior” chick, along with a third chick “preening nearby.” He continued, “A few minutes later, a lady approached and showed me a group of Least Terns with 3 chicks and 2 snowy plovers with 1 chick — all in an open area straight out about 40 yards from the Terrace condo.”

As of June 23, Worms told the *News Leader*, two more Snowy Plovers remained on nests in the posted area near Accesses 4 and 5. Luckner confirmed in the news release that those hens were still present after the second incident of vandalism.

Yet another nesting hen has been under observation on a piece of beach property owned by the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast in a different part of the beach, Worms said. This is her second attempt to produce chicks, he noted.



Wood Storks recently dropped by the watering hole on Siesta Public Beach. Contributed photo by Catherine Luckner

OTHER CHALLENGES

Sarasota Audubon volunteers also remain on alert for people illegally walking their dogs on the beach, Worms pointed out in his June 20 email. “Be friendly [and] try to educate [the owners], but if a dog is off leash and the dog walker does not immediately leash the dog (or cat) and remove it from the beach,” he added, volunteers should call the non-emergency number for the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office, 316-1201, and give the dispatcher “explicit information, including the direction the dog/walker is moving and where it will most [likely] be caught by an officer.”

More challenges will come with the July Fourth holiday, Worms said, a point made during the SKA meeting.

Bob Luckner needs help for the holiday, he said during the SKA meeting. The greater the number of people watching out for the nesting birds and chicks, the better the chance of keeping them all from harm. Anyone interested in assisting may send an email to sksnpl@gmail.com.


When an audience member asked what the Audubon group has in mind to protect the birds from the crowds expected for July Fourth, Catherine Luckner replied, "We have a plan."

Bob Luckner added that one measure the group has been considering is the erection of a silt net, similar to those used at construction sites, around the main nesting area near Accesses 4 and 5. That type of barrier was used successfully on a St. Petersburg beach last year to protect nesting birds, he pointed out. However, "It was just like corralling cats for a couple of hours," he said, as volunteers tried to maneuver all the chicks and nesting adults into the area surrounded by the net. After the birds were gathered behind the barrier, he said, they were inclined to stay there.

HIGH HOPES

In 2013, Sarasota Audubon volunteers achieved an 80-percent success rate with the number of endangered Snowy Plovers that reached the fledgling stage after hatching. The total, however, was just four birds.

If the volunteers can keep the remaining nesting birds of all species safe this season, Worms told the *News Leader*, "This is going to be the most exceptional breeding season Siesta Key has known [perhaps in centuries]."

Catherine Luckner has attributed the accretion of sand on the northern end of the public beach as the primary reason so many birds have made themselves at home on Siesta Key. "It's a huge big beach that didn't used to be there," she explained at the SKA meeting. 



NO SKA MEETING IN JULY
The Siesta Key Association
wishes everyone a Safe and
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'A PARTNERSHIP THAT'S DEFECTIVE'



Visitors and residents alike rave about the healing waters of Warm Mineral Springs. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

WITH NO COUNTY-CITY COMPROMISE IN SIGHT, WARM MINERAL SPRINGS WILL CLOSE ONCE AGAIN

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Two weeks ago, the Sarasota County and North Port commissions voted unanimously to pick two top finalists in their search for a long-term plan to redevelop Warm Mineral Springs. This week, they couldn't agree on anything, reaching an impasse that will lead to the closure of the springs effective Sept. 1.

Representatives from Jebco Ventures and National and State Park Concessions — the two companies selected as finalists by the county and city — presented the boards

their visions for the 81-acre Springs property on Tuesday, June 24. The choice was stark: While Jebco is proposing long-term development that would include a hotel and maybe even condos, National's plan called for no new construction in the short term and only the replacement of existing structures in the future.

“*We're back to the scenario where we were a year ago. We're just diametrically opposed.*”

Charles Hines
Chairman
Sarasota County Commission

The County Commission unanimously selected Jebco as its favorite, while the North Port board voted 4-1 in favor of National. Only Mayor

James Blucher joined the county board in picking Jebco. County commissioners have long expressed a desire to turn the Springs into an international attraction that would drive economic development in North Port, while North Port commissioners have in recent years pushed for a more park-like environment. The two entities jointly purchased the Springs in 2010 for \$5.5 million.

Despite the differences between the two boards, some commissioners had been optimistic a compromise could be reached. County Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson last week praised the current process for allowing the boards to pick and choose what they liked about the proposals in order to perhaps stitch together a compromise.

But compromise was nowhere to be found Tuesday. Robinson, County Commissioner Nora Patterson and North Port Vice Mayor

Rhonda DiFranco all expressed dislike for the portion of the Jebco plan that called for residential development on the land, suggesting that section could be excised, but the idea found no favor with the other North Port commissioners, who supported National. Robinson also objected to National's lack of a plan to improve the infrastructure at the Springs. (Jebco planned to connect the property to water and sewer lines as part of its work.) But no North Port board member would support tweaking the National plan to require such improvements.

After the stalemate vote, County Commission Chairman Charles Hines summed up the impasse. "We're back to the scenario where we were a year ago. We're just diametrically opposed," he said. "We're in a partnership that's defective."

"We're wasting our time," County Commissioner Joe Barbetta added. "There's



The members of the North Port City Commission are (from left) Vice Mayor Rhonda DiFranco, Mayor James Blucher and Commissioners Linda Yates, Cheryl Cook and Tom Jones. Photo courtesy City of North Port

no political will to do anything but a swimming hole.”

Robinson asked for compromise. “We can’t do it ‘my way or the highway,’” she said, asking the North Port board members for points on which they would be willing to budge. “I’m offering you an olive branch. Please don’t stab me in the eye with it.”

But the discussion died. With that, the Springs will close once the current short-term management deal with National runs out Aug. 31. Because of the way the agreement was structured, it cannot simply be extended or re-upped. The contract must be sent back out to the public for bids, a process that could take months. Ultimately, with no short- or long-term plan in place, no one knows how long the Springs might be shut down.

The day after the joint county-city meeting, the North Port board met to discuss other matters, but the conversation inevitably circled back to Warm Mineral Springs. Commissioner Linda Yates proposed that the city send a letter to the county asking it to agree to begin the solicitation process for another short-term agreement, one that would last a year. That motion passed, with Mayor Blucher

“*The cow is out of the barn. Close the door and move on. You have a fascination for, the next day, after the damage is done, to try to put your finger in the dike. You can’t put your finger in the dike now.*”

Marty Murphy
Candidate
For North Port Commission



*Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta.
File photo*

dissenting. He argued the matter shouldn't have been discussed without its first appearing on an agenda and without allowing the public to weigh in on it. The commission had already agreed to discuss the future of Warm Mineral Springs at its July 14 meeting.

Jack Bobo, the president of National and State Park Concessions, tells *The Sarasota News Leader* his company would be interested in bidding again for the short-term contract, assuming, of course, that the language remains similar to that of the current agreement. "I think it would be a travesty to close it," he says.


When asked about the road forward, Bobo adds, "You've got two separate boards with two separate ideas, and it's going to be tough."

Robinson tells the *News Leader* the county only agreed to the current short-term agreement because the two boards had settled on working out a long-range plan. "That deal is off," she says. "We had an opportunity to keep the springs open and North Port decided they

did not want to compromise and respect their partners and so now the Springs will close."

On Tuesday, a frustrated Barbetta suggested selling the county's interest in the Springs to the city. On Wednesday, Blucher said he's open to selling the property to the county or to a private entity. The only way forward might be the city's upcoming elections, he added.

Marty Murphy, who is campaigning to unseat Yates this November, criticized the North Port Commission Wednesday for approving its letter to the county with no public input, calling the move "outside the rules."

"You motioned and voted on something the public had no opportunity to see or hear," he said. "And you guys had plenty of time yesterday to take care of business. The cow is out of the barn. Close the door and move on. You have a fascination for, the next day, after the damage is done, to try to put your finger in the dike. You can't put your finger in the dike now. It's over. Move on and do what has to come next." 



Warm Mineral Springs will close again on Aug. 31. Photo by Ebyabe via Wikimedia Commons



My Sunday Paper...

...two days early!

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

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

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THE 2015 COUNTY BUDGET

County Government Millage Rates*

Lowest
Rates

1st Quartile
(millage 3.1380 – 4.9849)

2nd Quartile
(millage 4.9850 – 6.4705)

3rd Quartile
(millage 6.4706 – 7.6862)

Highest
Rates

4th Quartile
(millage 7.6863 – 10.0000)

Sarasota
County has
2nd lowest
millage rate
(3.3912)

* Rates are the sum of all countywide millages levied by each county government. Duval County does not levy a countywide millage but does levy a 11.1401 millage (less than countywide). Monroe County has the lowest rate.

A graphic County Administrator Tom Harmer presented to the County Commission shows Sarasota County has the second lowest millage rate in the state. Image courtesy Sarasota County

THE PRELIMINARY PLAN INCLUDES 40 NEW FULL-TIME POSITIONS AND A 3.7 PERCENT INCREASE IN THE COUNTY'S OPERATING BUDGET BUT HOLDS THE TAX RATE STEADY

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

With County Administrator Tom Harmer having dubbed Sarasota County's Fiscal Year 2015 spending plan the "Administrator's Budget," he has closely overseen a process that has included 17 internal budget reviews and four workshops so far with the county commissioners.

After all, it is his first budget since he was named to the top administrative position

following the October 2013 firing of his predecessor. If the commissioners approve the plan as presented, the county will add 40 new full-time employees and increase its operating budget by 3.7 percent. (See the link to Harmer's June 25 presentation.)

The Commissioners credited Harmer with holding the budget fairly stable. Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson praised him

for whittling away a projected 2016 deficit, which was estimated as high as \$25 million in October 2013, and putting the county on a “sustainable path.” The anticipated 2016 deficit has been deleted, partly through trimmed spending and shifts of excess revenue from other accounts.

“Everyone knows I am the nervous Nellie on the budget, and I just want to tell you and all the staff, thank you,” Robinson said.

The preliminary budget includes merit pay increases for some non-union staff, a proposal that [proved more controversial last year](#).

“We’ve scrutinized the budget as much as we could,” Harmer told the commissioners. “We

feel we are presenting a good plan for fiscal year 2015.”

The County Commission will continue to discuss the spending plan before it approves the final document in September. The board has upcoming workshops on June 27, June 30, July 1 and Aug. 20.

The \$1.09 billion preliminary Fiscal Year 2015 budget presented this week keeps the millage

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Read the full June 25 presentation.



Estimated taxable values in Sarasota County have increased for the second straight year. Property values are going up as home sales are steadily rising and retirees are once again moving to the region. Photo by Roger Drouin

rate at 3.39 percent. However, many property owners will see higher tax bills because of increased property values countywide.

“We submit our tax roll to the state of Florida tomorrow,” Sarasota County Property Appraiser Bill Furst told the commissioners on June 25, “and we are submitting it at \$87 million higher in the county.”

That works out to an estimated 6.5-percent increase in Sarasota County’s taxable values, compared to a 4.22-percent uptick last year. This marks the second straight year of

increases after the values were hit hard by the recession.

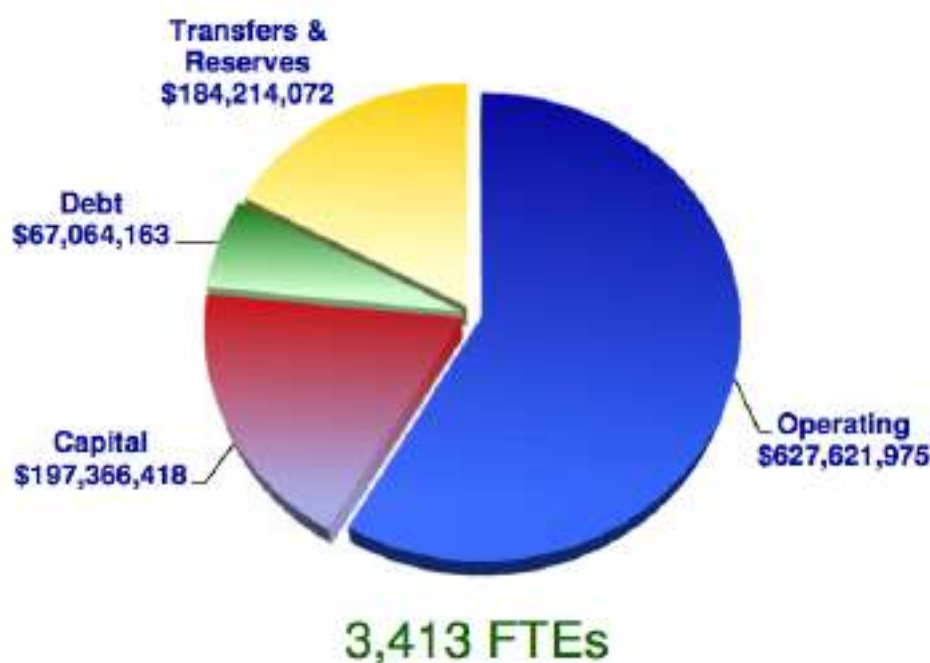
The county’s general revenues, which include property tax payments, utility fees and other fees, are estimated to grow 4.4 percent to \$371 million in the next fiscal year, which will begin Oct. 1.

Although Harmer voiced optimism about the budget plan for 2015, he did caution the board that future infrastructure needs, such as bridge maintenance and road repaving, are going to be a concern in the near future.



Total Budget Comparison

FY14 Adopted Budget
\$1,076,266,628



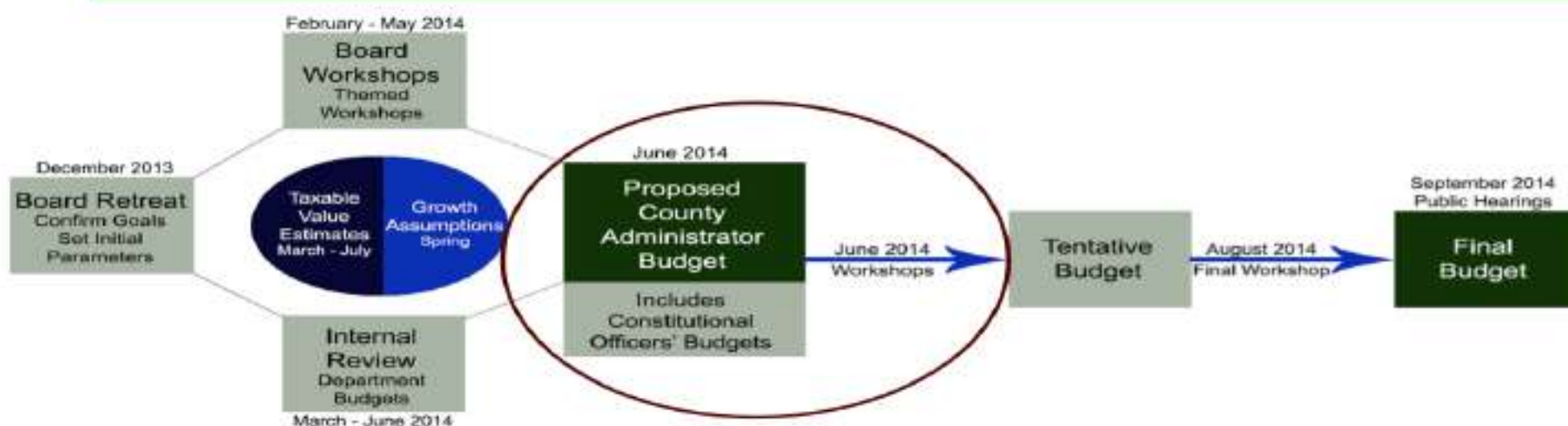
FY15 Preliminary Budget
\$1,088,258,859



1.1% increase in total budget
1.2% increase in FTEs

Most recent CPI increase (May '13 to May '14) = 2.1%

Preparing the FY15 Budget



New/Changed Processes:

- Additional workshop dates
- Themed workshops
- All major funds reviewed with Board
- Pre-June discussion on revenues, fund reserve policies, debt and capital
- 2-year operating review by departments (5-year plan with focus on 1st two years)
- Internal review team
- County Administrator budget reviewed in June workshops (supported by department presentations)

10

The County Commission will approve the final budget in September. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Employees (Full-Time Equivalents / FTEs)

	FY14	FY15	Change from FY14	
BCC FTEs	2,165	2,214	49	2%
Elected FTEs	1,248	1,239	(9)	-1%
TOTAL	3,413	3,453	40	1%

	FY07	FY15	Change from FY07	
BCC FTEs	2,468	2,214	(254)	-10%
Elected FTEs	1,301	1,239	(62)	-5%
TOTAL	3,769	3,453	(316)	-8%

Commissioners, county attorney & county administration included in BCC numbers

19

A chart compares numbers of full-time equivalent employees for general county government and for the staffs of the elected constitutional officers, such as the sheriff. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Another challenge will be retaining employees as the economy recovers.


A RELIEVED COMMISSION

Chairman Charles Hines said, “Nickels and dimes do matter.” He cited annual savings of \$100,000 from a planned debt restructuring as one example of how Harmer has trimmed expenses.

Commissioner Nora Patterson also praised Harmer for “good budget work to vastly improve our budget situation.” But Patterson noted that some economic uncertainty funds were used to balance the budget and delete the projected deficit for FY 2015. Before the recession hit, the county put away millions of dollars during the “boom years” as a cushion against a downturn.

“I am hopeful that our outgoing expenses and income will really equal each other out, and only at that point will our reserves be safe,” Patterson said.

Sarasota County long has had the third lowest millage rate in the state. At 3.3912 per \$1,000 in property value, the county now has the second lowest rate, behind only Monroe County. That was a fact to which Commissioner Joe Barbetta seemed happy to draw attention when Harmer showed the board a state map with details about county rates.

“We hear often that the development community is costing our taxpayers a lot of money and that everything is happening on the backs of taxpayers,” Barbetta said. “It shows over the years we have maintained No. 3 and now No. 2 lowest millage.” 

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THE 'DEBS' AND THEIR FIRST 'FORMAL'

Two seats are open and nine candidates are running. Seven attended the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations forum on Monday, June 23. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

SEVEN OF NINE COUNTY COMMISSION CANDIDATES ANSWER FORUM QUESTIONS ABOUT ISSUES SUCH AS THE 2050 PLAN AND THE LIDO RENOURISHMENT PROJECT

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The first candidates forum for the Sarasota County Commission hopefuls was held three days after the closing of the qualification period. Nine men and women are officially in the race to fill two open seats on the board. Current Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Nora Patterson are being forced out of their seats by term limits, though both have said they did not plan to seek new terms even before a 2012 Florida Supreme Court ruling left them no choice.

The forum was sponsored by the Sarasota County Coalition of County Neighborhoods

(CONA). Lourdes Ramirez, president of the organization, is one of the candidates.

Of the nine running for the county board, one is Democrat Ray Porter, who is vying for the District Four seat. Four are Republicans, two each running in District Two and District Four. Two are write-in candidates, and two have “no party affiliation.”

Here is the breakdown for County Commission District Two: Paul Caragiulo and Shannon Snyder are both Republicans, and both are Sarasota city commissioners. They will face off in the Aug. 26 party primary.

The winner will face two write-in candidates (Steve McAllister and Pete Theisen) plus Alexandra Coe (no party affiliation) in the general election on Nov. 4.

In District Four, Ramirez and Alan Maio will face off in the August primary; the winner will join Democrat Porter on the November ballot, along with John Minder (no party affiliation).

While a candidate must live within the district he or she wishes to represent, all registered voters in Sarasota County can vote in all the races.

Of the nine candidates, seven participated in the forum. Alan Maio was not present, while

Coe was in the audience but was not recognized by the moderator or invited to join the other seven on the panel. Maio's absence was understandable, because the CONA meetings are Ramirez's home turf.

The venue for the forum was the Sarasota Garden Club on Boulevard of the Arts in downtown Sarasota. It was an appropriate site for the debut of the candidates, six of them newcomers to the rough-and-tumble of electoral politics. Theisen has run repeatedly for the Sarasota City Commission, winning about 7 percent of the vote in 2011. Caragiulo and Snyder both won election to the City Commission in 2011. Caragiulo beat



The Sarasota Garden Club is a wonderful venue for fledgling politicians to test their wings in the winds of public approval. Photo by Stan Zimmerman



Al Maio, a Republican candidate for District 4, was not present at the forum. Contributed photo by Barbara Banks

incumbent Dick Clapp by 14 votes, while Snyder took 56 percent of the vote in a three-way contest.

THE SURPRISES

The format Monday night used a number of yes-or-no questions to poll all seven candidates. Most were answered unanimously. But there were some surprises.

- Do you favor restoration of full impact fees for roads? Yes, said all seven.
- Should developers be exempt from fiscal neutrality? No, said all seven.
- Should infill development be a top priority? Yes, they all agreed.
- Will you disavow any political action committee that does negative campaigning? Yes, they said unanimously.
- Would you allow the dredging of Big Pass? No, Minder and Ramirez said.
- Should citizens have access to all county commissioner emails? Yes; again unanimous.
- Support a come-as-you-are homeless shelter? Yes, said all seven.
- Would you support a human rights ordinance for Sarasota County? Yes, said all.
- Should groins be installed on South Lido Beach as part of the proposed



The Sarasota 2050 Plan, which involves development in the rural areas east of Interstate 75, was among the topics. File photo

renourishment project? Six of the seven said, “No” to groins, but Snyder said, “Yes.”

- Should the downtown bus transfer station be moved? Theisen said, “Yes,” but the remainder said, “No.”

Keep in mind that yes-or-no questions can be tricky and hard to understand (or even hear properly). But in a year, two of the nine will be voting on these issues, and it might be useful to keep track of their subsequent actions.

TAILORED QUESTIONS

Normally, all candidates at a forum get to answer the same set of questions. CONA used

that technique with its yes-or-no queries. But the other questions posed, which allowed the candidates time for longer answers, were “one-offs.” Some pertained to an individual’s background or past votes.

Others were softballs. For example, Porter, a former reporter for the *Venice Gondolier*, was asked if he supports the Florida Sunshine Laws. You can guess his answer. (“Yes.”)

Another softball went to Ramirez, a direct lead into the bedrock of her campaign. If the [2050 Plan](#) is changed, how will the community pay for infrastructure? “We need to sustain fiscal neutrality,” she said. “Developers should pay for all the new infrastructure. With impact



Five of the seven candidates who participated in the June 23 forum said they would support the dredging of Big Pass to renourish South Lido Key. File photo

fees reduced, we have to pay for roads and infrastructure, and we do not have enough money.”


Other questions were more nuanced. Snyder was asked how the community could create higher-paying jobs that might keep graduating students in Sarasota. “Create super-high-speed Internet,” he replied. “Demand infrastructure ahead of development. And make sure our schools maintain their dominance in the State of Florida.”

Should Sarasota County move beyond political parties and make some offices non-partisan? Steve McAllister said, “Politics is a wasteful use of our time. We want real human beings in there. We have issues we need to deal with. We need to refocus our attention.”

Because he has run three times in the past for the City Commission, Theisen was asked how

best to encourage the creation of affordable housing. “Tell them they can’t develop any more until we have sufficient affordable housing. Put down a moratorium,” he responded. “Of course, then the existing buildings get old. So they can tear them down to make new developments.”

Caragiulo showed he had done some South County homework. “What are three problems with River Road?” he was asked. He shot back, “Capacity, capacity, capacity. It’s an evacuation route for hurricanes. It’s an arterial.”

Because the qualification period ended in mid-June and the first election is at the end of August, only a 10-week window exists to gather all the candidates into one place at a time for a forum. CONA’s event marked the official start of the campaign. 

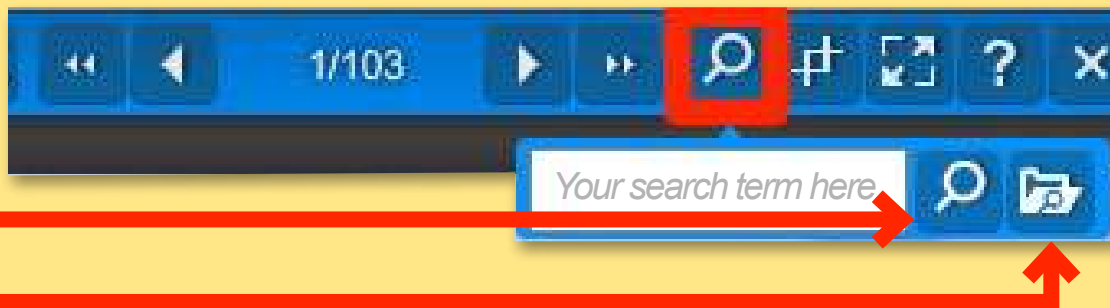
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BIG BANG FOR THE BUCKS

People in the Sheriff's Offender Work Program deal with tree debris. Photo courtesy Sheriff's Office

THE SHERIFF CITES A 33-PERCENT DROP IN CRIME SINCE HE TOOK OFFICE AS HE SEEKS ABOUT A 3.6-PERCENT BUDGET INCREASE THAT INCLUDES MORE MONEY FOR A PROGRAM THAT HOLDS DOWN JAIL EXPENSES

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The Sarasota County commissioners had plenty of plaudits on Wednesday, June 25, for Sheriff Tom Knight, who presented statistics showing crime is down 33 percent since 2008.

And while they want to make sure their financial staff has a chance to crunch the numbers, the majority of them also voiced strong support for a late request Knight relayed from Chief Judge Andrew D. Owens Jr. of the 12th Judicial Circuit Court. Owens wants to expand the

Sheriff's Offender Work Program, which is keeping about 300 people a year out of the jail. Commissioner Joe Barbetta called the \$136,291 cost "money well spent." Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson pointed out, "It stops the downward spiral for some people because they lose their jobs once they go to jail. You can find yourself on the streets, homeless" upon release after incarceration, she added, if a steady job cannot be found.

“It's money well spent, no question about it.”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County



When Robinson asked whether the funding



A man in the Sheriff's Offender Work Program handles a job that Sarasota County otherwise would have had to pay someone to do. Photo courtesy Sheriff's Office

for two new full-time employees was already in the sheriff's proposed Fiscal Year 2015 budget of \$95,479,334, Knight said it was not. He explained that Owens had called him after he had submitted his spending plan to the county. He could provide a revised budget to Steve Botelho, the county's acting assistant administrator and chief financial planning officer, he added.

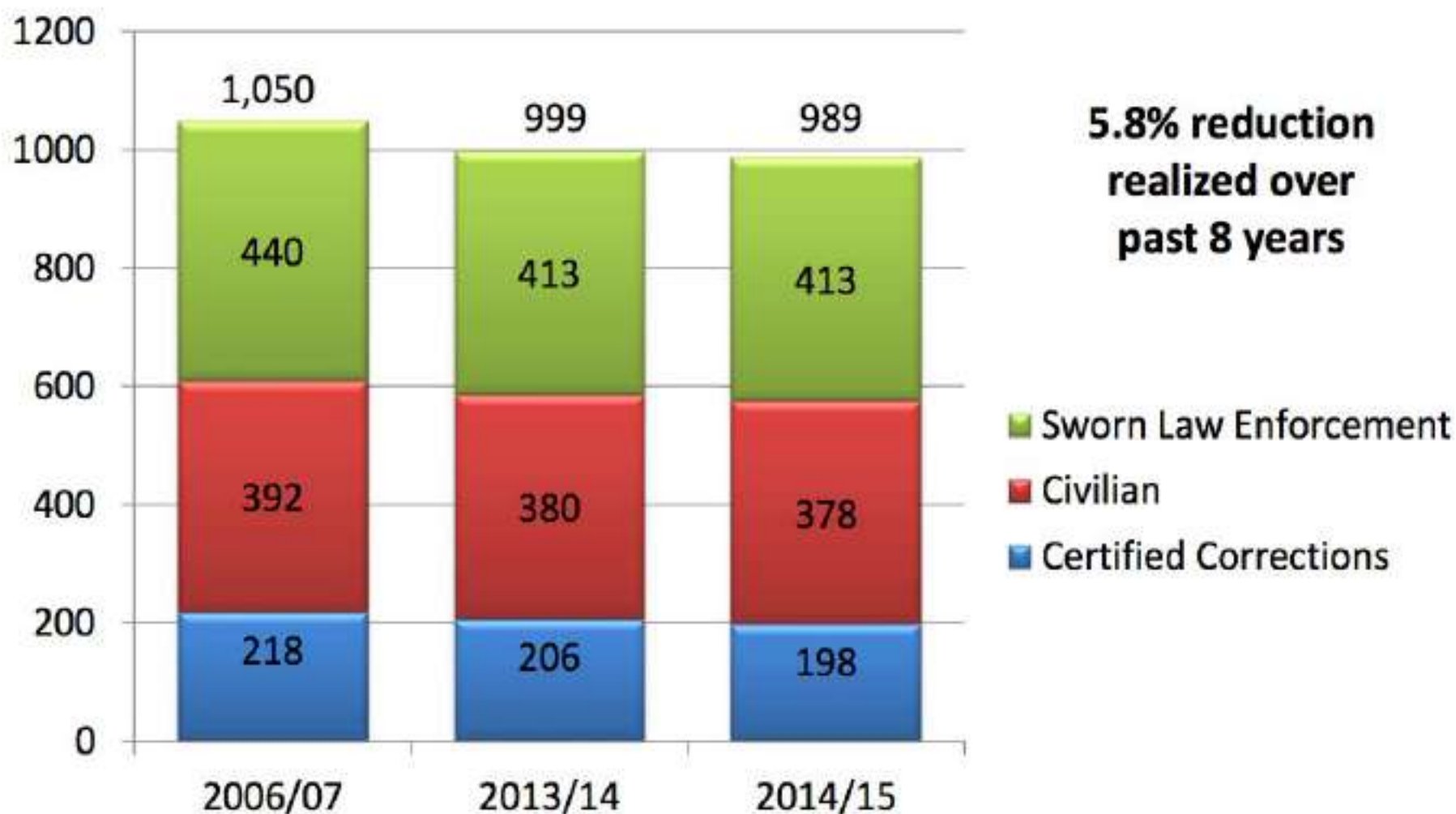
"Of course, I want to do it," Robinson said of expanding the program. However, she continued, "I want to make sure that we've worked it in appropriately to the budget. ... These things make a difference for future years."

Maj. Jeff Bell, commander of the Sheriff's Courts/Corrections Division, explained that the money would be used for the salaries of the two full-time employees, an expense of about \$89,000, plus one fully equipped vehicle at a cost of about \$47,000. Bell pointed out that the county saved about \$1 million in 2013 for work performed by people in the program.

Since 2010, Bell said, 12th Judicial Circuit Court judges have assigned about 1,200 people to the program. Although some of them were convicted of felony charges, none was considered violent, Knight explained.



Authorized Positions by Category



A graphic shows the reduction in personnel in the Sheriff's Office since the 2006-07 fiscal year. Image courtesy Sheriff's Office

Because of the demand for the program among judges, Bell continued, the judicial system has about a three-month delay from the time of sentencing until more people can enter the program.

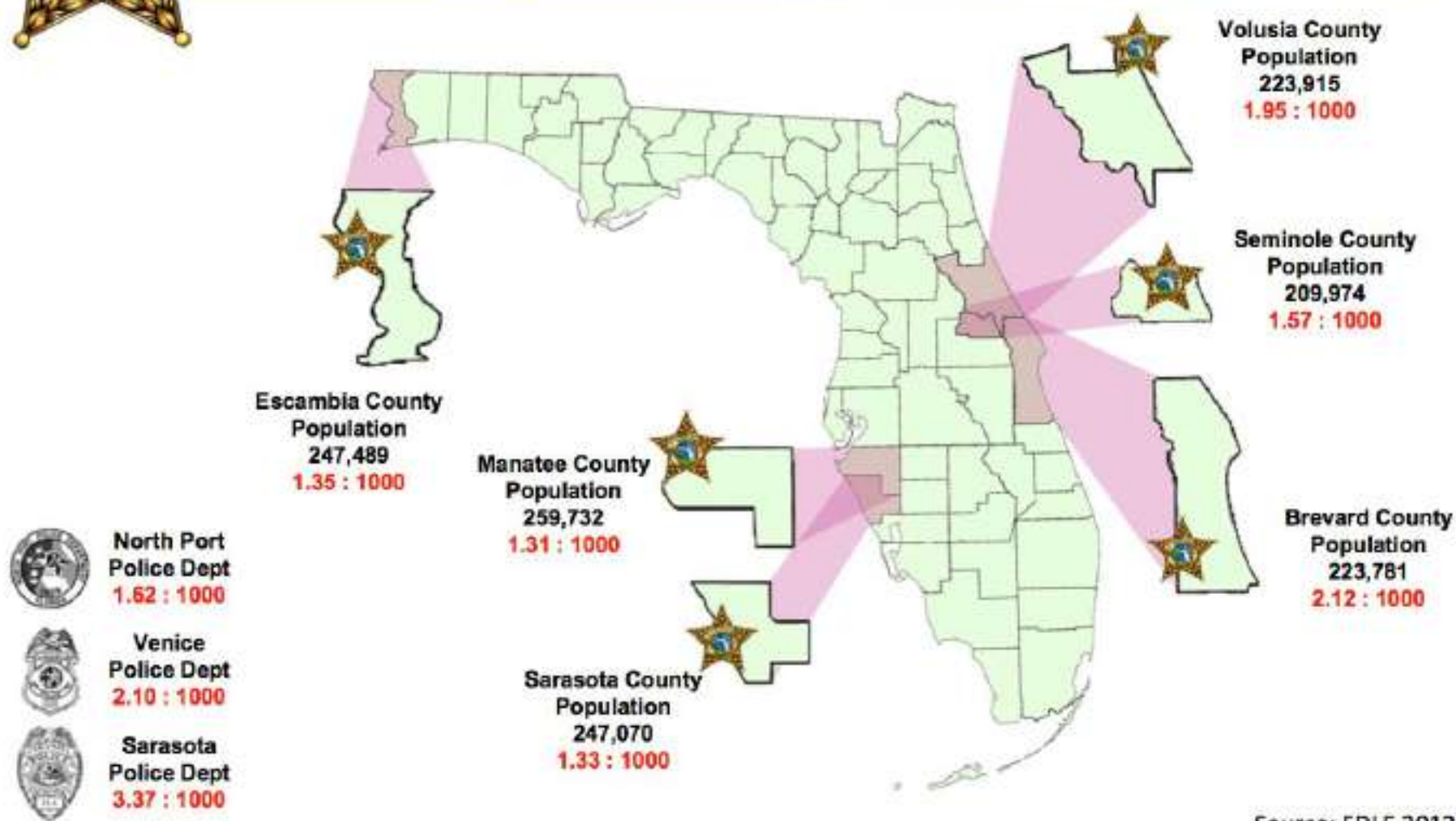
Bell also pointed out that it keeps the jail from becoming overcrowded. Last year, Knight noted earlier, the average population count in the jail was 944. He added that the county also saves money through the program because his office does not have to provide medical care or meals for the people in it.

The Sheriff's Office's annual report for 2013 says the program "continues to be a unique

but important sentencing alternative for low-level offenders who historically would serve jail time over consecutive weekends. The option was designed to reduce costs by not paying to house and feed additional inmates. Giving certain offenders the opportunity to serve their sentence through the work program performs a public service while allowing the offenders to maintain their employment and return to their families each night. In all, 280 people were sentenced to the [program] in 2013 and 159 of them completed [it]. Those who fail to complete the work program must serve their original jail sentences but on consecutive days, not [just on] weekends. Work



Officer to Population Ratio



Source: FDLE 2012 Ratios

A graphic shows officer-to-population ratios for several Florida counties and for the police departments in North Port, Sarasota and Venice. Image courtesy Sheriff's Office

Program participants completed 481 work details throughout Sarasota County in 2013.”

“I’m optimistic about it,” Robinson said of adding the funding into the FY 2015 budget.

“I guarantee the recidivism rate is unbelievable, so they won’t be back doing it again if they can help it,” Barbetta noted of the program participants.

Chairman Charles Hines also voiced his support. “I’m very much in favor of this. ... When people see these folks out working, it’s also a deterrent for others.”

THE STATS AND THE BUDGET

Knight explained that the 3.6-percent increase in his budget from FY 2014 to FY 2015 — from \$92,192,345 for the current fiscal year to \$95,479,334 for the next fiscal year — resulted mostly from a rise in non-discretionary costs, such as those related to the Florida Retirement System. Only 0.6 percent of the increase, he said, reflects what he called “discretionary but necessary expenses.”

“We’re trying to mirror what you’re asking [County Administrator Tom] Harmer and your staff to do” in holding down costs, Knight pointed out.

Because of his office’s Intelligence-Led Policing philosophy, Knight told the board, he has been able to reduce staff while reducing crime. For the first quarter of the current fiscal year, he said, the crime rate was down 47 percent compared to the same quarter in 2008, before he took office. “That’s really

unbelievable. That’s something I never imagined would happen five years ago,” he added.


As a result of the trend, he said the office has “the ability to be more responsive to quality-of-life issues ... whether it’s a nuisance on Casey Key or traffic issues on Jackson Road.”

For example, he noted, Operation Southern Watch in South County, for which the office released results this week, focused on what he called “nuisance people.” (See the related item in *Crime Briefs*.)

For another example, he said, the 2013 Operation Booster Buster, which was directed at retail theft, enabled his officers to create “a really good relationship with the retail outlets, especially on the Interstate 75 corridor. ... The goal is to ensure that the people traveling from county to county on the interstate system realize and recognize that ... Sarasota County is not a good place to stop.”

“Probably our most frequent complaint is one of your least serious ones,” Commissioner Nora Patterson told him. “It’s traffic.”

“Absolutely,” Knight responded, pointing out that his office issued 34,415 traffic citations and made 653 DUI arrests in 2013. The latter figure, he added, represents the majority of such arrests in the county.

“I want to take this opportunity to thank you and the men and women in your department for ... what I call outstanding arrests you’re making throughout the county, [which] affect people’s quality of life,” Commissioner Carolyn Mason told Knight. 

A SITE SEARCH, AGAIN



Homeless people gather on Central Avenue in the Rosemary District on the morning of June 25. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE PROSPECT OF BUILDING A COMMUNITY HOMELESS SHELTER APPEARS MURKIER THAN EVER, THOUGH THERE MIGHT BE A SILVER LINING IN THE LATEST TURN OF EVENTS

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

After more than four hours of public comments and often contentious discussion on Monday, June 23, the City and County commissions are no closer to deciding where and when to build a proposed homeless shelter. Nor have they resolved how to pay for one.

Three shelter sites were shot down during the course of the boards' joint meeting. The top two locations were rejected because of high projected facility costs — \$8.9 million at the 1800 N. East Ave. parcel and \$9.2 million

at the city-owned property on 1330 N. Osprey Ave. A third, less expensive option, the site of Harvest Tabernacle Church on North Lime Avenue, proved to be less than ideal for the city commissioners. Earlier this month, they unanimously voted down a proposal to add the site to the list for consideration because it is in a section of the city targeted for redevelopment.

“ We didn’t tell [consultant Robert Marbut] to pick those two sites, and we didn’t pick those problems.

Tom Barwin
City Manager
City of Sarasota



The majorities on both boards, however, said they do not want to abandon the concept of a come-as-you-are facility for chronic

homeless adults and that they do want to continue looking for potential sites.

Thus, the idea of a homeless shelter in Sarasota remains alive, at least until September. That is when both commissions will meet once again to discuss the project.

“I don’t want to give this up,” said Sarasota County Commissioner Carolyn Mason.

“I am not ready to give up on the problem,” agreed Mayor Willie Shaw.

But the work that has to be done is substantial, and city and county staffs have conflicting approaches how to fund the facility.

Staffers from both the city and county will work with homelessness consultant Robert Marbut to scour the community once again for possible sites, this time keeping eyes out

specifically for properties with existing structures that can be converted to a shelter, a plan thought to be less expensive than constructing a brand new facility.

Three county commissioners appear uncertain the project will ever come to fruition. After months of debate over the issue with the divided City Commission, they say they do not think there is enough political will in the city to support the shelter.

For County Commission Chairman Charles Hines, that history portends little likelihood of progress in a renewed search for a location. “The city had nine months to bring a site within the city, and it didn’t occur,” Hines said. “I don’t believe that will happen.”

City and county staff members, alongside Marbut, have already studied about 80



County Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson. Photo by Norman Schimmel

different properties, with several of the sites falling off the list as a result of opposition from business owners and city residents. For example, one site was removed from the list because the new owner did not want to see it become home to a shelter. The City Commission nixed another property, at 1011 N. Lime Ave., before the possible sale price was known because it was too close to a residential community.

Monday's meeting closed with a 4-1 vote by the City Commission to continue exploring sites "inside and outside" the city and a 3-2 vote by the County Commission to direct the county administrator to work with the city to continue the search for potential sites. The votes also approved an agreement that the

“If those [top two] sites are not suitable, we should look at other sites. But no matter where you want to put it, people will show up to oppose it. Even the cows. They will come up and say, ‘Mooo, we don’t want it here.’”

Diana Hamilton
Downtown Sarasota Resident

boards would reconvene for another joint meeting in September.

Earlier County Commission votes on the shelter had been unanimous.

(See the related article in this issue.)

MORE SITES?

There may be a silver lining to this week's non-decision, however.

Over the past few months, several new properties in light industrial/commercial areas have come onto the market, and other properties may emerge on "For Sale" listings in the immediate future. "Normally, I would be very cynical, but because of this delay, some sites may have bubbled up," Marbut told *The Sarasota News Leader*.



Sarasota County Homeless Services Coordinator Wayne Applebee addresses the two commissions on Monday. Photo by Norman Schimmel

But local officials will have to act fast if they find something, because the commercial real estate market moves quickly, often much more so than local government, Marbut said.

Meanwhile, as the city and county elected officials struggle to find a suitable site, the problems associated with chronic homelessness are becoming more evident in the city's core, Marbut told the joint commissions on Monday.

"You had two violent incidents" in the last two months, he said, referring to a murder and a death under investigation. "Those [numbers] will keep going up."

The total of homeless individuals, including homeless military veterans who served in Iraq

and Afghanistan, could increase by 20 to 25 percent in a few months' time, Marbut added.

'CALL US WHEN YOU ARE READY'

At one point during the meeting, the concept of the shelter project seemed to face a stalemate.

County Commissioner Joe Barbetta said he did not want to see the county spend any more time working on the project until city administrative staff and the city commissioners brought forth a location they had endorsed.

"I don't think the city is ready," Barbetta added. "I don't think the leadership is there. To put our staff under more meetings and running around isn't worth it."



COST ALLOCATION STRUCTURE – POTENTIAL APPROACH

Based upon a review of data from multiple sources, 65%-78% of single adult homeless are within the City of Sarasota:

Potential Approach:

- 78% (or 65%) of all costs - City of Sarasota and Sarasota County to be divided equally
 - 39% (or 32.5%) to be paid by City of Sarasota
 - 39% (or 32.5%) to be paid by Sarasota County
- 22% (or 35%) of all costs - Sarasota County
 - Other municipalities paying on a "per bed" basis until more detailed data is available

The county's 'potential approach' for funding has the city and county together covering up to 78 percent of the costs. Image courtesy Sarasota County

“If there isn’t the public will to do something, I am done. You can call us when you are ready,” Barbetta said, referring to the city commissioners.

But a motion Barbetta put forth to suspend the search for sites until the city had proposed a location failed in a 2-3 vote. “I don’t know what else the county can do at this point,” said Hines, who supported the motion. Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson and Commissioners Nora Patterson and Carolyn Mason voted it down.

Although Monday’s session was a “tough meeting,” it was also a “good meeting,” City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell said in an interview with the *News Leader* after it ended.

Atwell added that she is committed to the recommendations Marbut made after he was hired by the city and county to come up with a blueprint for addressing homelessness,

including his proposal for a come-as-you-are shelter that would offer services to the chronically homeless population.

Atwell countered Barbetta’s charge that a lack of political will on the part of the City Commission is stalling the project.

“I think, quite frankly, there was leadership,” Atwell said. “We have to make a tough decision. I think that takes quite a good deal of leadership.”

As for the probability of the shelter ever getting built, Atwell would not venture a prediction of the odds.

Finding an approach that the City and County commissions can agree on does not appear to be getting simpler. County Commissioners say the shelter is the best option for addressing homelessness, which has led to increasing problems downtown, from crime to customers having to contend with panhandlers and



County Commissioner Carolyn Mason. Photo by Norman Schimmel

worries about their safety while they are shopping. Yet, two city commissioners — Mayor Willie Shaw and Vice Mayor Susan Chapman — have said it should not be built in the city.

Barbetta does not want to give up on the shelter, either, he says. But at this point, he has “no faith this thing is going to continue forward.”

THE FUNDING CHALLENGE

What about capital costs and operating funding?

The commissions Monday did not even take on perhaps the most heated challenges yet regarding the project: Who will pay for what?

The topic was part of a staff presentation shown on an overhead projector, but the boards did not get to it.

One slide showed the county’s “potential approach,” which has the city covering up to 78 percent of the costs with the county. Under this scenario, the city would pay 39 percent of all expenses, the county would pay 39 percent and other municipalities in the county would pay the remaining 22 percent.

On the next page, an approach recommended by City Manager Tom Barwin has the county paying a larger share of the shelter’s costs. All of the capital expenses would be handled by the county.



Cost Allocation Structure – City Manager Recommendation

- Based upon the Pinellas County model, City staff believes a “come-as-you-are”, jail diversion shelter, is a criminal justice/mental/physical health facility and a county wide systems asset, available to all residents and communities of the County, which is an extension of the state. Construction and operations costs of mainline county system assets are 100% funded by the County with voluntary contributions by others as agreed, as in Pinellas County.
- The City has however pledged up to \$289,000 of its eligible CDBG funds toward a “come-as-you-are” shelter or other facility serving the chronically homeless.
- The City staff finds the operations funding formula for the “come-as-you-are” shelter in Pinellas County of 87% County and 13% municipalities is reasonable.

Another approach to funding the shelter, recommended by City Manager Tom Barwin, has the county paying the larger share of the expenses. Image courtesy Sarasota County

In the past week, discussions between city and county staffers assigned to put together options for a shelter broke down when they began talking about funding approaches, the *News Leader* learned.

Barwin has concerns about the county's proposal for the city's split. "It's like saying, 'Here, take the whole burden and 50 percent of the costs,'" he told the *News Leader* after the joint meeting.

He has advocated for the Pinellas Safe Harbor model. That Clearwater facility is funded and run by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, with annual contributions from the Cities of Clearwater and St. Petersburg of about \$100,000 each towards the \$1.6 million annual operating budget. Pinellas County paid 100 percent of the capital costs.

A QUERY

On Monday, County Commission Vice Chairwoman Robinson brought up the issue of an apparent rift at City Hall. She repeatedly asked the city commissioners how they are going to handle the concerns about site selection that Barwin has raised publically, points that Robinson says run counter to the policy direction provided by the three majority City Commission votes in favor of constructing a shelter in the city.

"If the city wants to move forward, I would like to know we are not going to experience two different conversations," Robinson said.

"I have asked several times, but I have not heard from them," Robinson added later in the meeting.



Former County Commissioner Jon Thaxton, who works with the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, listens to the discussion. Behind him is former Sarasota Police Department Capt. Paul Sutton, who has worked with homelessness issues in the community. Photo by Norman Schimmel

No city commissioner directly answered Robinson's query.

Barwin told the *News Leader* that the city administration has been supportive of the shelter planning process, which has been led mostly by the county. However, he added that he felt it was his duty to raise issues ranging from environmental problems at the city-owned Osprey site to how the shelter will be funded.


"Concerns have to be addressed," Barwin told the *News Leader*. But one county commissioner, he said, is intent on trying to make it seem like "the city is just putting a stick through the spoke."

"We didn't tell [Marbut] to pick those two sites [on Osprey Avenue and East Avenue]," Barwin added, "and we didn't pick those problems."

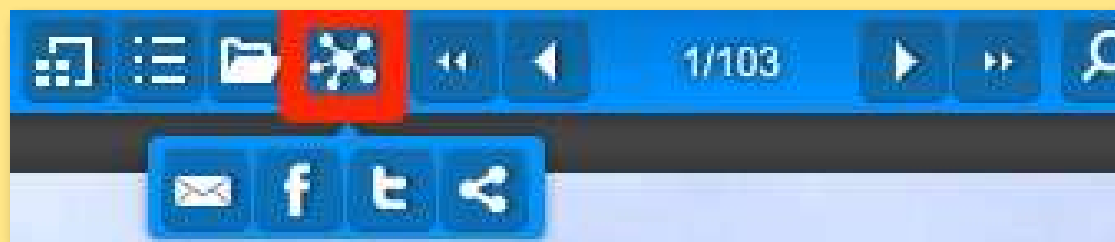
Barwin said he spoke to Marbut early in the site selection process and suggested that some locations outside the city's core, where other services the homeless would need are already concentrated, should be considered.

"Marbut didn't listen to us," Barwin continued. "The sites he picked were not viable."

One thing that remains clear, said downtown resident Diana Hamilton, is wherever the shelter is proposed, there will be opposition.

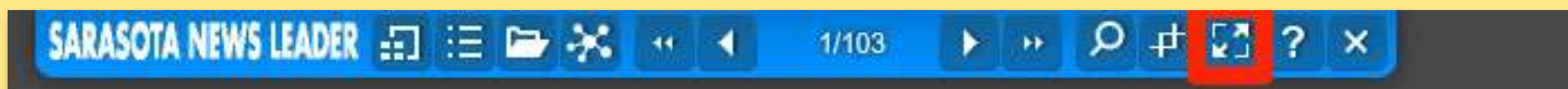
"If those [top two] sites are not suitable, we should look at other sites," Hamilton told the commissioners. "But no matter where you want to put it, people will show up to oppose it. Even the cows. They will come up and say, 'Mooo, we don't want it here.'" 

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SHARING A LIBRARY

A proposal for a public library within the new Sarasota County Technical Institute in North Port won community support in January. Photo by George Chriss via Wikimedia Commons

THE COUNTY COMMISSION VOICES COMMITMENT TO COLLABORATING WITH THE SCHOOL BOARD IN A TECHNICAL INSTITUTE/PUBLIC FACILITY IN NORTH PORT

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Staff members representing Sarasota County and the Sarasota County School District have been meeting regularly on plans for a shared library in the Sarasota County Technical Institute (SCTI) that will be constructed in North Port, Sarabeth Kalajian, the county's director of libraries and historical resources, told the County Commission during a budget workshop on June 25.

Another meeting of the group was set for June 26, she added. It would focus on the site selection process for the new school.

Last week, district staff told the Sarasota County School Board a parcel had been selected in the Toledo Blade corridor, but [a number of challenges were related to that site](#).

In the meantime, Kalajian said, she and her staff "have been reviewing information from other public libraries co-located on school campuses, including building plans, operations and details of inter-local agreements."

“*There is such an advantage to having this plan for a college campus.*”

Sarabeth Kalajian
Director
Libraries and Historical Resources
Sarasota County



They also are preparing for a visit to such a facility.

She continued, “The [district’s] project team and library project team are identifying the functions that need to go into this partnership library, especially common spaces.”

Part of the challenge for Kalajian is that she and her staff are asking questions to which district staff has no immediate answers, Scott Lempe, deputy superintendent of the school district, told *The Sarasota News Leader* on June 25. The next step in that process is for district staff and the School Board to decide on the features desired in the library. For example: How much circulation space should be provided? Where will the computer lab go? How many restrooms should the facility have?

Then district staff can provide that information to Kalajian, Lempe continued, pointing out all the space is sharable. After she lets district staff know how those plans should be modified to accommodate county patron needs, he said, district staff would come up with a cost estimate for the County Commission. “And that’s not a super complicated process from a planning perspective,” Lempe added.

The Florida Legislature this spring provided \$3 million to assist with planning for the North Port SCTI; \$1 million of that was dedicated to the library project.

Kalajian told the commissioners plans call for the first phase of the new SCTI to open in January 2017. However, Todd Bowden, the school district’s executive director of career, technical and adult education, pointed out to



Scott Lempe is deputy superintendent of the Sarasota County Schools. Photo by Rachel Hackney

the School Board that the library would be part of the third phase of construction.

County Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson voiced concern about comments School Board members made last week, wanting assurance the county is committed to the library. Commissioner Joe Barbetta also spoke of his worries on that point. "I want to make sure that they're on board with this fully and embrace it before we go too far down the road."

Kalajian said she and her staff are working with the Office of the County Attorney on an interlocal agreement with the School Board "that basically outlines we're going to commit to work together."

A copy of a draft interlocal is "bouncing around now," Lempe told the *News Leader*. The understanding he had last week from School Board Chairwoman Jane Goodwin and board member Caroline Zucker, Lempe said, was that they want to make sure the county remains dedicated to sharing the library. The interlocal agreement, even of a general nature, he pointed out, would be a good sign of that.

Kalajian explained to the commissioners that an earlier shared library project in which the county expressed interest involved a middle school. "There is such an advantage to having this plan for a college campus," she noted. "So many of those concerns [involving county library patrons at a middle school], I think, have been just really eliminated."

During a recent meeting of Sarasota County local government representatives, Barbetta noted, "Scott Lempe was very excited about [the SCTI library project]. So from a staff perspective, it seems like it's going forward."



Sarabeth Kalajian is the county's director of libraries and historical resources. Photo by Norman Schimmel

"We're very appreciative of the school [district] staff and how they're keeping us informed," Kalajian told the board.

She is scheduled to make a more detailed presentation to the commissioners in August, Kalajian pointed out. Her June 25 remarks came during a discussion of her department's Fiscal Year 2015 budget.

Robinson and County Administrator Tom Harmer noted that the School Board and County Commission have a joint meeting set for Sept. 30. Robinson added that she felt the August discussion would be appropriate in advance of that.

Now it is up to district staff, Lempe said, "to help [the commissioners] understand [the potential costs]." 



REVERSAL OF POLARITY

Homelessness consultant Robert Marbut (far left on the right front row) and City Manager Tom Barwin (third from left on right front row) are among audience members at the meeting. All photos by Norman Schimmel

ANALYSIS: THE CITY COMMISSION ENDS UP IN CONTROL OF NEW PROSPECTS FOR A HOMELESS SHELTER SITE

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The ghost of Everett Dirksen visited Sarasota County on Monday, June 23. The man once known as “the conscience of the U.S. Senate” spent his entire career in the minority party and a decade as Minority Leader. He still managed to achieve many legislative accomplishments, including passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 over a Democratic filibuster. Asked how he did all that, Dirksen once replied, “You just have to work smarter.”

So it was with the Sarasota City commissioners this week. They were scorned for months by their “elder statesmen” seniors on the County Commission for not rushing to judgment on the site of a proposed homeless

shelter. Two of the five county commissioners were openly contemptuous of the city board.

But when the dust settled after a four-hour meeting on Monday afternoon, a fundamental change had occurred. The county relinquished power over the outcome and, suddenly, positions were reversed. It was the County Commission that was fractured; the City Commission, united. More importantly, control over the issue had shifted.

WHEN IN DOUBT, READ THE INSTRUCTIONS

On one point, all parties agree. Politicians and citizens, vagrants and merchants all



Mayor Willie Shaw contemplates issues Monday.

acknowledge homelessness is not good for the community, the city or the county. Not one voice has been raised to stop consideration of some kind of facility to fight the blight of visible and invisible vagrancy and homelessness.

It will soon be a year since the city and county together hired nationally known consultant Robert Marbut “to develop a strategic action plan to evaluate and improve the efficiency and organization of homeless providers throughout Sarasota County,” according to the Aug. 12, 2013 press release that was issued. Phase Three of seven in the contract called for an “analysis of the gap between the inventory of services versus the actual needs, including possible recommendations for new facilities with potential sites considered.”

Three months later, Marbut produced a written report. The Nov. 25, 2013, document contained 12 steps. Most are in some degree of implementation. His fourth recommendation has caused the greatest turmoil. It is worth reprinting in full:

“Establish a 24/7/168/365 Men’s and Women’s Public Safety Triage and Stabilization Unit which would be a ‘come-as-you-are’ emergency shelter. The Sarasota Sheriff’s Office should be asked to be the lead coordinating agency. This would become the main intake portal for adult homeless men and women. All adult services county-wide should ‘spoke off’ this main hub. Once operational, all county-wide



City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell has been supportive of a shelter in the city.

street feeding programs, food pantry programs and day-time service centers for adult homeless men and women need to be relocated within the Public Safety Triage and Stabilization Unit ('Sarasota Safe Harbor'). This should also be the location of the Master Case Managers for adult homeless men and women."

Note, it does not say the facility should be near downtown or even within city limits. Note also that he recommends relocation of "day-time service centers" to the facility, as well as "master case managers."

But 24 pages later, Marbut's "evaluation criteria" eliminates any non-city site. "In order to

reduce pedestrian and bicycle traffic through neighborhoods, and to increase efficiencies within the overall service system, this Triage and Stabilization Unit ideally should be located within a short walking distance of existing programs, preferably between service agency anchors," his report says on Page 27.

The next criteria, also on Page 27, recommends putting the facility "within a short drive of the County Jail" for people "whose legal involvement may be a result of untreated mental illness or substance abuse disorders."

The report does not resolve the contradiction of calling for relocation of "service centers within the Public Safety and Triage and



Vice Mayor Susan Chapman has opposed a shelter in the City of Sarasota.

Stabilization Unit” at the same time it emphasizes the need to situate the facility “within a short walking distance of existing programs.” Nor does it give any idea of what a “short drive” might entail.

These criteria have been cited repeatedly by the county commissioners and Marbut as the reason to require a shelter be built not just in the city but also close to downtown — despite the contradiction and ambiguity.

However, Sarasota city commissioners have been deluged with public comments about siting the come-as-you-are shelter on the north side of town. Homeowners, business owners, not-for-profit organizations and even one member of the city Planning Board stepped up to the podium Monday to express opposition to that plan. “If you build it, they will come. The more services are provided, the more people will take advantage of them,” said Planning Board member Vlad Svekis. “You

will create an enclave near Newtown, and Newtown does not need any other stresses.”

Or, as Joseph Bessard, the president of the Park East Neighborhood Association, put it, “What part of ‘No’ are you not getting?”

SITE ROULETTE

Staff of the city and county has looked at 80 parcels. Marbut’s report listed 10 viable shelter locations. Only one remained available after seven months, a city-owned parcel on Osprey Avenue immediately north of the municipal sewer treatment plant. Of the 13 viable sites ultimately listed (three more were added after November), two were withdrawn by their owners as not for sale, one was rejected by the City Commission and nine were never seriously considered.

The two finalist sites were the subject of the June 23 joint city-county meeting. A decision



City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo listens to a speaker.

was expected to be made between 1800 N. East Ave. and 1330 N. Osprey Ave. However, the East Avenue site had been pulled because some of the owners of that parcel had reservations about a shelter there, the board members learned. That action left only the city-owned Osprey site.

In both cases — Osprey and East — the county commissioners choked on the price to create a shelter. Staff estimated the expense of building on the city site would be \$8.9 million. The off-the-table East Avenue plan came in at \$9.2 million. “We need to find an existing building,” said County Commissioner Nora Patterson. “If there are no sites within the city [that] the [City] Commission will not wholeheartedly support, then we can still get proximity to the services and be in the unincorporated area.”

But County Commissioner Joe Barbetta was ready to kill any city-county cooperation. “I

move we suspend any further search until further notice, when the city contacts us after finding an agreeable site.”

County Chairman Charles Hines seconded Barbetta’s suggestion, saying, “I don’t know what else the county can do. I would rather say to the city, ‘Bring us a site.’ It doesn’t have to be in the city.”

The motion failed, with only Hines and Barbetta voting in favor of it. A subsequent motion by Patterson to keep looking for sites “in or out of the county” also failed 2-3, with Hines, Barbetta and Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson voting against it.

Thus, a motion to suspend the search for a site failed, and then a motion to continue the search failed. The County Commission clearly had run out of ideas.

In the ensuing silence, City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell made a motion for staff



County Commissioner Joe Barbetta listens to a speaker.


to continue looking for sites “in and out of the city.” Vice Mayor Susan Chapman asked whether Atwell was considering a “regional facility.” Atwell said she was concerned about use of the term “regional.” The motion passed 4-1, with Chapman in the minority. But her comment clearly showed support for a site outside the city.

Therefore, after the County Commission huffed and puffed but could not blow down the city’s arguments, it then accepted them. Commissioner Carolyn Mason moved to have county staff work with the City of Sarasota “on looking for sites in or out of the city, leaving Marbut’s recommendations in place.” Barbetta and Hines were unmoved, but the motion passed 3-2.

The afternoon ended with a major shift in responsibility for finding a site for the come-as-you-are shelter. While “Marbut’s

recommendations” remain in force, a majority of the County Commission accepted the political reality that the shelter site most agreeable to the city commissioners will be outside the city limits.

Meanwhile, the county commissioners still have to grapple with finding the cash to either build a new structure or to rehabilitate an existing one. The \$9-million figure obviously was a shock to them, and it may be the next bone of contention.

Even if a site had been selected on Monday, the facility was about 22 months from opening, based on staff comments. Neither commission broached what should be done in the interim. In all, members of the public addressed the commissions for about two hours, and the staff presentation took almost another hour. That left less than an hour for the policymakers to actually discuss the hot issue of the day. 



The County Commission Chambers was so full for the meeting, some people stood in the back of the room.



A DRY WELL

The Downtown Improvement District paid for streetscape upgrades last year. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT BOARD FINDS ITS FINANCES WILL LIMIT IT FOR THE TIME BEING TO MAINTAINING THE WORK IT HAS UNDERTAKEN IN SARASOTA

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The reality has been approaching for months, but it arrived Tuesday morning, June 24, when the Downtown Improvement District (DID) board members learned there is no money in their budget to do more than just maintain what they have.

They were scheduled to take a look at undertaking more streetscape improvements on lower Main Street, the so-called Segments Three and Four. “Most of the projects require more financial resources than you have right now,” said DID Operations Manager John Moran.

In the past, the organization has utilized an “internal borrow” of city reserve funds, paying a slightly higher rate of interest than the city usually earns but a far lower rate than that for a commercial borrow or bond.

But that tool is not available now. Moran told the board he had spoken about it with city Finance Director John Lege. “He said [that

“Most of the [new] projects require more financial resources than you have right now.”

John Moran
Operations Manager
Downtown Improvement District

money] is devoted to the State Street [parking] garage,” noted Moran. “After they finish State Street, the money will be replenished.” But that is about two years away.

“Bricking the sidewalk along Main, extending the streetscape to the South Lemon Avenue mall, that would also require increasing our financial resources,” he pointed out.

Talk then turned to expanding the DID, a self-financed taxing district encompassing downtown property. “One option is going east out to U.S. 301,” said Moran. “That would bring an additional \$283,000.” Expanding south to Charles Ringling Boulevard would be another option, he added. “What we have left now is \$90,000.”

EYES AND STOMACHS

Because it uses special property tax revenue, the DID has access to the municipal bond market. The board has used that option once in the past, to get the money upfront for a

host of downtown beautification efforts. Now its budget is devoted to bond paybacks, maintenance and ongoing operating expenses. The latest project was re-sodding Five Points Park, work that must be done every two years because the park is a high foot-traffic area.

Two additional non-capital items now confront the organization as well. One is enhanced pressure-washing of sidewalks. The city has hired a contractor to clean the sidewalks of the city’s business districts. The first area to see the work done was St. Armands Circle. Moran reported the cleaning was unsatisfactory. “The contractor agreed the work was not done as well as [at] the test site,” Moran told the DID board. The contractor will start on downtown sidewalks immediately after the July Fourth festivities, he said. But if



A map shows the area of the Downtown Improvement District in Sarasota. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

downtown businesses want more frequent cleanings, the DID will have to come up with the money.


Ditto for a plan to hang flower baskets on the light poles downtown. Moran says it might cost \$25,000 to buy baskets and another \$25,000 for maintenance and plant replacement.

Another project Moran is chasing is a circulator to move pedestrians around the downtown area. The latest thinking is to use an “interior circulator” within the downtown core. The city has tested all-electric vehicles with some success, but to be useful, the vehicles must run frequently, and the best cost estimate at this point — using a variety of creative financial schemes — is about \$400,000 per year.

To take people to and from downtown shops, restaurants, hotels and attractions (including St. Armands and the beach) would require an “exterior circulator,” and that is estimated

to cost \$900,000 annually. Moran said he has been in touch with a company that provides on-demand service instead of running a regular route. He referred the DID members to a website, thegotchagroup.com, for more details.

Another project on the DID’s unfunded program list is increased downtown security, specifically, hiring private guards for foot patrols. Moran reported that the cost would be \$13.95 per hour for an armed guard. “You can decide how much [security] you want to purchase,” he said.

The financial squeeze was not unforeseen. The board members at one point realized they would have only \$54,000 left to spend each year while they were paying off debt. Moran has been able to push that to \$90,000. But flower baskets, armed guards and extra sidewalk cleaning will eat that up fast. As for those circulators ... 



*Downtown business owners say outdoor dining contributes significantly to dirt on the sidewalks.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

'THE CHAIR VOTES NO'



“ *We’re not trying to claim that every visitor is here because of our efforts.*

Virginia Haley
President
Visit Sarasota County



THE MAJORITY OF THE COUNTY'S TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL RECOMMENDS THE COUNTY COMMISSION ACCEPT THE LOWEST PROPOSED FIGURE IN REDUCING TOURISM PROMOTIONAL FUNDING

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

As chairwoman of the Sarasota County Tourist Development Council (TDC), Commissioner Nora Patterson told her board members on June 19, "I'm not going to speak one way or another. ... This is supposed to come from you and, ultimately, I have to vote at the County Commission level."

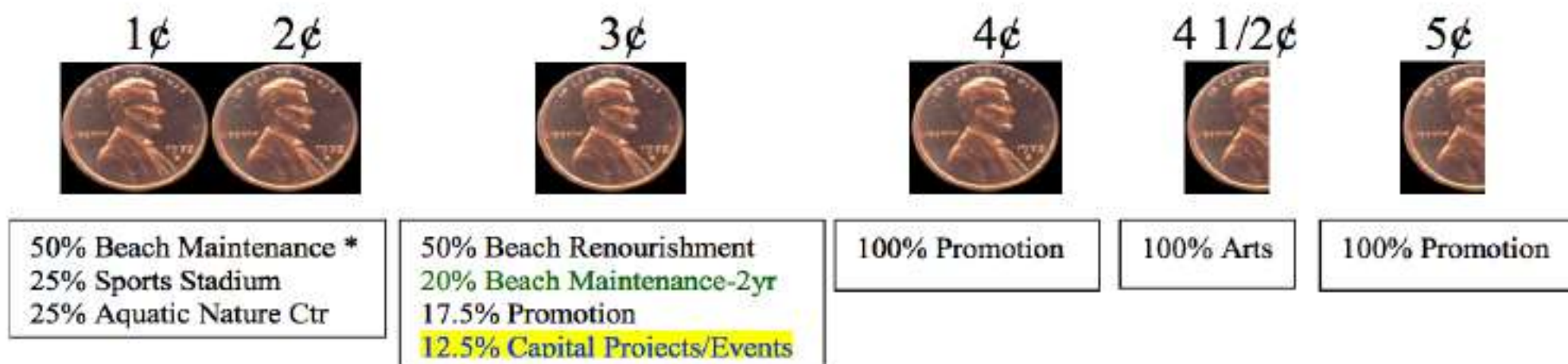
She was referring to a proposal by some of her colleagues on the County Commission to reduce the amount of money allocated annually to Visit Sarasota County for promotional purposes. During budget workshops this year, commissioners have proposed that

more funds be devoted to constructing new facilities that could supplement the county's existing attractions.

Patterson and her fellow commissioners wanted the TDC members to have an opportunity to "weigh in on" the matter before the commissioners vote on it after a public hearing on July 9, she explained on June 19.

And when the TDC board voted after about an hour of discussion, Patterson was the only one to say "No" to the motion calling for 7.5 percent of the amount of money generated by

5¢ Levy Allocation



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

20% County Beach Maintenance (as of October 1, 2009 w/2yr review)
 12.5% Promotion (as of May 1, 2011); Capital Projects/Events (as of May 1, 2013)

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

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

one penny of the 5-cent Tourist Development Tax (TDT) to go to new infrastructure instead of promotions. Under the current formula, 17.5 percent of the revenue from that penny goes to promotional efforts of Visit Sarasota County, which is the county’s tourism office.

One advisory board member, Daniel Bebak, recused himself, citing a conflict of interest with a business that could benefit from plans for new capital projects. That left the final tally in favor of the recommendation at 7-1.

Patterson also cast the solitary “No” vote when the County Commission agreed on May 16 to advertise the public hearing on shifting money from tourism marketing toward capital projects. That hearing has been set for July 9. Patterson has maintained that Visit Sarasota County needs to keep its promotional budget intact.

Steve Botelho, acting assistant administrator and chief financial planning officer for the county, explained at the TDC meeting that

TDT Revenue Allocation %’s



• Promotion	33.50%
• Arts	10.00%
• Beach Maintenance *	24.00%
• Beach Renourishment	10.00%
• Sports Stadium	10.00%
• Aquatic Nature Center	10.00%
• Capital Projects/Events	2.50%

*** To County and Municipalities based on population**

A chart shows the total amount of Tourist Development Tax money allocated for specific purposes. ‘Sports Stadium’ refers to Ed Smith Stadium and ‘Aquatic Nature Center’ refers to the rowing facility at Benderson Park. Image courtesy Sarasota County

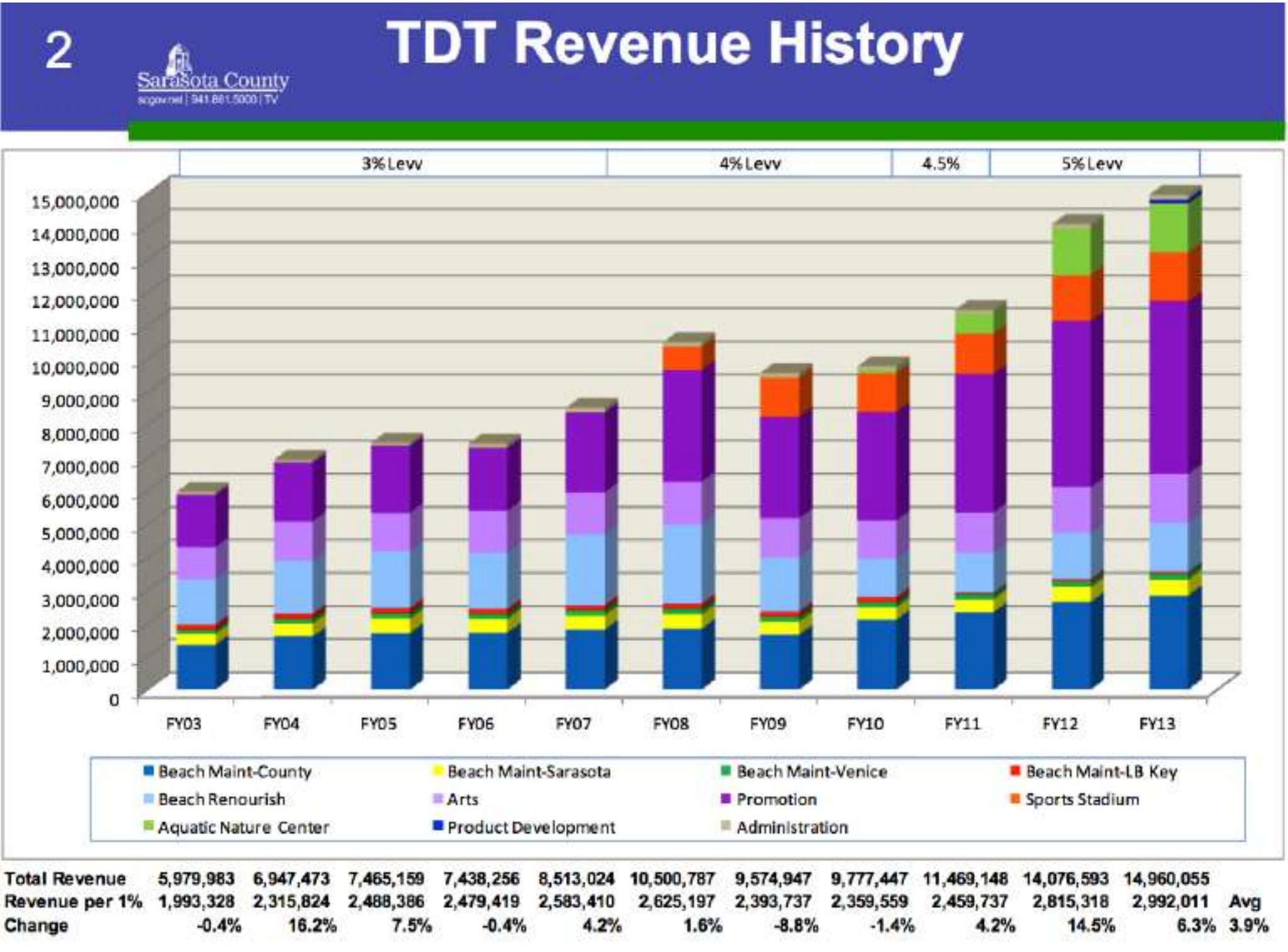
the motion would mean an extra \$229,305 for facilities funding in the 2015 fiscal year.

The TDC motion on June 19 included approval of the county’s taking excess revenue in a fund set aside for the repayment of bond funds and facilities maintenance at Ed Smith Stadium and putting it into an account for infrastructure. The resulting amount from the stadium fund for FY 2015 would be \$382,170, Botelho noted.

TDC member Sharon Cunningham made the motion, saying of the Visit Sarasota County board members, “I think they’re being generous in giving up 7.5 percent of their one penny.”

“I think this has to be give and take,” responded Venice City Councilman Bob Daniels, who represents that municipality on the TDC. “So we have to raise some kind of capital and get new products online. ... I think that’s reasonable.”

Prior to the vote, TDC member Tony Swain asked Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, “If push comes to shove and you had to take a cut, which one could you suck up the easiest?”



A chart compares Tourist Development Tax revenue collections from Fiscal Year 2003 through Fiscal Year 2013. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Haley replied that while her board preferred to lose none of the money, “we understand that the commissioners are trying to create more tourism product with these capital funds.” Her board members had settled on the loss of 7.5 percent from that one penny’s revenue, she added.

Projections show “that, in fact, by 2016, we will have made up that cut” because of anticipated growth in TDT revenue,” she said.

“It’s as good as we can get from a recommendation standpoint,” noted TDC Vice Chairman

John Ryan, president of the Venice Chamber of Commerce.

Still, Ryan pointed out, if the county ends up with more infrastructure, more money will be needed to market it.

When TDC member Jeffrey Mayers asked before the vote whether the adjustment in the allocation would be revisited annually or every five years, Patterson said, “This is indefinite.”

Nonetheless, Cunningham asked about amending the motion to call for the funding

16



Capital Projects/Events with Stadium & Promotion-7.5% of 1¢

	12.5% of 1¢ Capital P/E	Stadium excess	Subtotal	7.5% of 1¢ from Promo	Total
FY2015	382,170	274,991	657,161	229,305	886,466
FY2016	393,750	320,355	714,105	236,250	950,355
FY2017	405,670	342,597	748,267	243,405	991,672
FY2018	417,970	391,847	809,817	250,785	1,060,602
FY2019	430,620	443,004	873,624	258,375	1,131,999

Total Promotion Funds from 33.5% to 32.0%

Future borrow repayments:

17th St BMX Bike Course \$800,000

Knights Trail Gun Range \$500,000

A chart shows projected amounts of revenue over the next five fiscal years resulting from a decrease in promotional funding allocations to Visit Sarasota County combined with expected excess revenue in an account for Ed Smith Stadium. Image courtesy Sarasota County

reallocation to be revisited every couple of years. Patterson replied, "It makes it impossible to get a bond." Patterson then explained that having to reconsider the decision every two years would hamper the commission's ability to borrow money for projects. Given the potential expense of some of the facilities that have been proposed, such as a convention center or a downtown Sarasota aquarium, she continued, the commission probably would need to let the extra money accumulate in a fund that could be used to pay back a bond or loan to cover the cost of several new facilities.

PARSING THE PROSPECTS

Haley told the TDC members that research commissioned by Visit Sarasota County shows that for every \$150,000 her office spends on marketing, the return is \$4.3 million in direct visitor expenditures in the county. The total economic impact is about \$8 million for the \$150,000, she added.

When Mayers, general manager of The Resort at Longboat Key Club, asked how Sarasota County's marketing expenditures compare to those of comparable Florida counties, Haley told him, "We are the lowest allocation toward tourism promotion within our competitive set."

Referencing Botelho's presentation to the TDC, Patterson pointed out that the County Commission is considering options ranging from taking all of the marketing money allocated from one penny of the TDT to 7.5 percent. The other two options, according to Botelho's chart, are 12.5 percent and 10 percent of that penny.

Botelho explained that if the commissioners took the entire 17.5 percent of promotional

revenue generated by that penny, that would equate to a loss of 10.4 percent of the amount of money available for promotional purposes. All the revenue generated by the fourth penny of the TDT is dedicated to marketing, according to one of his charts.

In response to further questioning, Haley presented more of the Visit Sarasota County data accumulated over the past three years. According to surveys of tourists, Haley said, \$117 million of the total amount they spent in the county last year was directly related to her office's marketing.

"We're not trying to claim that every visitor is here because of our efforts," she said. The figure was linked to those who said the promotional efforts led to their visiting Sarasota County.


"We base that on our monthly visitor intercept studies," Haley added.

"Just conversing with them," as Patterson put it.

"Yes," Haley replied.

When TDC member Paul Caragiulo, a Sarasota city commissioner, asked how many visitors are questioned, Haley told him the minimum is 300 per month.

The reported accuracy of the research firm that handles those surveys is 97 percent, Haley added.

Mayers continued to argue against the loss of any of the promotional funds. With more hotels under construction in Sarasota, he said, "We're going to have to go out and find more business, which means we are going to need more marketing dollars." 



Siesta Seen

STAND-UP PADDLEBOARDING PROPOSAL FOR THE PUBLIC BEACH CONTINUES TO BE CONTROVERSIAL; DEPUTIES DEAL WITH A TRANSIENT HOARDER



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

A proposal for stand-up paddleboard rentals at Siesta Public Beach continues to be a source of concern for members of the Siesta Key Association (SKA).

Commissioner Nora Patterson, a guest at the June 5 meeting of the organization, told board members she recently had had a visit from

Rob Alfieri, who owns SUP Sarasota, and Warren LaBonte, the operator of the county concessionary facility near the pavilion at the public beach.

“I said to [Alfieri] ... the biggest concern is supervision, that I don’t actually believe that people are going to rent paddleboards and



Even in the traditional off-season, Siesta Beach has remained busy, especially on the weekends, sheriff’s deputies report. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Siesta Seen

reliably not enter areas where people are swimming,” Patterson said.

On March 5, the County Commission considered a request by Alfieri and LaBonte to allow Alfieri to rent paddleboards at the beach under a six-month trial program. After discussing various aspects of the proposal, the commissioners asked county staff to ascertain public views on it before making a decision.

The matter is expected to again come up before the County Commission in September, Carolyn Brown, director of the county’s Parks and Recreation Department, told me last week.

Patterson said during the SKA meeting that she suggested Alfieri consider offering lessons with the rentals, ensuring close supervision of participants. He responded that another possibility is renting the boards to people for guided excursions, which would entail experienced users accompanying the renters. “He actually said [the latter idea] really might be better for his business,” she noted.

“I told him to bring to you guys that thought and see what the response is,” Patterson added. “I’m not taking a stand at this point, but that, to me, would be a preferable way of dealing with [an expansion of paddleboarding on Siesta].”

The image is a screenshot of the SUP Sarasota website, overlaid on a background photo of a beach with a blue kayak in the foreground and palm trees in the distance. The website has a dark wooden header with the SUP SARASOTA logo and social media icons for email, Twitter, and Facebook. Below the header is a navigation bar with links: PADDLEBOARD RENTALS, LESSONS, TOURS, SUP ACADEMY, RACES, and CONTACT.

WHA...SUP SARASOTA?

Welcome to the SUP Sarasota Lifestyle. It is all about being happy, healthy, respecting nature and exploring our beautiful waterways. There is no better way to relax, get a fantastic physical workout and discover the Gulf, Bay, Mangroves and Lakes of Sarasota County than Stand Up Paddleboarding. From Anna Maria Island south to Venice, SUP Sarasota provides Stand Up Paddleboard Rentals, Sales, Lessons, Tours, Race and Fitness Training as well as Directing the Sarasota SUP Race Series. You can rent a board by the hour, half day, full day or week, just by giving us a call or e-mail. We will either direct you to our closest site or deliver the boards directly to you at no charge, depending on your location.

So live the life you've always wanted to live...and get in the best shape of your life while doing it. We've never met a person that didn't fall in love with this sport...we think you will too!

SUP RENTALS

1 HOUR	>> \$25
4 HOURS (HALF DAY)	>> \$45
8 HOURS (FULL DAY)	>> \$65
2+ DAYS	>> \$50 DAILY
1 WEEK	>> \$250 A WEEK

HAVE QUESTIONS?

941.704.4878
EMAIL ROB

WhatSUP?

Tweets

SUP Sarasota @SUPSarasota
Sarasota Stand Up Paddleboard Race Series - Sign Up! you can't miss! @SUPSarasota
@SUPSarasota

SUP Sarasota @SUPSarasota
2014 Sarasota SUP Race Series Video - Sign Up! you can't miss! @SUPSarasota
@SUPSarasota

FAQ's

Do I need experience?

No, not at all. However, you must be able to swim and be at least 7 years old to be on a board with an adult.

What do I wear?

We recommend wearing a bathing suit, sun protection and being ready to drink!

Give us a call 941.704.4878 or email to set up your reservation.

SUP Sarasota has proposed paddleboard rentals at the concessionary facility at Siesta Public Beach. Image from the business' website

Siesta Seen

Patterson told the SKA directors she would appreciate their willingness to talk with Alfieri.

SKA President Michael Shay replied that he understood a county website-based survey on the issue of paddleboarding at the beach ended on May 26. He and his fellow board members await the results of that, he said, but they remain opposed to marking off a section of the public swimming area for stand-up paddleboarding. "The way I interpreted that ... was at the beach, you would take, for example, a 100-foot-wide section, cordon it off and

in that section, you'd rent paddleboards and [the users] would [stay] in that area and go in and out of the water."

He added, "We had issues with that."

Many families come to Siesta Public Beach, Shay pointed out, and those with young children, especially, like to stay close to the shore so the youngsters can play in the shallow water while the parents keep close eyes on them. Taking a big swath of the beach for paddleboard use would hamper such activity, he said.



Lifeguards have expressed concerns about how demanding it would be for them to supervise stand-up paddleboarders as well as swimmers at Siesta Public Beach. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Siesta Seen

Moreover, Shay continued, he knows a lot of stand-up paddleboarders enter the Gulf of Mexico from seawalls on Ocean Boulevard. That enables them to head into the bay and even over to Lido Key, he added. If paddleboarders start out in the Gulf at Siesta Public Beach, he said, they have no place to go.

“Mexico,” SKA member Katherine Zimmerman interjected from the audience, drawing laughter.

Stand-up paddleboarders also like to go to Turtle Beach, Shay noted, because they can

maneuver through the mangroves. “That, to them, is enjoyable.”

Referring again to his board members, Shay told Patterson, “We don’t agree that [stand-up paddleboarding is] a viable option at this point” at the public beach.

Still, he said, the board members would be willing to listen to a presentation by Alfieri and LaBonte.

Patterson replied that she understood the original proposal to the County Commission



Michael Shay was named president of the Siesta Key Association on March 1. File photo



Beach Access 2 is located on Beach Road just south of the Avenida Messina intersection. Image from Google Maps

Siesta Seen

called for paddleboarders to use a 30-foot-wide access on the northern end of the swim area patrolled by lifeguards; people would go through that zone to reach the Gulf for tours or lessons without venturing into the swim area at all.

Patterson also pointed out that, under existing circumstances, paddleboarders can use other accesses besides those that lead to the public beach. Alfieri and LaBonte “were just looking to rent the boards” at the Siesta Beach concessionary facility, she added.

“Where there are already a lot of people,” Shay noted.

That facility already exists near the pavilion, she responded, stressing that she was not advocating for rentals there.

Another audience member, who reported having taken the county survey, said he was not opposed to the rental of the boards near the pavilion. However, he pointed out, many of those renters will not be experienced in paddleboarding. Their use of the equipment could be dangerous to swimmers, even if the people stay in a dedicated area. If a person falls off a board, he added, the board could end up striking nearby swimmers.

Patterson concurred with that view. “I just don’t believe you can control a bunch of tourists renting paddleboards.”

A third audience member pointed out that beginners in stand-up paddleboarding prefer calmer water than they often find in the Gulf.

Siesta resident and County Commission candidate Lourdes Ramirez, who also was in the audience, noted that three businesses operating on Siesta Key already rent paddleboards. She asked whether anyone had heard comments from their owners about the Alfieri/LaBonte proposal. No one had an answer for her.

A TRANSIENT HOARDER

Although downtown Sarasota has been the focal point for complaints about homeless people, business owners in Siesta Village recently had to contend with a transient woman who has a bit of an unusual habit. As Sgt. Scott Osborne of the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office put it, she is “by her own definition, a hoarder.”

Diane (he did not provide a last name) was the subject of discussion at both the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) and SKA meetings this month.

During the June 3 SKVA session, Osborne reported that Diane was one of three new transients who recently had shown up on Siesta. “She collects stuff out of trash cans” and piles them up at Access 2, he added. Deputies were collecting the material and hauling it away.

“She’s been out here about two weeks, from Tampa,” Osborne said.

A records search had turned up no criminal history on her, he pointed out.

Brian Wigelsworth, co-owner of Gidget’s Coastal Provisions in the Village, noted that

Siesta Seen

she was quick to pick up any free samples in his store. Every time he saw her come in, he said, he rushed to put away the samples.

“I’ve never seen anything like this,” Osborne added. She seems especially drawn to glass bottles and a type of yogurt container. “The stuff that she has is junk, worthless stuff.”

“Lighters are her big thing,” Wigelsworth noted.

She managed to drag an old TV stand with glass doors to Access 2, Osborne continued. She lined up her bottles and lighters inside, “all nice and pretty.”

Deputies have “trespassed her” from 12 Village businesses — issued her notices to stay off the premises where owners and managers have complained about her, Osborne explained.

When SKA President Michael Shay asked if the island is seeing some overflow of transients from downtown, Osborne replied that he was not sure whether the two men with Diane had come from the city.

During the June 5 SKA meeting, Deputy Chris McGregor reported that Diane was in jail. Osborne told me on June 24 that, as far as he knew, she still was incarcerated.

McGregor explained that the arrest resulted from a restraining order violation. Her bond was set at \$5,000, he added.

Prior to her arrest, he said, “Every time she was caught doing something wrong, nobody wanted to press charges on her.”

The Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce Proudly Presents
the Siesta Key 24th Annual Celebration

**Fourth of July Fireworks
VIP PARTY**
JULY 4th 5:30PM
Siesta Key Public Beach

VIP Package Information:

- Exclusive reserved on-site parking at Siesta Public Beach
- On-site catered picnic dinner for two
- Beer, wine and soft drinks
- Live musical entertainment by Ted Stevens and the Doo-Shots

For Tickets for the VIP Party, please call 941-349-3800
Tickets can be purchased at the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce
or online at www.SiestaKeyChamber.com

"Start the Fireworks"
FOURTH OF JULY KICK-OFF PARTY
JULY 3rd 5PM
South Bridge Plaza
Home of Abel's Ice Cream, Stonewood Grill
and New Balance - Located just west
of US 41 on Stickney Point Rd

The raffle tickets are \$5 per ticket, or 5 tickets for \$20. The winner of the raffle will receive:

- A VIP package and will start the fireworks show
- A behind the scene tour at the launch site
- News coverage
- Recognition in the Observer/Pelican Press
- An official Zambelli hard hat

Tickets can be purchased at the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce
5114 Ocean Blvd., Siesta Key Village (Davidson's Plaza)

2014
Siesta Key 24th Annual Fireworks Celebration
Siesta Key Public Beach

100% OF PROCEEDS
FUND THE SIESTA KEY
FIREWORKS

The Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce still has tickets available for its VIP July Fourth picnic, which include a great vantage point for the fireworks show at Siesta Public Beach, and for chances to start the pyrotechnics. Image courtesy Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce

For example, he continued, a man sitting on his deck at a Beach Road house saw her pedal away on his bicycle. When deputies caught her, McGregor said she told them, “I thought that was my bike.”

Yet, the man did not want to press charges. **SNL**



The parking lot at Siesta Public Beach appeared mostly full early in the afternoon of Wednesday, June 18. Photo by Norman Schimmel

TOURIST TAX REVENUE COULD HIT THE \$16 MILLION MARK THIS FISCAL YEAR

With Sarasota County already having collected \$11.5 million in Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue through April, “It’s looking like we possibly could be over [the] \$16 million [mark] for the year,” Doreen Buonpastore, a staff member of the county’s Office of Financial Management, told the Tourist Development Council during its June 19 meeting.

“Wow! That’s terrific,” responded County Commissioner Nora Patterson, who chairs the advisory board.

Through April, the TDT revenue was up 14 percent over the same period in the previous fiscal year, Buonpastore pointed out.

During the entire 2013 fiscal year, Sarasota County collected \$14,870,207.

So far this fiscal year, which began Oct. 1, 2013, April has proven the busiest month. The total TDT revenue collected in April was \$1,717,201, according to a chart provided to

the TDC members based on figures from the Sarasota County Tax Collector’s Office. That figure was 32.1 percent higher than the April 2013 total of \$1,300,044, the chart showed.

December 2013 is in second place, showing an increase of 20.3 percent over the TDT revenue amount for December 2012.

However, March has the highest total of any month thus far in the current fiscal year. Its TDT revenue figure was \$2,931,741, according to the Sarasota County Tax Collector’s Office. That was up 7.8 percent from the March 2013 number of \$2,720,202.

Through the end of May, Siesta Key continued to lead the way for reporting locations, the Tax Collector’s Office data showed. Siesta accounted for 31.67 percent of the total, while the City of Sarasota was in second place with 28.28 percent. Sarasota County held third place, with 17.63 percent, and Longboat Key accounted for 10.89 percent of the money.

Rachel Brown Hackney

UPCOMING HOLIDAY PERIOD TO INCLUDE ROAD CLOSURES FOR EVENTS

With July Fourth a week away, the Sarasota Police Department has released information related to road closures and parking restrictions related to the Suncoast Super Boat Grand Prix Festival.

No parking will be allowed on the city's bay-front between Ringling Boulevard and the entrance to Marie Selby Gardens on U.S. 41 during the July Fourth fireworks display hosted by [Suncoast Charities for Children](#) as part of the Grand Prix celebration, a news release says. "This is a designated pedestrian viewing area only," the release adds.

During the Power Boats by the Bay downtown block party on July 3, public consumption of alcohol will be restricted to the 1400 and 1500

blocks of Main Street between 5 p.m. and midnight, the release points out. "Outside this designated area, you must be seated at one of the ... restaurants licensed to serve alcohol outdoors" to consume such beverages, the release notes. "Carrying an open container of alcohol in public inside the city limits is in violation of City of Sarasota City Ordinance 5-21. You can be cited to appear in court or be subject to arrest at the time this violation occurs," the release adds.

The Police Department suggests those planning to consume alcoholic beverages away from home consider bringing with them a friend or family member who can be a designated driver or utilizing [BeMyDD](#), which offers Designed Driver and Pick Up services,



The Tilted Kilt and its crew and passengers make their way through downtown Sarasota during the 2012 Parade of Power Boats. Photo by Norman Schimmel

the release says. With the former, the release notes, “you can reserve a driver for the day or evening for \$16 per hour.” The Pick Up Service provides a driver to take customers home at a cost of \$25 plus mileage. Learn more at bemydd.com.

Among traffic pattern and parking changes, the department points out in the release that the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall lot will be closed from 7 a.m. on July 3 to 12:30 a.m. on July 7.

On July 3, to make staging possible for the boat parade and for the parade itself to utilize

Main Street, a number of road closings are scheduled.

Lemon Avenue from First Street to State Street will be closed from 1 p.m. to midnight. From 2 to 9 p.m., East Avenue and Wallace Avenue will be closed from Main Street to Fruitville Road. From 4 to 9 p.m., Main Street will be closed from U.S. 301 to School Avenue. From 6 to 9 p.m., Main Street will be closed from Gulfstream Avenue to Pineapple Avenue and from U.S. 301 to Orange Avenue. Additionally, Main Street will be closed from Orange Avenue to Central Avenue from 6 p.m. to midnight.

FORMER JOHNSON & JOHNSON EXECUTIVE JOINS FOUNDATION BOARD

Claudia Cardillo, former executive with Johnson & Johnson, has been appointed to the Board of the Library Foundation for Sarasota County, the organization has announced.

Cardillo retired to Siesta Key in 2011 after holding leadership positions with Ricoh Corp. and Lenox Brands and working for 23 years with the Johnson & Johnson family of companies, a news release says. She also served as president of Cardillo Business Management Group, providing consulting services to major corporations.

Among community activities, Cardillo served on the board of directors and as a volunteer with Big Brothers, Big Sisters in Roanoke VA. Since moving to Sarasota, she “has become an avid volunteer and mentor at Girls Inc. of Sarasota County and a job resource coach at Church of the Palms,” the release notes. She is a member of the Gulf Coast Leadership Institute Class of 2014.

Linda Getzen, president of the Library Foundation, says in the release, “We are



Claudia Cardillo/Contributed photo

fortunate to add Claudia to the Library Foundation Board and welcome her business acumen, financial experience and passion for libraries.”

CHAMBER NAMES GOODWILL MANASOTA NONPROFIT OF THE YEAR

The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce named **Goodwill Manasota** the Nonprofit Organization of the Year during the 2014 Frank G. Berlin Small Business Award ceremony held recently.

An independent panel of judges selected Goodwill Manasota from among three finalists, a Chamber news release says. The others were Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium and U.S. Masters Swimming.

“This top accolade is truly an honor, especially because it comes from the community in which we serve and live,” said Bob Rosinsky, president and CEO of Goodwill Manasota, who accepted the award along with his board’s

chairman, Steven Boone. “Recognition like this is an important and appreciated acknowledgement for our tireless and dedicated team who are committed to our mission of changing lives through the power of our work.”

The organization’s CEO also noted that its collaborations with other not-for-profit organizations and local businesses multiply the impact of Goodwill’s services in the areas of education, employment, economic development and environmental responsibility, the release notes.

In its 24th year, The Frank G. Berlin Small Business Awards program recognizes business and individual members of the Chamber.



Goodwill Manasota board Chairman Steven Boone (left) and Goodwill Manasota CEO Bob Rosinsky accept the Greater Sarasota Chamber’s Nonprofit of the Year Award. Contributed photo

COUNTIES AWARDED A DIFFERENT MODERN PENTATHLON EVENT IN 2015

The Sarasota-Bradenton area officially has been awarded the Modern Pentathlon First World Cup of 2015, which is expected to bring a larger number of athletes to the area than the Modern Pentathlon events earlier this month, organizers have announced.

The competition will take place Feb. 18-21, Rob Stull, spokesman for USA Modern Pentathlon, and Katherine Harris, executive chairwoman of Sarasota Bradenton Modern Pentathlon, said in a news release. Stull noted the Modern Pentathlon World Cup Final, held June 5-8 in the area, “left a very positive impression on the executives and board members of both USA Modern Pentathlon and the Union International de Pentathlon Moderne (UIPM),” the release continues.

“Pentathlon is really in tune with the importance of forming a local fan base,” added Stull in the release. “Usually, with these events, you only get friends and family as spectators; we don’t typically attract the local community. In [Sarasota and Bradenton], we actually had local community leaders, residents, students and athletes who cheered on the games.”

Originally, Sarasota and Bradenton won the bid for the 2015 Second World Cup, along with the 2016 World Cup Final and Olympic Trials. However, “the true test for future events was this past event,” the release points out. The success of the recent World Cup Final was a result of “the unconditional energy and passion of the Local Organizing Committee (LOC),” led by Harris, a former congresswoman from Sarasota and long-time fan of the sport, the release notes.

“Sport unites countries; it transcends everything,” said Harris in the release. “We’re the ideal community; we should have the ideal sport.”

Sarasota and Bradenton can expect more than 200 international athletes for the First World Cup of 2015, the release adds. “This event is also expected to attract visits from dignitaries” during the height of the Sarasota-Bradenton season, it says. “Taking advantage of the timing, the LOC is already working on getting more local arts and cultural groups involved as well as making plans for athletes to go to schools and various organizations to speak to students,” it concludes.



Modern Pentathlon features competition in fencing, swimming, shooting and stadium show jumping. Image from the Sarasota-Bradenton Modern Pentathlon [website](#)

WORLD OF BEER TO TAKE THE SPACE OF EAT HERE SARASOTA

Sean Murphy, owner of the [Eat Here restaurant family](#) and Beach Bistro on Anna Maria Island, has announced the closing of his Eat Here location in downtown Sarasota so the building can become a new home of [World of Beer](#).

“World of Beer contacted us with an unsolicited but very compelling offer to buy out our lease,” Murphy said in a news release. “The offer was attractive enough we could not refuse it. They are significantly extending the term of the lease and will be an excellent fit for the location.”

He added, “The Eat Here family’s smaller restaurants on Anna Maria Island and Siesta Key will continue offering chef-focused, chef-crafted, coastal cookery at their island locations.”

Murphy said in the release that he feels World of Beer “will do very well” in Eat Here’s location, set back from a fountain and urban park at the intersection of Links Avenue and Main Street. He noted the “momentous excitement brewing in the neighborhood now” with the opening of McCurdy’s Comedy Theatre a short distance away on Ringling Boulevard.

According to the release, the building is owned by Dr. Mark Kauffman, a Sarasota businessman, and his family.

Dean Lambert, a managing partner of the World of Beer on University Parkway, says in the release that he is excited about the new location. “It will be an excellent showcase for our extensive offerings of craft beer and our new food menu,” he added in the release. “World of Beer will be opening on Main in the early fall,” he pointed out.



Eat Here Sarasota on Main Street is closing to make way for World of Beer, the owner of the Eat Here restaurants has announced. Photo courtesy Eat Here restaurants

BAY PARTNERS

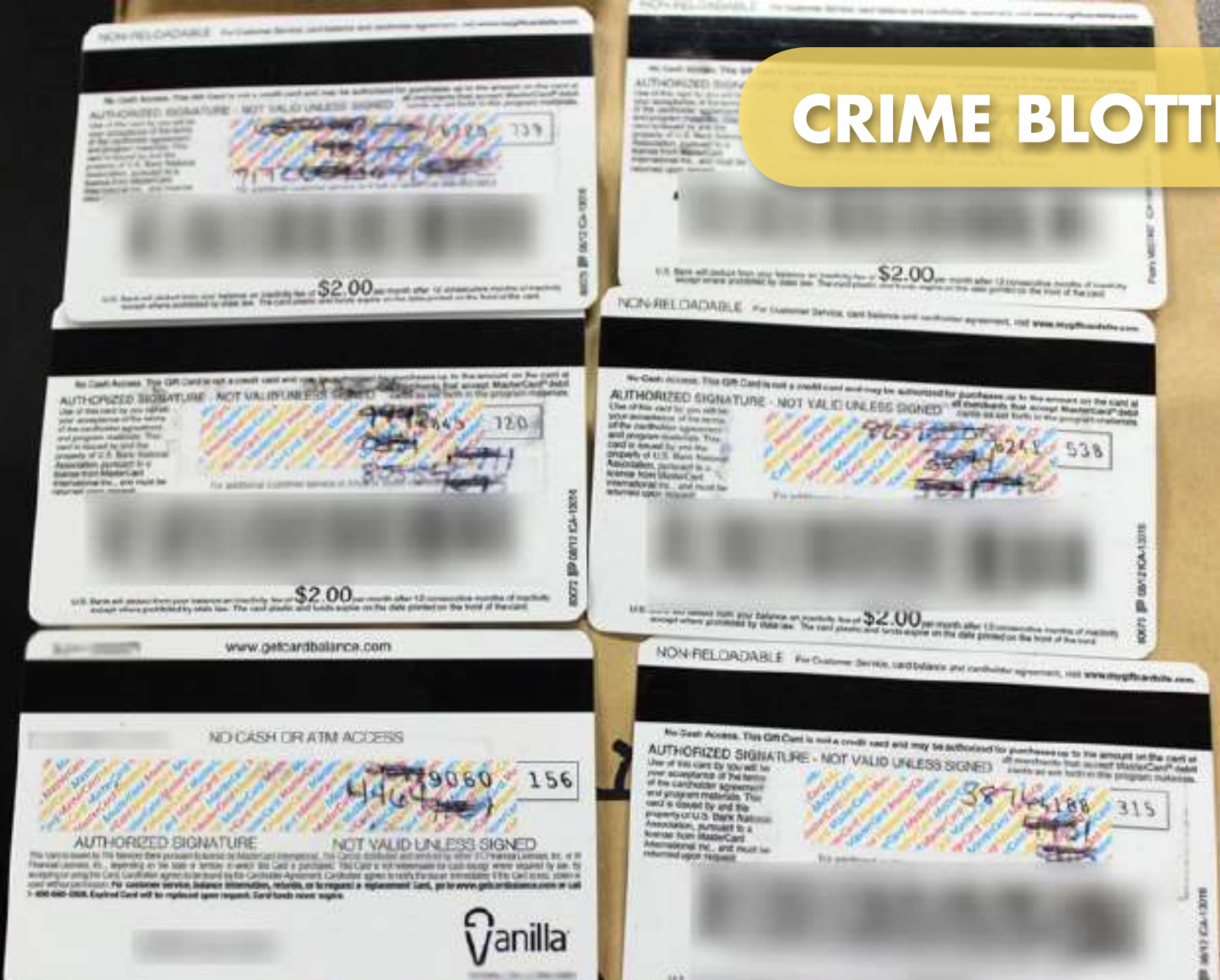
The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) has awarded grants to nine local organizations as part of the 2014 Bay Partners Grant Program, the organization has announced. The fully funded projects are those proposed by Anna Maria Island Sail and Power Squadron, Bayshore High School of Bradenton, Friends of Florida Maritime Museum, Sarasota Bay Watch and the Science and Environment Council of Southwest Florida, an SBEP news

release says. The partially funded projects are those planned by Nature's Academy of Bradenton, Save Our Seabirds and Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. Since 2003, the SBEP has awarded nearly \$247,000 in Bay Partners Grants to 126 organizations, the release notes. Visit SarasotaBay.org to learn more about the Bay Partners Grant Program.

Photo by Norman Schimmel



CRIME BLOTTER



A four-digit number on the back of a credit card indicates the number of times the account information on the magnetic strip of a cloned card has been changed, Sheriff's Office detectives say. Contributed photo

LEE COUNTY MEN ARRESTED ON CREDIT CARD FRAUD CHARGES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested two Lee County men whom watchful Walmart Loss Prevention employees caught allegedly committing credit card fraud, the office has announced.

Walmart personnel noticed that as the two suspects bought gift cards, they cycled through multiple credit cards, using a different one each time a transaction was declined, a news release explains. Walmart personnel contacted the Sheriff's Office Tactical Unit, which responded along with Patrol deputies. The officers found both suspects at a rental vehicle, the release continues. Deputies discovered numerous gift cards, 33 fraudulent

credit cards, unopened merchandise and approximately \$3,700 in cash, the release adds.

Responding detectives then "found receipts that show the suspects used cloned credit cards at Walmart and Home Depot on Cattlemen Road [on June 23] and at other retailers this month" between Sarasota and the rest of Southwest Florida, the release says.

Demarcus Smith, 26, of Fort Myers, and George Joyner, 34, of Lehigh Acres, are both charged with two counts of Trafficking in Counterfeit Credit Cards. Smith is also charged with Violation of Probation because he is under state supervision after being



Demarcus Smith/Contributed photo



George Joyner/Contributed photo



convicted in a child abuse/neglect case, the release points out.

Detectives saw that the cloned cards in the men's possession had several four-digit numbers handwritten on the backs (see the

accompanying photo). All business owners should teach their employees to check for this pattern, the release explains, "as it is an indication of fraud, noting how many times that the account information on the magnetic strip of a cloned card has been changed."

(Above) Detectives discovered two suspects with numerous items that reportedly had been purchased through the use of cloned credit cards. Contributed photo

22-YEAR-OLD ARRESTED FOR SHOOTING INCIDENT ON BEE RIDGE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a 22-year-old man in connection with a shooting incident on Bee Ridge Road earlier this month, the office has announced.

When deputies arrived at the Walgreens parking lot on Bee Ridge just after midnight June 9, they learned that Asa Masotti of 6920 Clark Road, Sarasota, had asked a man he did not know if the man wanted to buy a gun, a news release says. Masotti reportedly took a silver Smith & Wesson 9mm handgun out of a lock-box in the trunk of his vehicle, the release continues. Then when he racked the slide, the release adds, the gun went off, firing a round into the victim's right thigh.

Witnesses say Masotti initially gave the gun to a friend who arrived after the shooting and told him to get rid of it, but, instead, the friend assisted the victim, ensured the clerk called 911 and remained on scene, the release says.

The Sheriff's Office determined the handgun had not been stolen.



Asa Masotti/Contributed photo

The victim, 27-year-old Benjamin Smith of Sarasota, suffered a shattered femur and had to undergo surgery at Blake Medical Center in Bradenton, the release notes.

Masotti, who has five prior arrests for Burglary, Aggravated Battery and Domestic Violence, was taken into custody on the night of June 19 and charged with Improper Exhibition of a Dangerous Weapon.

OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH RESULTS IN 66 ARRESTS ON 105 CHARGES INVOLVING INCIDENTS IN SOUTH SARASOTA COUNTY

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office arrested 66 people on 105 new charges during Operation Southern Watch, "a targeted effort to prevent crime and enhance safety in south Sarasota County," the office has announced in a news release.

The agency used its Intelligence to Action (I2A) model of intelligence-led policing to identify areas of Venice, Nokomis, Englewood, North Port and Warm Mineral Springs "that are susceptible to crime," the release explains. From June 13 to June 22, deputies increased their law enforcement presence to address trends, patterns and hot spots, and they worked to locate wanted persons in addition to conducting highway interdiction and DUI enforcement, the release continues.

The arrest history of the suspects showed a combined 451 prior felony charges and 590 prior misdemeanor charges, the release points out. "Ten of the people arrested have served prison time, and five are labeled prolific offenders," it notes.

"These operations are created through data analysis and intelligence, as well as the cooperation of community members who work with the Sheriff's Office regarding pervasive problems," said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. "We are committed to improving the quality of life that residents expect and to send a message to criminals who become a public nuisance that they're not welcome in these neighborhoods."



Operation Southern Watch

Total Number Persons Arrested - 66

Total Number Charges Filed - 105



Justin Horn

DOB 4/7/1988

10147 Melanie Avenue Englewood

Arrest_Date

Charge_1 Possession of Paraphernalia

Charge_2

Charge_3

Criminal History

Felony Charges 0

Felony Convictions 0

Misd Charges 2

Misd Convictions 0

Incarcerations 0



Marlon Cordova

DOB 8/2/1988

8299 Leona Avenue North Port

Arrest_Date 6/4/2014

Charge_1 Trafficking in Heroin

Charge_2 Possession of Cocaine WITS/M/D

Charge_3 Possession of Controlled Substance (

Criminal History

Felony Charges 16

Felony Convictions 0

Misd Charges 2

Misd Convictions 0

Incarcerations 0



Rachel Baye

DOB 10/20/1985

4713 N. 47th Street Tampa

Arrest_Date 6/5/2014

Charge_1 Possess Counterfeit Bank Bill Check

Charge_2 Trafficking in Methamphetamine

Charge_3 Produce Methamphetamine

Criminal History

Felony Charges 10

Felony Convictions 0

Misd Charges 14

Misd Convictions 5

Incarcerations 0

POLICE MAKE THREE ARRESTS IN OPERATION CROSS COUNTRY

On Thursday, June 19, the Sarasota Police Department arrested three people and seized two vehicles in conjunction with a national initiative called Operation Cross Country, the department has reported.

The department's Street Crimes Unit, in collaboration with the FBI, was focused on prostitution on North Tamiami Trail, human trafficking and adults using the Internet to attempt to lure children into sexual activity, a news release explains. "During the operation, 168 juveniles were recovered nationwide," the release adds.

Operation Cross Country was part of the Innocence Lost National Initiative, established in 2003 by the FBI's Criminal Investigations Division, the release continues. This year, Operation Cross Country initiatives were conducted in 54 FBI field offices and 106 cities, it notes.



Jessica Fisher/Contributed photo



Jessel Rajesh Patel/Contributed photo



Whisper Morton/Contributed photo

The following people were arrested in Sarasota:

- Jessel Rajesh Patel, 25, of 9009 Beacon Manor Terrace, Bradenton. He was charged with Using a Computer To Solicit and Travel to Meet a Minor; Travel to Meet a Minor after Using a Computer to Lure a Child; Using a 2-Way Communication

Device to Facilitate a Felony; and Lewd and Lascivious Battery.

- Whisper Morton, 30, of 1070 Mecca Drive, Sarasota. She was charged with Prostitution with 3 Prior Convictions.
- Jessica Fisher, 29; no address was available, according to the Police Department. She was charged with a misdemeanor count of Prostitution.

ENGLEWOOD MAN CHARGED AFTER SWAT INCIDENT

A 36-year-old Englewood man has been charged with Possession of a Firearm by a Convicted Felon as a result of a reported domestic violence incident on June 18, the Sheriff's Office has announced.

Patrol deputies responded about 7:30 p.m. on June 18 to a call about a domestic violence situation at 25 Harwich Circle in Englewood, a news release says. The 77-year-old victim — the suspect's mother — had fled the home and gone to a neighbor's for safety, the release continues. She informed the deputies that as she was leaving, she heard multiple gunshots from inside the residence, the report says.

She added that she believed the likely source of the gunfire was an assault rifle in her son's possession, according to the report.

The victim also told the deputies that the suspect was a convicted felon and that he "had been drinking alcohol throughout the day," the release adds.

The suspect, Jeffery Mullins of 25 Harwich Circle, Englewood, barricaded himself within the residence and eventually stopped communicating with the initial responders, the release says. The Sheriff's Office SWAT team and detectives then went to the scene, it notes.



Jeffery Mullins/Contributed photo

Mullins eventually surrendered at approximately 1:30 a.m. on June 19.

In interviews with neighbors, deputies learned that within the previous two days, the suspect had approached one neighbor, asking the person if he wanted an AK-47 assault rifle and 1,000 rounds of armor-piercing ammunition, the report says.

Mullins was ordered held without bond in the Sarasota County jail.

THREE PEOPLE ARRESTED FOLLOWING RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested three people in connection with a residential burglary reported on June 23 while a teenage girl was inside her Spainwood Drive home in Sarasota.

The 13-year-old girl was on the phone with her mother shortly after noon when she heard someone trying to break into the house, a news release says. The mother told the girl to run out of the back door while the mother called 911, the release adds.

When deputies arrived, they saw the suspects leaving the scene, the release continues. Two suspects fled on foot while a third drove off in a silver pickup truck, it notes. "The driver was captured after a brief pursuit," it says. Deputies set up a perimeter around the neighborhood and located the other two suspects



Jessina Butler/Contributed photo



Ja'Mair Hooks/Contributed photo



Howard China Smith/Contributed

after a resident reported seeing two people jump over her fence, the release adds.

All three suspects, Ja'Mair Hooks, 16, of 2425 19th St., Sarasota; Howard China Smith, 16, of 3380 Central Ave., Sarasota; and Jessina Butler, 25, of 1806 Sixth Avenue East, Bradenton, are charged with Burglary of an Occupied Dwelling.

Hooks was found in possession of a Kindle Fire, an iPad, a cellphone and Social Security cards from the residence, according to the report. Deputies discovered Smith carrying an iPod and a gold watch allegedly stolen from the house, the report continues.

Hooks also was charged with Aggravated Fleeing to Elude and Grand Theft. Additionally, the Manatee County Sheriff's Office has charged him with Grand Theft Auto for driving the allegedly stolen truck in which deputies found him.

Smith also was charged with Grand Theft, while Butler was charged with Grand Theft and Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor.

Further, the release says, all three suspects have prior arrests.

25-YEAR-OLD SARASOTA MAN ARRESTED ON HEROIN TRAFFICKING CHARGE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, working in conjunction with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), has arrested a Sarasota man for trafficking in heroin, the office has announced.

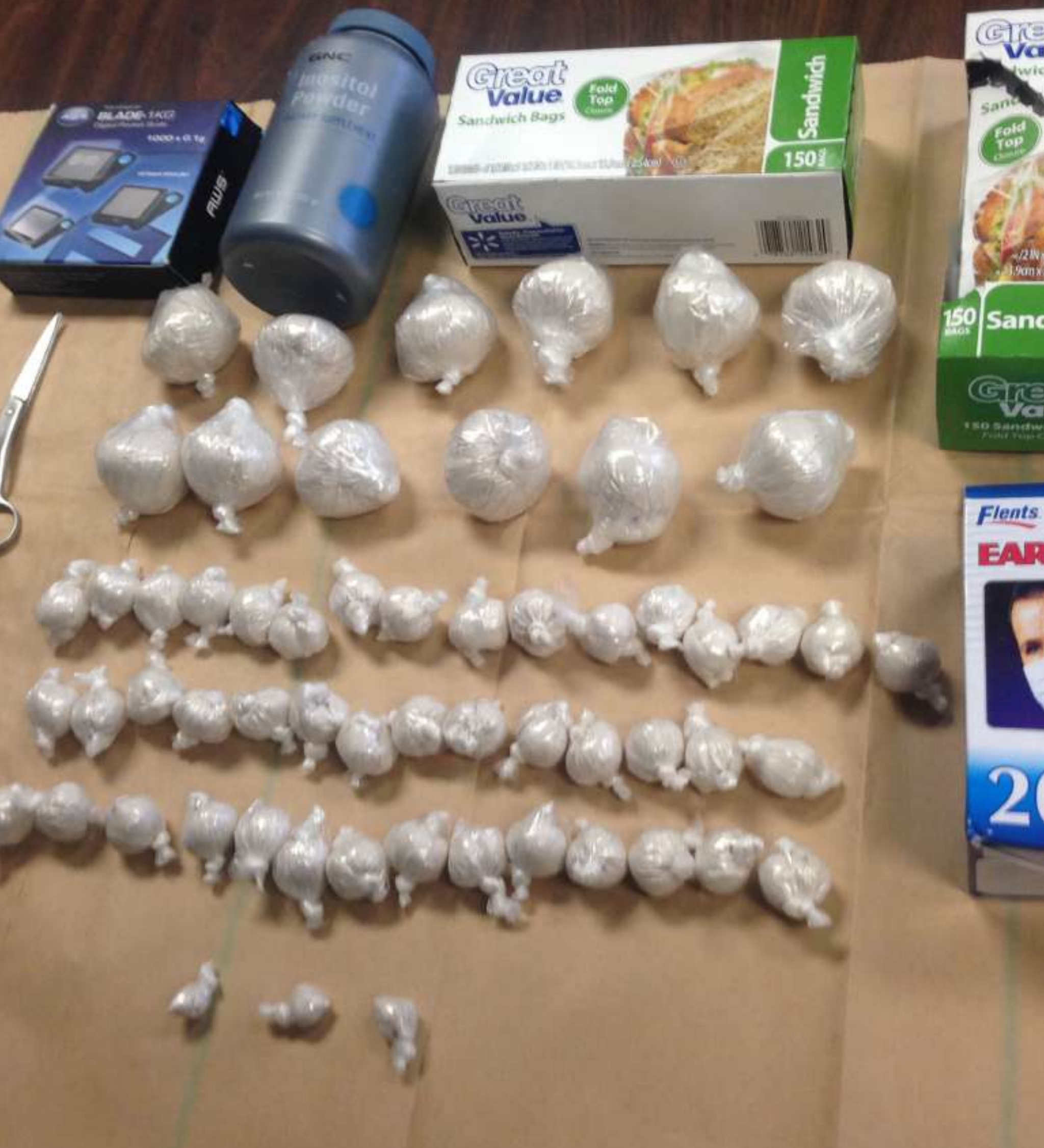
Darryl Darling Ortiz Caberera, 22, of 3223 Nature Circle, Apartment 203, Sarasota, was under investigation by Special Investigation Section narcotics detectives and ICE agents over the past several months, a news release says. On several occasions, detectives working undercover purchased heroin from him, buying 5 grams at a time for \$550, the release adds.

As a result of this initial investigation, the release continues, detectives obtained an arrest warrant for four counts of Sale/Trafficking in Heroin and took Caberera into custody on the afternoon of June 24 on Lockwood Ridge Road. After he consented to a search of his home, the release adds, further investigation yielded more than half a kilo of heroin, resulting in a fifth trafficking charge.

Caberera is being held in the Sarasota County Jail without bond.



Darryl Caberera/Contributed photo




Sarasota County Sheriff's Office personnel reported finding more than half a kilo of heroin in the home of a suspect already under arrest for trafficking in the drug, the office has announced. Contributed photo

SHERIFF'S OFFICE JOINS OPERATION DRY WATER THIS MONTH

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has joined the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators in Operation Dry Water, June 27-29, the office has reported.

"Members of the Marine Patrol Unit will monitor Sarasota County waterways to ensure boaters operate safely and at posted speeds, have proper safety equipment and avoid alcohol while at the helm of the boat," a news release says. "This is the sixth year of this operation," it adds.

"The goal of this safety initiative is to reduce the number of accidents and fatalities through heightened education and enforcement, particularly in regard to alcohol and drug-related accidents," the release continues. "Alcohol use while boating is the leading contributing factor in recreational boater deaths on our nation's waterways," it points out.

Thousands of local, state and federal law enforcement officers and recreational boating safety advocates are conducting similar campaigns across the country, the release adds. To learn, more visit operationdrywater.org. 



OPINION



THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS DRAFT REPORT IS HIGHLY SUSPECT

EDITORIAL

The long-delayed draft report by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), regarding the planned mining of the Big Pass ebb shoal to obtain sand for the renourishing of South Lido beaches, was released on June 11. No gasps of surprise were heard from those perusing its contents, because there were no surprises: The draft report claims to mathematically prove that the plan will have no negative impact on Big Pass' ebb shoal, Siesta Key or downdrift beaches.

In 171 pages of colorful diagrams, maps, photographs, long lists and determinedly obfuscatory prose, the draft report has the tinge of self-fulfilling prophecy, given the ACOE's almost pugnacious assertion last September that its staff knew what would

work best in the ongoing effort to renourish the eroding beaches on Lido Key.

ACOE representatives at the time were almost disdainful in their dismissal of local protests to the plan, maintaining that the impact of dredging on the Big Pass shoal would be almost imperceptible while saving South Lido from an uncertain future because of encroaching seas.

Yet, those protests were based on more than just the fretfulness of people potentially affected by the ACOE plans, particularly residents of Siesta Key and other county taxpayers who realize what an economic engine Siesta Beach represents for the county. It was based on prior study of a similar ACOE plan, which showed the impact of dredging the ebb

OPINION

shoal of Big Pass would pose an unacceptable risk to Siesta Key and the downdrift beaches.

That study, done in 1994 by a senior scientist at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute and a professor at the University of Virginia, clearly showed that the ebb shoal in Big Pass was the lynchpin for the stability of sand formations to the south, including Siesta Key. Because of the study, the plan by the ACOE to mine Big Pass for Venice beach renourishment was abandoned.

Yet, here is the ACOE again, proposing the same dredging plan and claiming it will have no impact on the surrounding islands.

In its draft report, the ACOE acknowledges that the ebb shoal in Big Pass is virtually unchanged over the past 130 years. However, the ACOE conveniently ignores the 1994 study that refuted its assurances of little or no impact from dredging. Because of the unchanging nature of the Big Pass ebb shoal, that earlier study has lost none of its relevance in considering the current proposal.

Simply put, the ACOE is attempting to force on Sarasota County a solution to normal beach erosion that could have devastating and far reaching consequences. Its draft report is a poor attempt to use its mostly discredited methodologies to support its dangerous conclusions.

Just as in 1994, the proposal of the ACOE must be subjected to a rigorous peer review by credible experts in coastal geology. Such a review would provide an impartial assessment of the ACOE's analytical methodologies and confirm or deny the accuracy of its predictions for the impact of dredging the Big Pass ebb shoal.

The City of Sarasota, within whose boundaries lie the eroding beaches on Lido Key, has a vested interest in a positive evaluation of the ACOE draft plan. As a result, it has hired Cliff Truitt of Coastal Technology Corp. to conduct a "peer review" of the ACOE proposal. However, Truitt has long been an advocate of beach renourishment and has worked with local governments on renourishment proposals in the past. There is little reason to believe that Truitt's evaluation of the ACOE plan will be the exhaustive analysis needed to ensure the plan's veracity.

Sarasota County, on the other hand, has much to lose if the ACOE proposal is adopted and its modeling assumptions are incorrect. The damage to Siesta Key and its beaches, a major source of tourism tax revenue, could have a

profound impact on the county's long-term finances. Accordingly, the county must commission its own review of the ACOE report and employ someone with impeccable credentials to undertake the task.

Simply put, the ACOE is attempting to force a solution to normal beach erosion on Sarasota County that could have devastating and far-reaching consequences. Its draft report is a poor attempt to use its mostly discredited methodologies to support its dangerous conclusions.


OPINION

Two individuals who immediately come to mind are Stanley R. Riggs, distinguished professor of geology at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC, and Orrin H. Pilkey, professor emeritus at the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University. Both are acknowledged experts in coastal geology, especially the unique geology of barrier islands, with decades of experience.

The county should seek out either of these men to evaluate the ACOE plan. Their agreement with the ACOE's assertions would remove most objections to the proposal. However, their objection to the accuracy of the plan would be a vital warning to find other alternatives for preserving Lido's beaches.

The ACOE has presented a draft plan that relies excessively on models that are outdated

and not specific to the wind and tidal forces of the southwest gulf coast. It almost seems "reverse engineered": The supporting data was crafted to buttress the conclusion, which actually was offered at the outset. And given the checkered history of the ACOE, with environmental disasters too numerous to catalog here, the decision-makers of Sarasota County must err on the side of caution.

New Orleans, one of the oldest cities in the nation, was nearly obliterated by Hurricane Katrina because of the ACOE's miscalculations about the effectiveness of its flood control systems for that city. We should not invite a similar catastrophe for Sarasota County by blindly trusting that the ACOE is more "right" in its calculations for the preservation of our fragile barrier islands. 



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HOMELESS SHELTER SHOULD BE BUILT ON LIME AVENUE

To the Editor:

Regarding the article *Decision to shelter homeless is delayed* (*Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, June 24): The City Commission unanimously opposed creating an adult shelter that would accept people who are drunk or on drugs at the site of the Harvest Tabernacle Church on Lime Avenue. Board members said they

disapproved of the location because the area is slated for redevelopment, even though it is very close to the jail and other services that homeless people need, as recommended by the county's and city's homelessness consultant, Dr. Robert Marbut. The cost for a shelter on that property is the lowest by far of the three top proposed locations.

OPINION

After a year of intense discussion on how to solve Sarasota's homelessness problem, these "hardcore" homeless will have to wait longer for a home off the streets while the city and county search for another acceptable site.

I have a suggestion. Let's build this adult shelter on Lime Avenue and finally give these homeless people a decent place to live and tell the developers that *they* have to search for an alternative site for their projects.

*Steve Scott
Sarasota*



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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

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SAVING THE OCEANS

All photos by Carolann Cahill

VISITORS TO MOTE MARINE WERE AMONG THOSE AROUND THE WORLD WHO RECENTLY PUT THEIR FOCUS ON THE EARTH'S VAST WATER RESOURCES

Story and Photos

By Carolann Cahill

Contributing Writer

We cannot keep taking our precious ecosystems for granted. Science has demonstrated that.

At least 70 percent of our world is covered in water, and oceans contain the majority of it. The largest space on earth is inextricably linked to our climate, too.

Our oceans also provide shipping lanes, food and many other resources to which we have grown accustomed in our everyday lives. What is so amazing is that as they meet all these needs, they ask nothing in return.

After years of dumping, oil and gas exploration, development, inadequate protection and unsustainable fishing practices, our oceans and their habitats are deteriorating, international research shows. With 90 percent of Florida's populace living along the coast, the ongoing devastation should be cause for alarm. Will our state continue to be the popular tourist destination it is if the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico became polluted wastelands?

We do have the power to protect our oceans.





In 2008, World Oceans Day was officially recognized by the United Nations. Coordinated by [The Ocean Project](#) and [The World Ocean Network](#), June 8 was set aside as a time to reflect on all the benefits of the oceans.

Around the world, aquariums, conservation organizations, zoos and schools host events that highlight the deep connection between our oceans and our human spirit. To keep our oceans healthy and productive for us and future generations, we must commit to sustainable lifestyles.

In Sarasota, [Mote Marine](#) has been conducting an observance of World Oceans Day. It did so again this year.

The facility's public relations manager, Hayley Rutger, describes Mote as "an informal science education center that works to

help the public become more ocean-literate 365 days per year." To that point, on any given day, visitors are able to observe a variety of marine life. Sharks, manatees, sea turtles and "Moonshine" the dolphin call Mote home. Hands-on exhibits allow you to get up-close and personal with rays and various other reef and bay inhabitants.

Numerous organizations were represented at this year's World Oceans Day event: Manatee County Parks and Natural Resource Department, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, Florida Native Plant Society (Serenoa Chapter), Mote Education Division, Sarasota County Public Utilities, Longboat Key Turtle Watch, Mote's Spotted Eagle Ray Program, Sarasota Bay Estuary Program, Save Our Seabirds, Around the Bend Nature








Tours, Mote's Internship Program and Tampa Bay Watch.

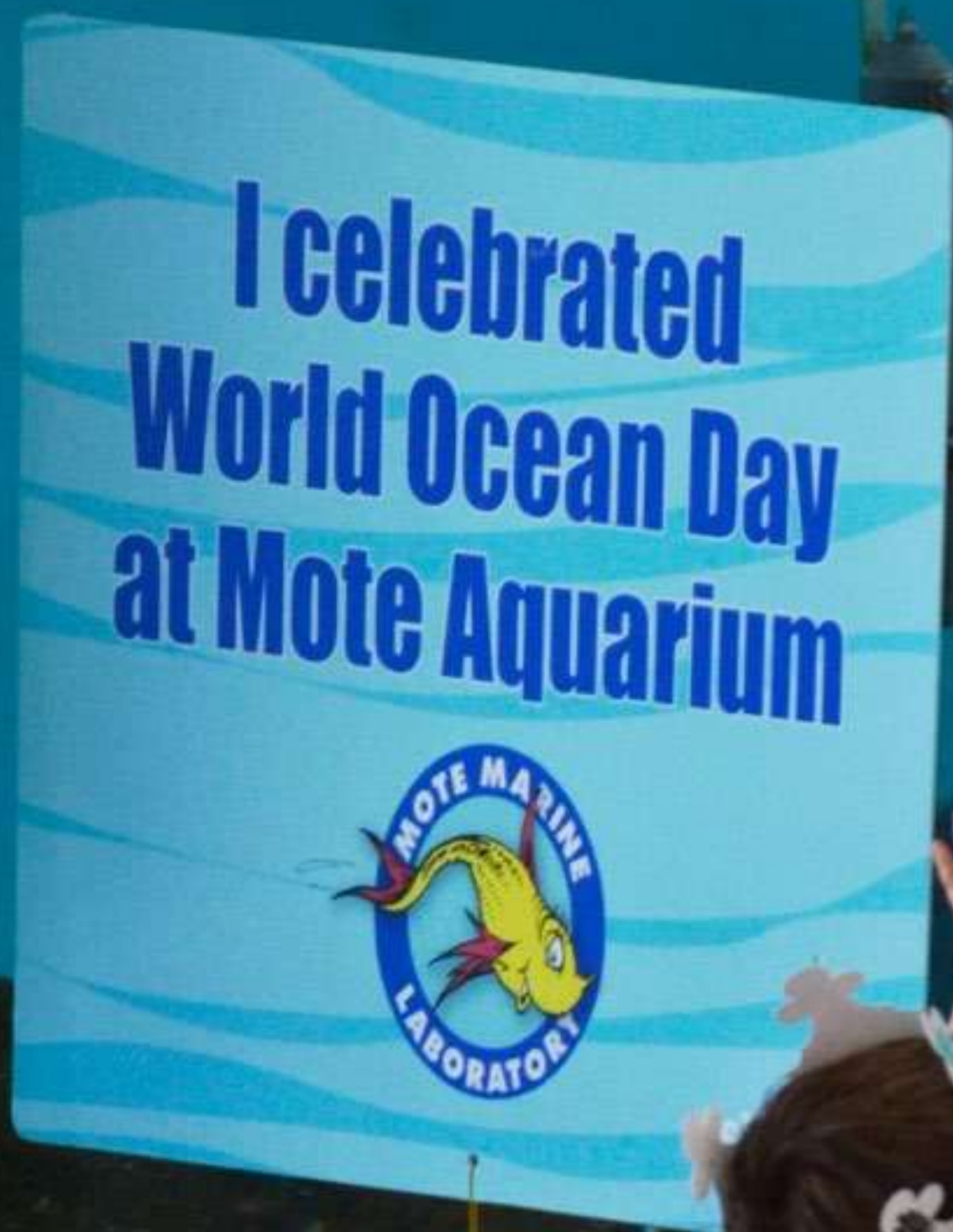
Among the many exhibits, the beach dune sunflowers donated by Green Seasons Nursery were especially a hit. Children were able to pot them and, therefore, take little Florida native plants home.

Games, coloring and crafts were enjoyed by all, and a whole lot of educational materials were handed out to participants.

Seven hundred sixty visitors attended the Dr. Seuss-themed festival. As Rutger says, "It's wonderful that, year after year, people of all ages join us to recognize the importance of our oceans, learn more about them and have a great time at Mote."

Editor's note: Carolann Cahill is passionate about the environment and gardening for wildlife. 







COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

27 JUNE	FridayFest returns with Yesterdayze June 27, 5-9 p.m., rain or shine. Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Free. Blankets and lawn chairs welcome. No outside food or drinks allowed. Information: 953-3368 or vanwezel.org .
27+ JUNE	Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>Pump Boys and Dinettes</i> Through June 29; times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$34 to \$44. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org .
27+ JUNE	Baritones Unbound: Celebrating the Uncommon Voice of the Common Man Through June 29; times vary. Asolo Repertory Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$20 and up. Information: 351-8000 or AsoloRep.org .
27+ JUNE	Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>At the Hop</i> Through July 6; times vary. Court Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$32 to \$36. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org .
27+ JUNE	Banyan Theater Company presents <i>The Price</i> by Arthur Miller 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 Sty of the Blind Pig</i> by Phillip Hayes Dean to follow in July and <i>Collected Stories</i> by Donald Margulies in August. Information: banyantheater-company.com .
27+ JUNE	FST presents <i>Becoming Dr. Ruth</i> Through July 27; times vary. Keating Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$34 to \$44. Information: floridastudiotheatre.org or 366-9000.
27+ JUNE	Allyn Gallup Gallery presents <i>A Few Great, Big Pictures</i> Through July 28; times vary. 1288 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Information: 366-2454 or AllynGallup.com .

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

27+ JUNE	FST Improv: Out of Bounds Match Up 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 .
27+ JUNE	UUCS Presents Jane Shannon: Works in Fabric 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 .
27+ JUNE	Dabbert Gallery presents Summer Showcase 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 .
04 JULY	The Gloria Musicae Singers present Patriotic Spectacular July 4, 4:30 p.m. First United Methodist Church, 104 S. Pineapple St., Sarasota. Tickets: \$35 for general admission or \$33.50 if purchased online ; student tickets, \$15 at the door. Concert to feature traditional patriotic songs and tributes to Harold Arlen and Leonard Bernstein. Free parking in Zenith garage on Mira Mar Court. Information: 953-3368.
05+ JULY	Bookstore1Sarasota presents Breakfast Serial Book Club July 5 and each succeeding Saturday during the summer. From 10:30-11 a.m., staffers will read to 3- to 6-year-olds; from 11:15-11:45 a.m., they will read to 7- to 9-year-olds. 1359 Main St., Sarasota. Information: bookstore1sarasota.com or 365-7900.
08+ JULY	Florida Studio Theatre presents Clearly Invisible, Magic Up Close with Carl Seiger July 8 through Aug. 3; times vary. John C. Court Cabaret, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$32 to \$36. Information: 366-9000 or floridastudiotheatre.org .
11+ JULY	Florida Studio Theatre presents the Sixth Annual Improv Festival July 11-12; times vary. 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: weekend passes, \$59; for one night of shows, \$49; individual shows, \$10 each; workshops, \$29 per two-hour session. Information: 366-9000 or floridastudiotheatre.org .
12 JULY	Venice Community Center presents One Night Rodeo July 12, 8-11 p.m.; doors open at 6:30 p.m. Center located at 326 Nokomis Ave., Venice. Tickets: \$5. A Bradenton band, One Night Rodeo recently won the Great American Country and Music Nation's Next Star Competition. More information and tickets: 861-1380.
19 JULY	ALSO Youth presents The Story of My Life July 19, 7 p.m. Goldstein Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets \$25; proceeds benefit ALSO Youth. The semi-autobiographical serio-come-dy will focus on the lives of Mark Bowers and Joey Panek. Information: 951-2576 or Alsoyouth.org .

Submit Calendar Events To
News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

**YOU DON'T THINK THIS
OUTFIT IS TOO MUCH?**

PRESS



Norman Schimmel
Photographer

The Sarasota News Leader
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SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS



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

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

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