

**THE SARASOTA**

Vol. 2, No. 43 — July 11, 2014

# News Leader

**IT'S TIME SARASOTA ... NOT  
EVALUATING THE SYSTEM  
A TRANSITION**

*Inside*

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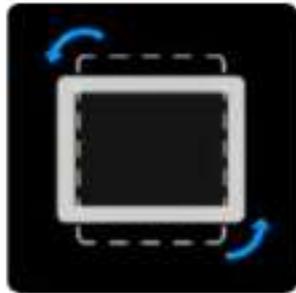
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# A.K.A. HELP

# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

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# Welcome

A friend chided me last week for digressing in this space from my usual report on topics of note in the issue. Therefore, I am making amends this week.

And a busy week it was. Not only did the City Commission tackle a wealth of diverse matters — from future use of the bayfront to keeping homes in foreclosure in good maintenance — but the County Commission was working through its last set of regular sessions before starting its summer recess.

Amid all that, City Editor Stan Zimmerman sussed out plans for an acknowledgement of defeat by the latest group trying to put a strong mayor in place, and he heard an unprecedented Downtown Improvement District board endorsement of two people for temporary City Commission vacancies.

On the county side, the fate of Warm Mineral Springs could be decided very soon, in great contrast to the fate of the planned community homeless shelter. The County Commission this week also acted on diverting tourist tax revenue from promotional efforts to a fund for new attractions, and it heard eye-opening details about its bus system's operations. In fact, so much happened at the county level, I highly recommend you peruse our *News Briefs*, which has a number of shorter articles on some of the votes.

And as icing on the news “cake,” Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker attended the July 10 Sarasota Tiger Bay Club debate of District 2 County Commission candidates.

Last, but assuredly not least, our incredibly gifted nature photographer/essayist, Fran Palmeri, has provided another chapter in her “Florida Alphabet Soup” series. You will not want to miss it.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

Editor and Publisher





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## NEWS BRIEFS



## 'S' IS FOR SPANISH MOSS



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A sign 'switcheroo' occurs on North Shell Road; Roberts Point Road has its own parking problems; the Siesta Chamber meets its fireworks fundraising goal; and the public beach park improvements are on schedule — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

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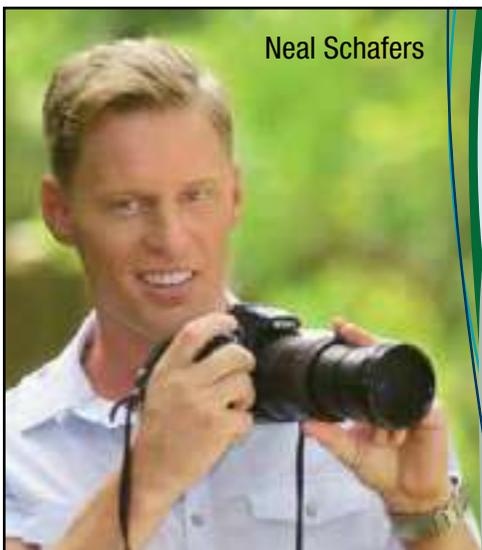
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# IT'S TIME SARASOTA ... NOT



## LATEST STRONG-MAYOR EFFORT APPEARS TO HAVE FAILED

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

A six-month-long petition drive to promote a referendum to replace the Sarasota City Charter with a new one giving executive powers to the office of mayor has fallen far short of its signature goal, and it is out of time.

Although no one is talking on the record, the It's Time Sarasota steering committee acknowledged the inevitable during a meeting held Wednesday evening, July 9, *The Sarasota News Leader* has learned.

A prior charter change approved by voters doubled the amount of time petitioners have to gather signatures for a referendum from 90 days to 180. The first validated signature for this drive was obtained on Jan. 21, making July 21 the deadline under the 180-day rule.

However, the group is more than 1,000 valid signatures short of the 3,548 needed to call a referendum, with time rapidly running out.

The group already failed to meet other deadlines for the regular consideration of its petition. The Sarasota City Commission has to put the issue on the ballot, and that requires a city ordinance, which must be passed after an advertisement of a public hearing. Then there are other dates for specific actions that follow passage of such an ordinance if a measure is to meet the Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Office's requirements under state law.

The petition group hoped to put the question on the November ballot. Instead, the *News Leader* has learned, it will issue a press release on Tuesday, July 15, about its failure to achieve success.

City voters have rejected a strong-mayor form of government in the past. Efforts to use the city's Charter Review Board to propose the referendum question, and efforts to use the City Commission for the same, have failed as well. 

(Above) Linda Holland, a past candidate for the Sarasota City Commission, is chairwoman of the It's Time initiative to change the city charter. Photo by Norman Schimmel



# My Sunday Paper...

## ...two days early!

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

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

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

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

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## EVALUATING THE SYSTEM

*A SCAT Express bus travels its county route. Express buses, which operate between North and South county, feature Wi-Fi. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

### **AN INTERNAL STUDY SHOWS SARASOTA COUNTY IS CONTRIBUTING CONSIDERABLY MORE MONEY TO THE OPERATION OF ITS BUS SYSTEM EACH YEAR THAN 11 OTHER COMPARABLE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

The results of a recent internal study of Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) found that county funding represents a higher annual percentage of the bus system's budget than the local government support provided to 11 other comparable systems in the Southeastern United States.

Sarasota County contributed more than \$14 million of SCAT's \$20 million in total operating funds in the 2013 fiscal year, the study showed. That

is more than 2.5 times higher than the average amount of local funds contributed to the "peer group" transit systems.

In addition, SCAT's total operating expenses — \$20,017,000 — were the highest of the study group, with Lee County's Lee Tran in second place.

**“ This will serve as a baseline for the County Commission to make decisions regarding public transit. ”**

Jonathan Paul  
Interim Transportation Planning Director  
Sarasota County

A considerably higher cost per mile for paratransit service — which is offered for residents with special needs, veterans and the elderly who have

difficulty taking regular buses — was one major reason for SCAT's higher overall operating costs, the report showed. According to the study, SCAT had a \$27.5 million operating budget in the 2013 fiscal year. That includes the cost of the paratransit service.

The study was part of an effort to focus on ways the bus system can be run more efficiently. More significantly, it marks the first step in evaluating whether privatization of the transit system would save the county money.

The findings' impact could be seen in August, when the county commissioners will discuss a proposal to privatize or consolidate the public transit system. The option of privatizing all or part of SCAT's operations has appeared the more likely one after the potential for consolidation hit a snag earlier this year when the Manatee County commissioners backed away from discussions about merging their bus system with SCAT.

In February, the Sarasota County commissioners rolled ahead with further exploration of both options, and in May, they gave staff

the go-ahead to conduct the study of SCAT's operating expenses. In May, SCAT General Manager Glama Carter told the commissioners that privatization just for the paratransit service would save the county \$1.5 million a year.

Jonathan Paul, the county's interim transportation planning director, presented the report's findings to the County Commission during the board's Tuesday, July 8, session, but the commissioners did not discuss it.

"This will serve as a baseline for the County Commission to make decisions regarding public transit," Paul said.

## A COMPARISON STUDY

Sarasota's transit system employs 262 staff members while running 55 fixed-route buses and 84 paratransit buses.

The study compared SCAT's operations to those of 11 other bus systems in communities similar to Sarasota County in the Southeastern

Transit Authority	Local Funds	State Funds	Federal Assistance	Total Operating Funds Expended
<b>Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT)</b>	<b>\$14,428,471.00</b>	<b>\$1,828,705.00</b>	<b>\$1,383,223.00</b>	<b>\$20,017,493.00</b>
Space Coast Area Transit (Brevard County)	\$1,706,041.00	\$3,710,780.00	\$3,462,472.00	\$10,858,378.00
Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority	\$7,366,160.00	\$525,560.00	\$5,017,351.00	\$17,007,375.00
Chatham Area Transit Authority (Savannah, GA)	\$9,365,999.00	\$0.00	\$2,363,894.00	\$16,400,005.00
Collier Area Transit (CAT)	\$4,173,737.00	\$1,505,437.00	\$2,237,359.00	\$9,270,803.00
Escambia County Area Transit (ECAT)	\$3,815,282.00	\$1,413,825.00	\$2,470,378.00	\$9,647,023.00
LeeTran (Lee County)	\$11,432,785.00	\$3,460,418.00	\$1,294,437.00	\$20,009,988.00
Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT)	\$4,596,368.00	\$1,962,426.00	\$878,979.00	\$8,672,623.00
Pasco County Public Transportation (PCPT)	\$1,332,154.00	\$2,645,634.00	\$1,383,700.00	\$6,505,695.00
Polk / Citrus Connection (Lakeland)	\$3,459,330.00	\$2,613,207.00	\$7,089,781.00	\$15,912,150.00
VOTRAN (Volusia County)	\$8,281,616.00	\$2,823,130.00	\$4,438,972.00	\$19,090,416.00
Wave Transit System (Mobile, Alabama)	\$6,352,159.00	\$0.00	\$1,759,518.00	\$9,153,970.00
<b>PEER GROUP AVERAGE</b>	<b>\$5,625,602.82</b>	<b>\$1,878,219.73</b>	<b>\$2,945,167.36</b>	<b>\$12,957,129.64</b>

*The percentage of local funding in SCAT's budget is higher than that of the 11 other comparable 'peer groups.' Image courtesy Sarasota County*

United States. Five of the systems are privately operated, Paul told the commissioners.

According to Paul, the report shows SCAT does not have a top-heavy organizational structure. Seventy-eight percent of its 262 positions comprise bus operators, mechanics and other personnel, such as attendants who assist users of the paratransit service.

Fifty-seven percent of SCAT’s expenses are for salaries, wages and benefits.

The top performing routes for SCAT were No. 12/Lockwood Ridge; No. 99/Palmetto; No. 6/Beneva; and No. 17/Tamiami Trail.

“Nine of the [fixed] routes operate below the average cost for transit,” Paul said. “So roughly half are performing efficiently.” 



Photo courtesy Sarasota County

Table 1 - Service Area Statistics	
Transit Authority	Population
<b>Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT)</b>	<b>388,474</b>
Space Coast Area Transit (Brevard County)	554,354
Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA) S. Carolina	510,286
Chatham Area Transit Authority (Savannah, GA)	265,128
Collier Area Transit (CAT)	323,785
Escambia County Area Transit (ECAT)	341,765
LeeTran (Lee County)	459,381
Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT)	322,833
Pasco County Public Transportation (PCPT)	464,697
Polk County Transit Service/Citrus Connection (Lakeland)	262,569
Votran (Volusia County)	468,670
Wave Transit System (Mobile, Alabama)	223,900
<b>PEER GROUP AVERAGE</b>	<b>381,579</b>

Charleston, Collier, Escambia, Votran & Wave – Private Operators

Data from 2012 - National Transit Database

A chart in the SCAT report compares the populations of the peer groups that were studied. Image courtesy Sarasota County

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# A TRANSITION



*Benderson says it will build the first 200,000 square feet of the complex within six months after closing on the property. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

## **A SPLIT COUNTY COMMISSION VOTE CLEARS THE WAY FOR ANOTHER BIG CHANGE ON FRUITVILLE ROAD EAST OF INTERSTATE 75**

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

As Fruitville Road east of Interstate 75 transitions from a series of pastures to a “gateway” village to Sarasota, another big change is coming, as the result of county action this week.

The Sarasota County commissioners on Wednesday, July 9, approved Benderson Development’s plans to purchase 41 acres of county land to serve as the site of a business complex. The property is in a prime location, right in the midst of the long-planned Fruitville Initiative area east of I-75. According

to the agreement between the county and Benderson, the developer will have the first 200,000 square feet of the complex constructed within six months of closing on the parcel.

Wednesday’s vote came two days after Bass Pro Shops officially announced its plans to open an 80,000-square-foot store in the

Fruitville Initiative area. More than 300 acres along that corridor long have been foreseen as home to a mixed-use village of commercial property,

“ *Light industrial Class A [space] is extremely hard to find.* ”

Joe Barbetta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



residences and hotels. The county has been moving ahead with rezoning for large-scale development there.

Wednesday's County Commission vote was

split, however, with Chairman Charles Hines and Commissioner Nora Patterson dissenting. Both voiced reservations about selling this piece of county property that is rising in value and has the potential to be a lure for a bigger opportunity.

Board members supporting the project said it will fill a void in the county's lack of manufacturing space and, they hope, provide a facility

**“ I think this hampers the [Economic Development Corp. of Sarasota County] being able to negotiate with the larger big players.**

Charles Hines  
Chairman  
Sarasota County Commission

where smaller companies can grow.

“Light industrial Class A [space] is extremely hard to find,” noted Commissioner Joe Barbetta.

After several months of negotiations, Benderson offered the county \$3 million for the site, but it also will pay \$1.35 million to bring in fill material to enhance its design potential. The extra expense will make the construction of elevated truck delivery lanes possible, said Lin Kurant, the county's real estate services manager.

Further, the company will grant easements to the county, including a 28-foot-wide path



The County Commission has approved Benderson Development's plans for a business complex on Fruitville Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County

to the adjacent Celery Fields. Company staff worked with Sarasota Audubon members to plan the linear park space, said Benderson Vice President Larry Fineberg.

While Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson said Benderson's purchase price gave her "heartburn," she voted in favor of the sale after pointing out that she felt the space would be a "great incubator" for smaller companies, which make up a large portion of the county's employer base.

"I think it will inspire some similar types of growth in that area," Robinson added.

## GOING UP IN VALUE

The \$3 million appraisal of the property was on the low side because only four recent



*Benderson Vice President Larry Fineberg (left) listens to comments during his presentation to the County Commission on Nov. 26, 2013. File photo*



*An aerial view shows the property at Fruitville and Coburn roads. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

parcel sales in the county could be found for comparison, Kurant told the commissioners.

“That’s not to say the property is not going to be worth a lot more in the future,” Kurant said.

Several factors are driving new demand in the area. Lakewood Ranch’s movement to the south and the Fruitville Initiative already had been seen as economic drivers for next few years. The Bass Pro Shops announcement this week is likely to spur immediate interest.

Patterson said she felt property in the Fruitville area will become more valuable with time as a result of those factors, arguing that the county would be selling the site to Benderson at too low a price. She also told Fineberg she is worried the firm’s proposal will simply result in tenants moving from another industrial park to the newer one.

Hines said selling the property for the creation of a “spec” business complex designed to draw tenants would negate any potential for the county to utilize the parcel to land a major company looking for a new headquarters. “I think this [sale] hampers the [[Economic Development Corp. of Sarasota County](#)] being able to negotiate with the larger big players.”

## REVISED PLANS

Benderson staff had strived to alleviate some concerns about the project that commissioners voiced on Nov. 26, 2013, when they heard the original proposal. Fineberg told the board on July 9 that the firm had tried to work closely with county staff on the design of the complex.



*Lin Kurant, the county's real estate services manager, offers remarks on the Benderson project during the July 9 commission meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

“We need this type of facility to diversify our economy the way we really want to,” said Fineberg. “We’d like to move forward and get a shovel in the ground.”

Fineberg also pointed to Benderson’s guarantee that the first phase of construction will begin within six months. “There is a tremendous void in the market right now, and we are missing out on industrial [firms] and the good jobs we are looking for in Sarasota County,” he told the commissioners.

The new complex could include distribution services and research and development offices as well as light manufacturing, he pointed out. 



## DODGEBALL

*County Commission candidates for the District 2 seat share the dais as Tom Tryon of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune (at the podium) asks the questions: (from left) Paul Caragiulo, Alexandra Coe, Steve McAllister, Shannon Snyder and Pete Theisen. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## GROWTH ISSUES DOMINATE AT SARASOTA COUNTY COMMISSION DEBATE

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

The questions may have ranged from how to deal with homelessness to how sausage is made, but much of the discussion at the Thursday, July 10, Tiger Bay-hosted Sarasota County Commission debate came down to one hot topic: growth. Are we growing wisely? Are developers paying their fair share? Can the county afford additional infrastructure?

The debate pitted Republican City Commissioners Shannon Snyder and Paul Caragiulo against no-party candidate Alexandra Coe and write-in hopefuls Steve McAllister and Pete Theisen. Snyder and Caragiulo will square off in the Aug. 26 GOP primary; the winner will then face Coe and the others in the November general election.

Growth issues came to the fore early. Tom Tryon, the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune's* opinion editor, asked how the candidates thought local cities would fare should the county's planned changes to [Sarasota 2050](#) go through, as expected. Sarasota 2050 is a decade-old land-use plan intended to encourage the development of walkable, mixed-use communities in areas previously closed to dense new neighborhoods.

"It's going to be open sprawl," Snyder said about the county's changes to the policy. He argued that new development out east would increase the burden on the City of Sarasota's infrastructure without providing the offsetting property tax revenue. "As we have more

and more uncontrolled growth, the cities are going to pay the price for it," he said.

Caragiulo declined to take a stance on the issue, saying the 2050 plan "can be good" but that any plan should consistently be evaluated and tweaked. "I don't think it's functioning as desired, the way it stands right now," he said.

Other debate revolved around the interchange at University Parkway and Interstate 75 and the heavy traffic anticipated there with the opening of The Mall at University Town Center this October. Snyder criticized the County Commission for allowing new construction to go through without requiring adequate infrastructure first. He said the situation would "take at least 20 years to straighten out."

When Control Growth Now President Dan Lobeck asked specifically whether the candidates would restore road impact fees, which have repeatedly been slashed by the current

## ALEXANDRA COE



*Alexandra Coe is a candidate for the District 2 seat. Image from her campaign [website](#)*



*City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo listens to discussion during the joint City/County commissions meeting on homelessness on June 23. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*City Commissioner Shannon Snyder sits at the County Commission dais during a joint city/county meeting in June. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

County Commission, no one would bite. “We have to look for a holistic way to remediate these concerns,” Caragiulo said.

Caragiulo praised the current board for its economic development policies, but the most fleshed-out answer to the question came from write-in candidate McAllister, who called for increased attention to agriculture and the local [food shed](#), in addition to policies that support the nonprofit and for-profit arts community.

“We need to stop grabbing onto whatever the trend of the month is,” Snyder said, promising to support manufacturing and light-industrial operations.

Summing up her pitch, Coe, who has been active in the local Libertarian Party, said county government is not now reflecting the values of the community. She added that “a good infusion of ethics” is needed. McAllister,



*Steve McAllister is a write-in candidate for the District 2 County Commission seat. Image from his [Facebook page](#)*



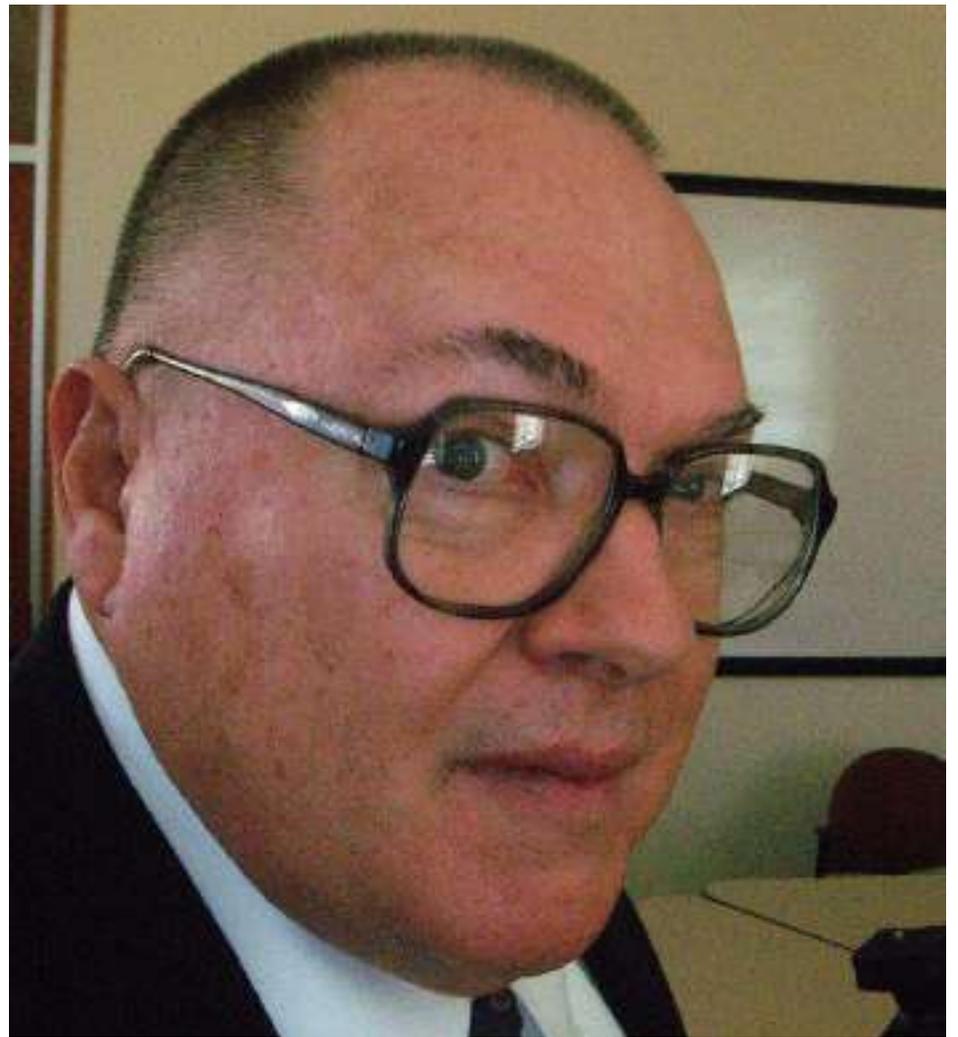
*The ballroom at Michael's On East is packed as the District 2 County Commission candidates participate in a Tiger Bay Club debate. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

meanwhile, said he was running as a write-in to encourage a more “participatory democracy.”

When asked why voters should choose him, Caragiulo encouraged attendees to visit his website to see his list of supporters, which includes current County Commissioners Joe Barbetta, Charles Hines and Christine Robinson. “I have a tremendous amount of support for a reason,” he said. “They know how serious I am about the job.”

Snyder dubbed himself a “fiscal hawk” who’s never voted to raise the city millage rate. He was inspired to run after the firing of county Ethics and Compliance Officer Steve Uebelacker, and he said someone on the board needs to generate “some real discussions,” calling himself “the only one who will hold people accountable.”

“If you want the status quo,” he said, “I’m not your candidate.” 



*Pete Theisen previously has run for City Commission. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

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# TAXING DISTRICT PUSHES INTERIM CANDIDATES



*Paul Caragiulo and Shannon Snyder by law have to resign from the City Commission in November because they are vying for the District 2 County Commission seat. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## THE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT BOARD ENDORSES KEN SHELIN AND PAUL THORPE TO FILL ONE OF TWO CITY COMMISSION SEATS THAT WILL BE VACATED NOV. 18

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

In a startling display of audacity, an autonomous taxing body in the city took official action this week to back two individuals to serve on the Sarasota City Commission.

The Downtown Improvement District board on July 8 unanimously voted to recommend two people to the City Commission in the matter of filling the seats of City Commissioners Paul Caragiulo and Shannon Snyder, who will vacate them this fall under Florida's Resign-to-Run rule.

Both men are seeking the same County Commission seat. (See the related story in this issue.) Both have filed letters of resignation as required by state law, effective Nov. 18.

In mid-December, the three remaining city commissioners will pick two individuals to fill the vacancies in District 2 (Caragiulo's seat) and District 3 (Snyder's seat). The new members would serve for five months, until the resolution of

“ *We have to realize we don't have any sway in this decision.* ”

Ernie Ritz  
Chairman  
Downtown Improvement District

city elections in the spring of 2015. The election will be in March, with any runoff to be held in May.

The DID board voted to support Paul “Mr. Downtown” Thorpe, a tireless volunteer for decades, and former City Commissioner Ken Shelin.

Both men were in the audience, and both spoke to the DID board members. “This is awkward. It wasn’t planned,” said Shelin. “For a period of five months, or whatever it turns out to be, it would be a comfortable thing for me to do. If the commission said, ‘Yes’ to me, I would happily serve.”

Thorpe told the DID board, “Sure, I’d be interested in doing that. I have attended every City Commission meeting for the past 30 years. My heart is with the city, and I’ve shown that by the things I’ve done in this community. I would not run for election.”

DID board member Dr. Mark Kauffman then made a motion to send a letter to the Sarasota

City Commission “expressing interest in one of these two men in [the commissioners’] decision.” The motion passed unanimously. DID Chairman Ernie Ritz cautioned, “We have to realize we don’t have any sway in this decision.”

Unfortunately, both Thorpe and Shelin live in District 2, which encompasses the downtown, waterfront and islands. Thus, only one of the two men could serve if selected.

At that point in the meeting, City Commissioner Susan Chapman asked to brief the DID on the procedure to be used in picking the two interim commissioners. She said that on Sept. 2, the commission will open a two-week period for taking applications for the seats. One part of the process involves filling out the simple application form used for applicants to an advisory board.

A second form is more rigorous. It is used to screen supplicants for a gubernatorial appointment. “That is very extensive,” said Chapman. “We don’t want everybody on a lark to apply.”



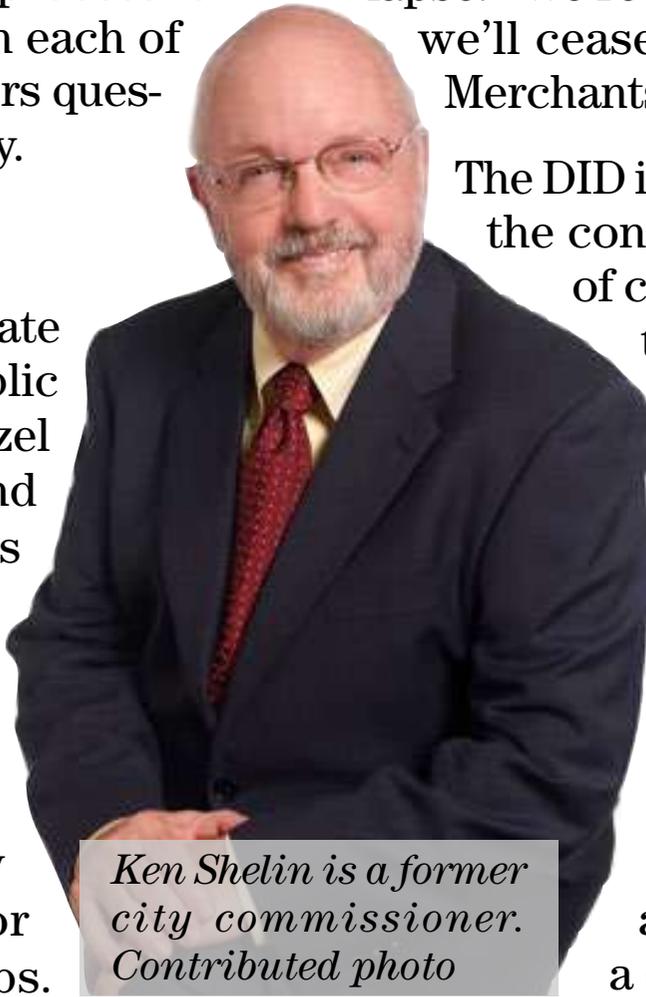
*The Downtown Improvement District is a special taxing area of the City of Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

The City Commission at an upcoming meeting will codify these requirements into a resolution, she added. The interview process for applicants will be private, with each of the three serving commissioners questioning the finalists individually.

## SECURITY PATROLS

The city is about to hire a private firm to provide security for public facilities, including the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall. Diamond Investigations and Security was picked after a competitive bidding process.

At present, the Downtown Merchants Association is paying for private security downtown, as is the operator of the Pineapple Square shops.



*Ken Shelin is a former city commissioner. Contributed photo*

The DID board is interested in picking up the responsibility when the merchants let it lapse. “We’re going to run out of money, so we’ll cease soon,” said Ron Soto of the Merchants Association.

The DID is interested in piggybacking on the contract, avoiding another round of competitive bidding. “Normally, the contract has piggybacking,” said Diamond Vice President David Evans. “I haven’t seen the city contract yet. If there is no piggy-backing, you might want to put it in.”

Sight-unseen, the DID board voted unanimously to hire Diamond for up to \$5,000 a year “for six days a week, up to nine hours a day.” 

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# SARASOTA COUNTY PENS A BREAKUP LETTER



*Unless the City of North Port buys Warm Mineral Springs from the county within the next couple of months, the resort will close again on Sept. 1. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

## COUNTY COMMISSION WANTS OUT OF ITS WARM MINERAL SPRINGS PARTNERSHIP

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

Two weeks ago, Sarasota County Commission Chairman Charles Hines called the county's joint ownership of Warm Mineral Springs with the City of North Port a "defective" partnership. This week, he and the other four county commissioners voted to end that arrangement, offering the city the opportunity to buy the county's share of the 81-acre Springs property.

Representatives from the public spoke for more than an hour on the topic Tuesday, July

8, many urging the county to do whatever it could to prevent the springs from closing on Sept. 1, when the county and city's current short-term management contract runs out. But there's little chance of that happening. The county says it cannot simply re-up the

current deal and any competitive solicitation process would stretch beyond that Sept. 1 cutoff.

Many speakers also asked the county to refrain from allowing any development on

“ [Warm Mineral Springs is] a treasure, and we're fortunate to have it here in the City of North Port. It makes sense for the City of North Port to be the sole owner.

Linda Yates  
Commissioner  
City of North Port



the property, without a doubt the primary friction point between the county and North Port. While county commissioners have generally favored plans to aggressively update the facilities around the Springs and to even allow amenities such as a hotel, the city has pushed to maintain a simple park-like environment there. That disagreement hasn't significantly shifted despite years of debate.

So, with no resolution in sight, the County Commission decided to offer to sell its 50-percent share in the springs. The county and city together paid \$5.5 million for the property in 2010. A letter drafted by the county and sent to the North Port board this week offers to sell the county's stake for its original worth, \$2.75 million, "plus the costs associated with the sale."

Response to the sale proposal from the public was divided. North Port's Ken Maturo urged the County Commission, "Do not sell it to the incompetent City of North Port," and asked the commissioners to wait till after the November elections to see if the North Port board changes.

But Lorenzo Whitehead, currently campaigning for outgoing North Port Mayor Jim Blucher's seat on the City Commission, argued the county should sell its share. "There's really no surprise," he said. "Anyone with any political savvy could see this impasse coming years and years ago."

Of course, the question remains: Does the current North Port board even want to buy the county's stake? And can it afford it?



*Although Warm Mineral Springs has scenic grounds, city and county staffs say the buildings are in dire need of repair. Photo courtesy City of North Port`*



The City Commission is set to discuss the issue Monday.

Blucher tells *The Sarasota News Leader* he wants to hear from the public before making up his mind, but he's reluctant to spend more public money on the property. City Commissioner Linda Yates, meanwhile, tells the *News Leader*, "It would be a great thing for North Port to own Warm Mineral Springs 100 percent." But even though she'd love to see the city hold title to the land outright, she doesn't know exactly where the money would come from.

Yates criticizes the county for declining to take up the city's request that the two boards work together on a new year-long management plan, ostensibly the reason for the County Commission's discussion about the Springs this week. The county took no action on the proposal outlined in a letter sent by North Port two weeks ago. County Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson said any short-term deal would allow the city to dawdle on the question of whether it would purchase the Springs. "They are driving the closure of Warm Mineral Springs," Yates says.

County Commissioners Nora Patterson and Hines pushed to stipulate in the sale offer that the Springs remain in public ownership, but that motion failed. Patterson said she was "disappointed" the county couldn't guarantee the land will remain in taxpayer hands. "The whole reason we've gone through this agony is to protect the Springs," she said.

"It is obvious this relationship and joint ownership is just not going to work," Yates says. "So we need to move forward now and resolve that. [Warm Mineral Springs is] a treasure, and we're fortunate to have it here in the City of North Port. It makes sense for the City of North Port to be the sole owner." 

# PROPERTY AND HOMELESSNESS



## **THE CITY COMMISSION APPROVES MORE OVERSIGHT OF USE OF THE BAYFRONT, DENIES AN EXPANSION OF A NEW RESIDENTIAL OVERLAY DISTRICT AND HEARS AN UPDATE ON HELP FOR THE HOMELESS**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

Short- and long-term use of city bayfront property, the renaming of a park, a new tool to force banks to manage their foreclosed property and a lengthy discussion of homelessness and vagrancy were the key points of the July 7 Sarasota City Commission meeting.

The board members decided with a 3-2 vote to require any use of bayfront city land to get the city manager's approval as well as their affirmative vote. Mayor Willie Shaw and Commissioner Shannon Snyder opposed the move.

Three existing uses were “grandfathered,” so they will not go through the new approval process. They are the annual *Embracing Our Differences* art show, the biennial *Season of Sculpture* and the *Unconditional Surrender* statue, which is expected to be up at least another decade.

The commissioners were unanimous in instructing city staff to begin coordinating with the Sarasota 20:20 group looking at the future of the 42 acres in and around the existing Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall parking

*(Above) City staff has received direction to become involved in the discussions about a new proposal for a cultural district in the area of the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, including the venue's parking lot. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

lot. In 2007, the city received a \$100,000 report proposing a future plan for what was called “the cultural district.” It envisioned new buildings for existing arts organizations, a parking structure, shops and restaurants.

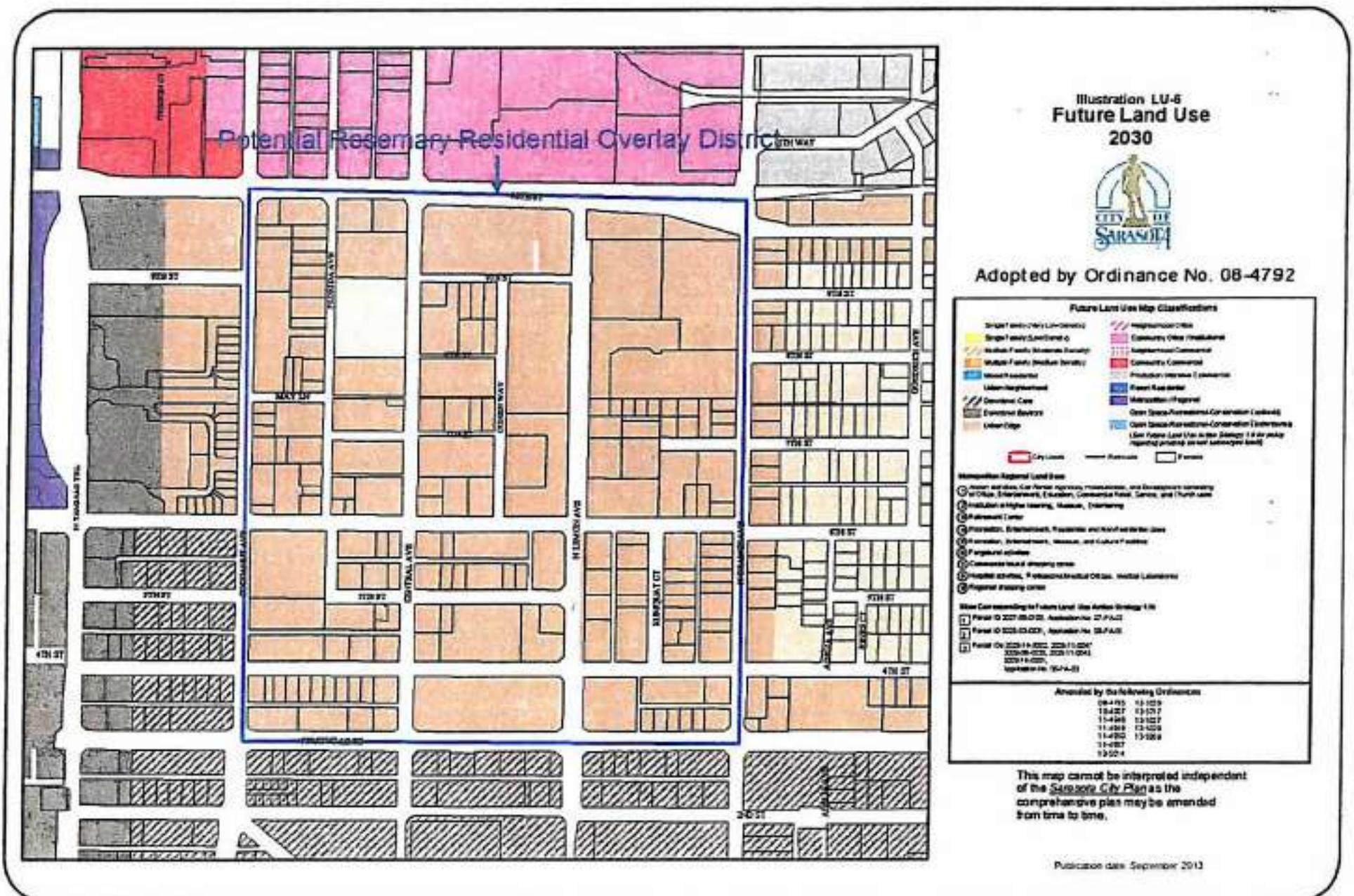
Then the real estate market failed, and grandiose plans for adjoining parcels — the old Quay property to the south and the Proscenium to the east — collapsed as well. While the Proscenium remains in a legal snarl, the receiver of the Quay property is marketing it heavily, with rumors of sales abounding.

There recently was friction between the city and the 20:20 group after a report was leaked with the city’s logo on the cover, leading

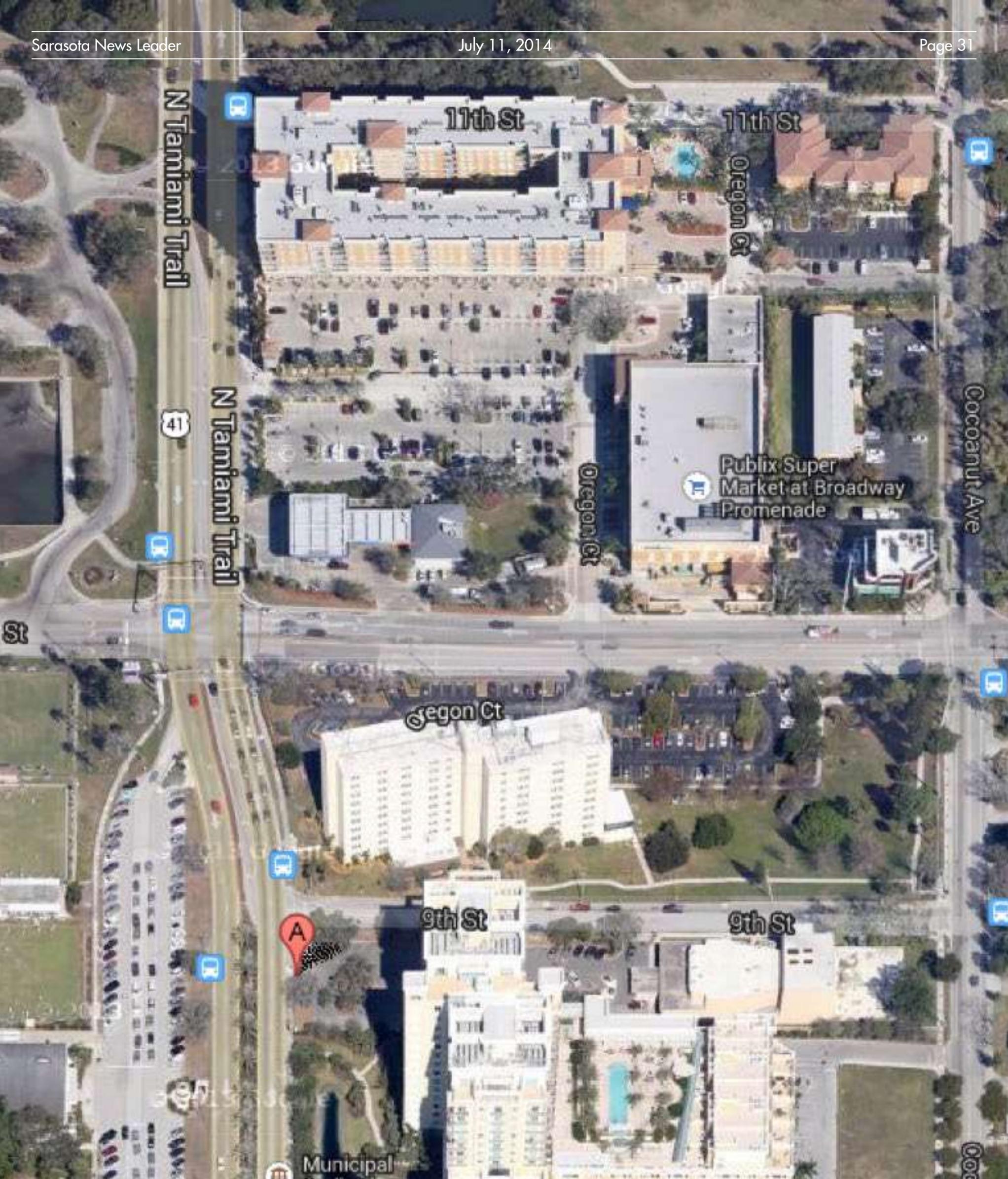
some to think the plan was city-authorized. After Monday’s unanimous vote, city staffers may officially participate in the discussions. The commissioners will hold a workshop in November to hear the latest thinking on the proposal, including a staff evaluation.

## PARK RENAMED

In exchange for \$125,000, the city commissioners agreed to rename the city park under the eastern approach of the Ringling Causeway. Henceforth, it will be known as Eloise Erland Park. “It’s an honor to name this park after my late wife, Eloise. She so enjoyed Sarasota in the few years before she passed away,” said her widower, Ernest “Doc” Erland.



A map shows the new Rosemary Residential Overlay District, which the City Commission has approved and forwarded to the state for its endorsement. Image courtesy City of Sarasota



The majority of city commissioners Monday opposed adding more territory to the Rosemary Residential Overlay District, including the property that is home to The Players Theatre (marked by the red flag). Image from Google Maps

He will pay to install a small playground and “coastal garden” in the center of the property and erect three “shade structures” over existing park benches. He also will create a \$50,000 endowment to pay for maintenance of the park for 55 years.

While the city has many parks named for individuals, this is the first time in nearly a century it has agreed to name a park in return for a donation. The last example was the gift of land that became Payne Park in the 1920s.

After accepting Erland’s pledge of \$125,000, the commissioners instructed staff to develop a policy to govern similar deals in the future. “This may draw more interest from others,” said Snyder.

## UNITS NEW AND OLD

In another matter, the commissioners voted 3-2 not to heed the plea of three property owners at the western fringe of the Rosemary District to be folded into the recently approved Rosemary Residential Overlay District.

The R-ROD allows triple density, jumping to 75 dwelling units per acre. The petition to create the special district (and accompanying change to the city’s comprehensive plan) was initiated and funded by a developer wanting to build a large apartment complex. The district will be short-lived, expiring in four years.

The two commissioners who previously served on the Planning Board opposed the



*Valerie Guillory, who operates Trinity Without Borders, pleaded with both the City and County commissions this week for help to contain the violence in a camp of homeless people adjacent to her sanctuary. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

expansion. “The reason we agreed to the R-ROD was because there was one rental project we wanted to jumpstart in that area,” said Vice Mayor Susan Chapman. “Adding the Jefferson Center and The Players [Theatre] could be the end of The Players, who might sell and move on. And the end of the Jefferson.”

“Approving density because it feels good is not good planning,” said Snyder. “I’d rather have quality planning.”

Mayor Shaw joined them in a 3-2 vote to deny the application to expand the district.

On the other end of the scale, the board unanimously approved a staff-sponsored plan to force banks to maintain foreclosed properties. Neighborhood and Development Services Director Tim Litchet said it would

require banks to register with the city’s Code Compliance Division, designate a local agent to be responsible for maintenance and pay an annual fee of \$250 per property.

“Banks that do not register will be cited,” said Litchet. An earlier effort to manage the problem with unsightly properties in foreclosure was up-ended by the Florida Supreme Court, which ruled against the priority of a code enforcement lien. Prior to that, the city could seize and re-sell property if the owners failed to maintain it to a minimum standard.

Litchet said the new procedure avoids the lien priority issue and follows “the tool used by other jurisdictions.” He added that staff has identified 425 properties that would require registration.



*People sit under tents on a rainy day at Trinity Without Borders. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

“It’s a sliding scale,” said Litchet of the fine for not registering. “It starts at \$240 and goes up to \$500 after two years, then \$1,000, to a maximum of \$4,000 if the property is foreclosed or abandoned more than four years. We want to encourage the banks to take care of these properties. Banks that do not register will be cited.”

## **HOMELESS — LOCALS OR THE NEW TOURISTS?**

City police are starting to comb the homeless and vagrant population in town, looking specifically for veterans. The city has adopted an informal policy that no veteran shall be homeless in Sarasota.

“We have made contact with 132 individuals. Twelve say they are veterans,” said Police Chief Bernadette DiPino. “Five are confirmed veterans and qualified for case management and housing. Four are in the process and almost permanently housed and eligible for long-term counseling. The fifth is in the process and should be housed shortly.”

She was joined at the dais by two members of the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), case management specialist Calvin Collins and Sgt. Lori Jaress. City Manager Tom Barwin asked if the veterans were found downtown. “Most of the ones I’m talking to are not from the Sarasota area,” replied Collins. “One goal is to reconnect them with persons, family from wherever they are from.”

“The HOT team is doing this one person at a time,” said DiPino. “We’re trying to identify the vets first and then the vulnerable adults. Our motto is to help people one individual at a time. Each one is unique.”

Meanwhile, the numbers are growing and tempers are fraying. “There are lots of people sleeping outdoors near The Salvation Army,” said the Army’s Maj. Ethan Frizzell during the afternoon session. “The parties are getting larger. A lot of the arrests have drug issues, not just homeless issues.”

At the opening of the evening session, Valerie Guillory with the homelessness sanctuary Trinity Without Borders came forward to say the homeless camp adjacent to her 10th Street ministry is getting out of control. During the commission’s “open to the public” period, she reported, “Over the past few days, it’s getting very, very violent there. A 71-year-old woman was sexually assaulted. I don’t know what it’s going to take to get the people into housing and cure the area. We have pregnant women back there. ... We have people recovering from heart surgery, just asking for your help to get them into housing again and self-sufficiency.”

Jon Thaxton, who is on the staff of the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, came forward during the evening session to brief the commissioners on progress regarding a shelter for homeless women and children. He is working with [Harvest House](#), using property owned by the ministry on Mango Avenue, south of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way in Sarasota.

“How many are just passing through?” asked Snyder. “Are we imposing some kind of residency requirements?”

“It’s the reason we’re setting up this two-phase system, one for families here more than one year,” replied Thaxton. “Many come here in hopes of employment and finding a better climate,” he added. “There may be a need for residency requirements, and we have given that a consideration.” 



## FREE SAMPLES ON ST. ARMANDS?

*St. Armands Circle has an abundance of upscale shops in complement to its restaurants. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **THE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT VOTES TO ASK THE CITY COMMISSION TO CONSIDER A ZONING CHANGE FOR THE CIRCLE**

**By Stan Zimmerman**

*City Editor*

The City of Sarasota, like most cities, places restrictions on merchants. Unlike the bazaars of the Middle East, in the City of Sarasota, you cannot shove racks of your products on the sidewalk in front of your shop. And you cannot offer free samples to entice shoppers inside your doors.

But some or all of that could change on St. Armands Circle, after the property owners' group decided to ask the City Commission to consider changes to the rules. The St.

Armands Business Improvement District — the BID — is a self-taxing body of commercial property owners who pay for marketing, capital improvements and aesthetic enhancements to their tony shopping zone.

At their monthly meeting on July 8, the BID board members voted to “investigate new language to make allowances for offering samples.”

“ *This could be a zoning text amendment especially for the St. Armands [Commercial Intensive Tourist] zoning district.* ”

Robert Fournier  
City Attorney  
City of Sarasota

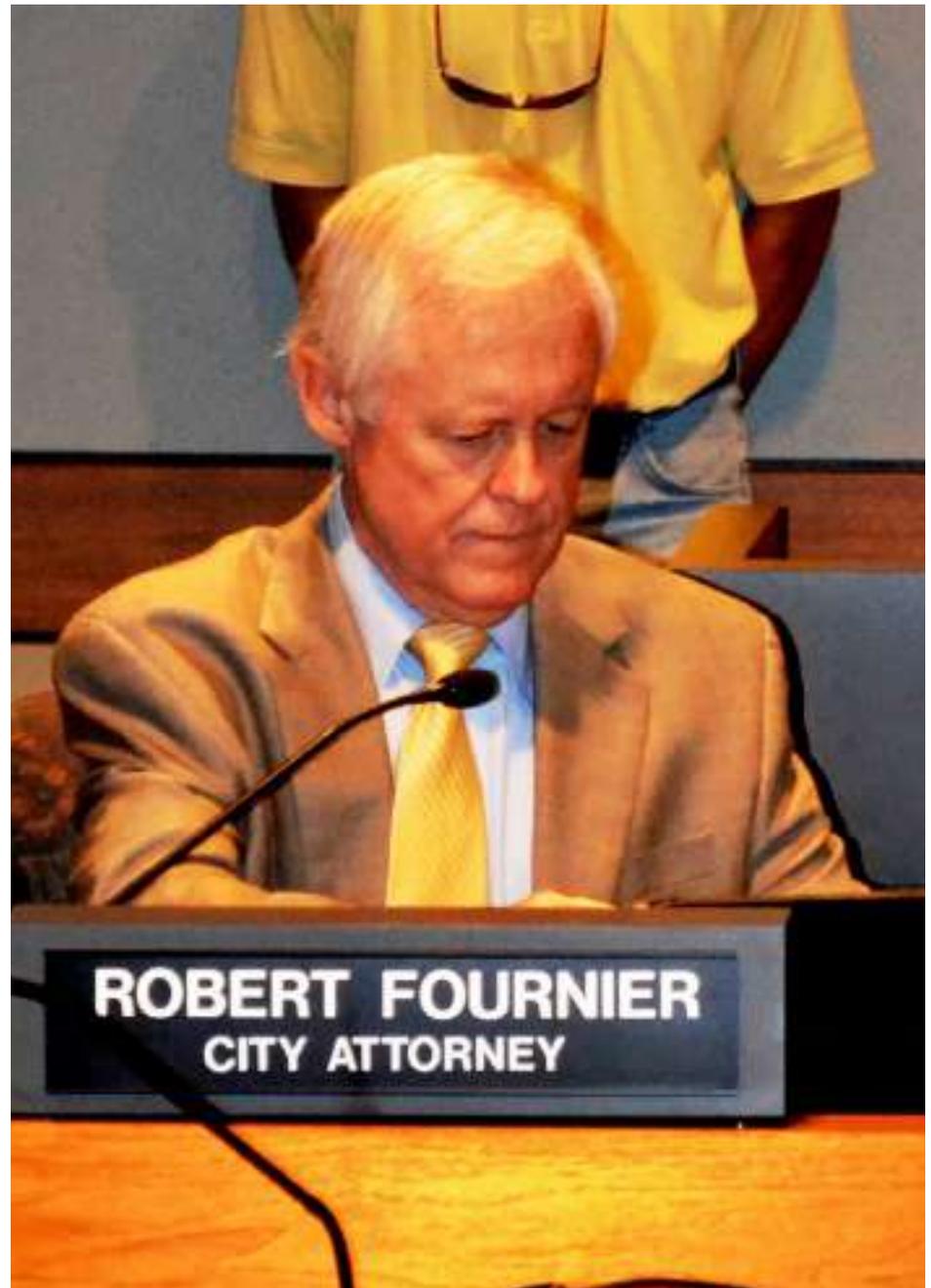
City Attorney Robert Fournier, attending the session for a different

agenda item, said the BID's vote would be communicated to the City Commission. "This could be a zoning text amendment especially for the St. Armands [Commercial Intensive Tourist] zoning district," he added.

Fournier also weighed in when BID member Marty Rappaport said the organization's lawyer was contacted by a group seeking minutes of its meetings. Rappaport added that [ask4records.com](http://ask4records.com) was looking for the organization's public records.

Fournier said that was probably a routine matter. "I think that is one of the tests this group runs on local governments to see if they are compliant," he added. BID members have been sensitive to public records requests since they were sued to produce email communications about BID business through their personal accounts. Their legal fees are still getting sorted out.

The item Fournier awaited involves a public hearing on special events in the city. The hearing is set for July 21. "The policy before 2009 was unwritten," he said. The new ordinance will contain special conditions for St. Armands Circle, but the details have not been finalized. "It is open for discussion," he added.



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

"We have special events we've done for 35 years," said Diane Corrigan, executive director of the St. Armands Circle Association. "We hope they will be grandfathered in, and it does not become first-come, first-served." 

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# A MARKETING COMPROMISE



*County commissioners want to see new assets join the county's beaches as attractions for visitors.  
Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## THE COUNTY COMMISSION AGREES ON THE LOWEST PROPOSED PERCENTAGE IN SHIFTING TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX REVENUE FROM PROMOTING ATTRACTIONS TO INVESTING IN NEW ONES

By Rachel Brown Hackney

*Editor*

With Commissioner Nora Patterson casting the only “No” vote, as she did during the June 19 Tourist Development Council’s action on the same issue, the Sarasota County Commission this week approved the reallocation of a portion of Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue to a fund for the development of new attractions.

The change will redirect 3.5 percent of the total county TDT revenue that had been

going to promotional efforts undertaken by Visit Sarasota County, the county’s tourism office.

Additionally, the board voted unanimously to redirect excess funds from an account for

Ed Smith Stadium into the capital investment account for new visitor draws. Because of increases in TDT revenue over the past couple of years, the county has been accumulating more money in the stadium account

**“** *We need to have other assets. We rely on our beaches, obviously. We rely on our arts and culture [to draw visitors]. ... A hurricane or a red tide can shut down those beaches relatively quickly, so we need those other assets.*

Joe Barbeta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



than it needs for debt service on a bond it took out to cover renovations of the facility as well as to pay for stadium maintenance. That board action on July 9 is expected to provide an extra \$274,991 for the 2015 fiscal year and at least \$443,004 in the 2019 fiscal year, according to projections by the county's Office of Financial Management.

Earlier this year, [when the commissioners discussed a proposal to shift promotional money](#) away from Visit Sarasota County, the matter drew opposition from community leaders involved in the hospitality industry.

However, during the June 19 meeting of the county's Tourist Development Council (TDC), which Patterson chairs, Virginia Haley,

president of Visit Sarasota County, told the members her board reluctantly would support a shift of 7.5 percent of the promotional money from one penny of the five-cent TDT. Haley reiterated that point to the County Commission on July 9.

Thanks to projections that the TDT revenue will continue to climb, she said, "We should recover [the lost money] easily, and it would give us the ammunition to support whatever those new [tourist attraction] assets would be."

The commission had voted to advertise for the July 9 public hearing a shift of up to 17.5 percent of that single penny's revenue to the tourist attraction fund, but several board



*Opponents of a shift in county Tourist Development Tax revenue from promotional efforts to a capital investment fund cited the need for extra funds to market new hotels that will be opening in Sarasota, such as the Aloft under construction on Palm Avenue. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

members this week suggested the 7.5 percent level was a good start and that future commissions could reassess the situation.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta had been most vocal in supporting the maximum proposed transfer of funds. “Roughly \$1 million bonds out to about \$11 million on a 15-year amortization and about \$17.5 million on a 30-year [amortization],” he asked Doreen Buonpastore of the Office of Financial Management.

“Exactly,” she replied.

“The real value is the bonding capability of [the redirected revenue],” he noted.

“We need to have other assets,” Barbetta continued. “We rely on our beaches, obviously. We rely on our arts and culture [to draw visitors]. ... A hurricane or a red tide can shut down those beaches relatively quickly, so we need those other assets.”

Regarding one example of a potential new draw, he said the county cannot accommodate more than about 800 people in one place for a meeting. If the community had a conference

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:**

- 17<sup>th</sup> St BMX Bike Course \$800,000
- Knights Trail Gun Range \$500,000

center that could hold up to 2,200 persons at a time, the facility would be a year-round enticement for more people to visit the area.

Still, he added, while he would prefer an initial shift of 10 percent of that one TDT penny's revenue, he would support the 7.5 percent level at the outset.

## THE COMPROMISE

“Thank you, Virginia, for meeting with me and for trying to collaborate on this issue,” Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson told Haley.

“I think we worked the numbers backwards and forwards to try to figure this out. ... I think [7.5 percent] will be an important step.”

Chairman Charles Hines also thanked Haley and her board for being willing to compromise on the issue. “The initial reaction was ‘Absolutely not! No way!’” he noted.

Referring to a graphic Buonpastore had shown the board, Hines also reminded Haley that past County Commission commitments of funding to the expansion of the shooting clay course at Knight Trail Park in Nokomis

## Sports Stadium option

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

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

and improvements at the BMX track in Sarasota would mean more events and more people filling hotel rooms. “[Those actions] will benefit our restaurants; they will benefit our hotels.”

Commissioner Carolyn Mason said she had struggled between supporting the 10-percent and 7.5-percent proposals. “But I think 7.5 percent is a good place to start. Future commissions will have to keep an eye on it.”

When Robinson began to make a motion on the funding shift, Patterson requested that the board vote on the stadium funds separately. “I think it’s a reasonable move,” she added of the latter accounting change, “as the dollars keep coming in higher.”

After the unanimous vote on that change, Robinson made the motion for the shift of TDT revenue to the attractions fund. Patterson said, “I’m sort of torn on this because I think it’s a reasonable compromise.” Nonetheless, she continued, “I think it’s sort of a slippery slope, which is kind of illustrated by everybody saying it’s a start.”

She reminded her colleagues that when the commission approved a hike in the TDT from 4.5 cents to 5 cents, which went into effect on May 1, 2011, the board members emphasized that meant more money would be going toward marketing the county.

“The way I really feel is we probably shouldn’t [shift any of the promotional funds],” she added, “and I’m going to vote to my heart.” 



## Promotion Funds 33.5% of TDT

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

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

*A chart explains how promotional funds were allocated from the five pennies of the Tourist Development Tax prior to the July 9 County Commission vote. Image courtesy Sarasota County*



# ROUNDBABOUTS SET IN STONE

*A video with animation explains how pedestrians and drivers can co-exist in a multi-lane roundabout. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

## THE PUBLIC GETS WHAT WAS PROBABLY ITS LAST LOOK AT STATE TRANSPORTATION PLANS FOR U.S. 41 BETWEEN 10TH AND 14TH STREETS IN SARASOTA

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has held what might have been its final public preview of the new segment of U.S. 41 between 10th and 14th streets in Sarasota. The section includes two multi-lane roundabouts.

Plans are about 60 percent complete, with the remainder concerned with details below the level of public scrutiny.

Perhaps 30 members of the public showed up at a meeting late Tuesday afternoon,

July 8, to view the plans and talk with FDOT engineers and specialists about the project. It was a multi-media presentation, with a video showing how roundabouts work for drivers and pedestrians. While the roundabouts were the eye-catching element, there were also diagrams of the new roadway that will connect them, along with views of the wider sidewalks

of the Multi-Use Recreational Trail that runs parallel with the Tamiami Trail.

The FDOT has held 48 meetings or presentations on the plans since Feb. 7, 2011.

“ *If we only work at night, it takes longer because we have to move the machinery and supplies to the site every night and remove them around dawn.* ”

Alex DavisShaw  
City Engineer  
City of Sarasota





*Chris Rouse peruses the 17 hefty documents that provide the details on the roadway plan. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

It has compiled 17 hefty documents running into the thousands of pages. Issues related to noise, wetlands, environmental contamination and cultural and historical resources have all been incorporated in them, in addition to the preliminary engineering work.

The project will span three city parks, including Centennial and its boat ramps at 10th Street. Special planning was necessary to allow for vehicles hauling trailers. Special attention also was paid to enabling pedestrians to cross U.S. 41 to reach those three parks. "Splitter islands" will serve as safe havens in the middle of the roadway.

The venture is expected to begin in April 2017. It will not be constructed piecemeal; instead, it will be treated as one large project. The total cost is now estimated at nearly \$11 million.

City Engineer Alex DavisShaw says the trickiest part of the construction will be the detours. "If we only work at night, it takes longer because we have to move the machinery and supplies to the site every night and remove them around dawn," she explained.

Working full-time means diverting traffic with detours. But 10th Street needs to stay open because it is the only access to the boat ramps, one of the city's primary means for boaters to reach the bay. "These are things we're still working on," she said.

During construction, locals will soon realize the Tamiami Trail will not be the fastest way to go north. At the peak of tourist season, as many as 40,000 vehicles per day use that roadway. 



*Ryan Chapdelain, a staff member with the city's Neighborhood and Development Services Department, explains a detail to Parks, Recreation and Environmental Protection Advisory Board Chairwoman Millie Small. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*



# NO PROGRESS

*Homeless people commonly gather at the Sarasota County Area Transit transfer station at Lemon Avenue and First Street in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## THE COUNTY COMMISSION SENDS A LETTER TO THE CITY COMMISSION ASKING IN REGARD TO THE PROPOSED HOMELESS SHELTER, ARE YOU IN OR OUT?

**By Roger Drouin**

*County Editor*

Valerie Guillory had a message for the Sarasota County commissioners this week.

“I need you all to stand strong and keep moving towards a solution,” said Guillory, addressing the effort to build a come-as-you-are homeless shelter in Sarasota.

Guillory, an advocate for the homeless and executive director of Trinity Without Borders, reported to the board this week that community conditions are getting worse. A camp of

homeless people off Washington Boulevard in the City of Sarasota has “regrouped itself” and expanded since a city homeless outreach team shuttered it weeks ago, and more problems have arisen with the people staying there, she said. “I want you to specifically know within the last few days we had a 71-year-old woman attacked back there,” Guillory told the board.

(See the related story in this issue.)

Guillory and other proponents of a permanent, Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office-operated shelter for

“*I don’t want them to pretend they have a voice in this if they are not going to be a partner.*”

Christine Robinson  
Vice Chairwoman  
Sarasota County Commission



adults say the facility is one of the best options for addressing a growing population of homeless people and issues associated with them. But plans for the shelter, once the goal of the city and county commissioners, remain at a standstill.

The concept barely survived a joint meeting of the City and County commissions last month, when both voted to continue exploring sites inside and outside the city limits.

This week, prospects for a city-county agreement looked even bleaker. The question of how to proceed with the latest search led to further debate.

And the City Commission's unwillingness to confirm the tentative schedule for another joint meeting in September further stymies plans, county commissioners say.

"It just seems like there is always a pushback," Commissioner Joe Barbetta said about the effort to work with city commissioners and their staff to secure a site for the shelter.

During his board's July 8 meeting, Barbetta voiced frustration at what he perceived as another series of setbacks on the part of city officials. He referenced an assertion a day earlier by Sarasota Mayor Willie Shaw that because homeless individuals are not originally from the city, they are not a city concern. Barbetta characterized that as an argument that does not make sense. "None of us are from the city," Barbetta pointed out. "We all come from somewhere else, with the exception of [County Commissioner] Carolyn [Mason]."

Wayne Applebee, the county's homelessness policies coordinator, noted that 78 percent of



“It just seems like there is always a pushback.”

Joe Barbetta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County

”

*Homeless people again are camping on Central Avenue in the Rosemary District. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

**SARASOTA COUNTY***"Dedicated to Quality Service"***BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

1660 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota, FL 34236

phone: 941-861-5344 fax: 941-861-5987

July 9, 2014

**Via U.S. Mail and Electronic Mail (willie.shaw@sarasotagov.com)**

The Honorable Willie Charles Shaw

Mayor

City of Sarasota

P. O. Box 1058

Sarasota, FL 34230-1058

Dear Mayor Shaw:

At our joint commission meeting on June 23, 2014, the County Administrator and the City Manager were directed by their respective commissions to continue the site search for a Come-As-You-Are (CAYA) shelter. The direction to both executives included specific instruction from their commissions to search for sites in the city and the county, utilizing Dr. Robert Marbut's site selection criteria, and to focus on properties with existing buildings. Both commissions agreed to a joint meeting in September for an update on the site selection process.

In keeping with that direction, the County Administrator proposed a process whereby city staff would search for sites within the city and county staff would search for sites in the county. All sites identified by city and county would be consistent with Dr. Marbut's criteria as identified in his November 2013 report which was formally accepted and approved by both commissions. The County Administrator further proposed that Dr. Marbut be included in the process by providing a review of all sites identified by city and county staff. The sites would then be presented at the joint commission meeting in September. The proposed date for the joint meeting is September 19, 2014 at 1:30 PM.

In a June 27, 2014, email, the City Manager's response to the County Administrator's proposal indicated that he did not support this approach and wanted to continue discussions about Dr. Marbut's siting criteria. The County Administrator's July 1, 2014, response indicated that sharing the responsibility for site selection would be more efficient and effective since the city staff would be able to identify concerns early in the process. In addition, the County Administrator restated the joint direction of the commissions regarding the use of Dr. Marbut's criteria for site selection.

The correspondence between the City Manager and the County Administrator was presented to the City Commission at your meeting on July 7, 2014 by the City Manager, who indicated he was open to direction. However, no direction or comment was provided by the commission to the City Manager. At this same meeting, city staff presented the commission with the proposed date for the joint meeting. The City Commission did not confirm the date, indicating they were going to delay the decision on the date of the joint meeting until your July 21 meeting.

Based on these actions, the County Commission is concerned about the continued viability of our partnership on homelessness. We began this partnership with agreement on the qualifications of the consultant and the 12-point strategic plan he prepared for our community. Significant resources have been dedicated to implementing this plan and, to date, much success has been enjoyed. The opening of a

Carolyn J. Mason, District 1 ▪ Joseph A. Barbeta, District 2 ▪ Christine Robinson, District 3 ▪ Nora Patterson, District 4 ▪ Charles D. Hines, District 5  
cmason@scgov.net jbarbett@scgov.net crobinson@scgov.net npatters@scgov.net chines@scgov.net

all homeless people in the county have lived in the city for more than a year.

Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson said she does not believe the two local government bodies can work together to build a shelter. "I have no faith that we are going to end up in a partnership with the city," Robinson said during the July 8 session, the day before Guillory offered her comments to the board.

Robinson suggested sending a letter to the City Commission, a proposal that won support from the other commissioners. The letter asks whether the city board members still want to meet in September to review potential shelter sites and whether they plan to follow homelessness consultant Robert Marbut's criteria for a facility.

Even though Robinson says she does not think city leaders are interested in meeting, she wants them to "address these issues."

"I don't want them to pretend they have a voice in this if they are not going to be a partner," Robinson added.

Commissioner Nora Patterson, however, has some hope that a site will be found, regardless of whether the city or county locates it or a realtor suggests a potential parcel.

"I'm not ready to say the partnership is broken," Patterson said. "It is wobbly."

The two commissions also have yet to come to an agreement on construction and operational funding for the shelter.



*The City and County commissions met on June 23 to consider the latest information from staff members regarding the effort to build a homeless shelter in the community. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## ANOTHER DISAGREEMENT

Even as various efforts to provide housing and programs to homeless families are moving forward across the county, the lack of progress on the shelter itself was most perceptible this week in an exchange of city and county emails, which conveyed different approaches for the next steps. City Manager Tom Barwin wants to take a fresh look at Marbut's criteria for a shelter site, arguing for a search that includes parcels further from the city's urban core.

"Another reason we must review Dr. Marbut's criteria is because there is also a glaring, inherent contradiction between Dr. Marbut's many statements (and what we saw and heard at [Pinellas Safe Harbor](#)) [about] a come as you are jail diversion shelter which featured case-workers and services within the shelter,"

Barwin wrote in a June 27 email to county staff.

County Administrator Tom Harmer points out that at the last joint meeting on the topic held June 23, both commissions made motions that included direction to staff to leave Marbut's suggestions in place as the search for a viable site continues. Harmer said the best route is for city officials to search for potential sites in the city and for county staff to look for parcels in the county that are close to the city limits.

Barwin's email also was a topic of discussion at the July 8 County Commission meeting.

"Mr. Barwin's extensive email — it is clear to me he is rejecting everything, and his board did not speak up at all to reject any of that email," Barbetta said. 

THE SARASOTA

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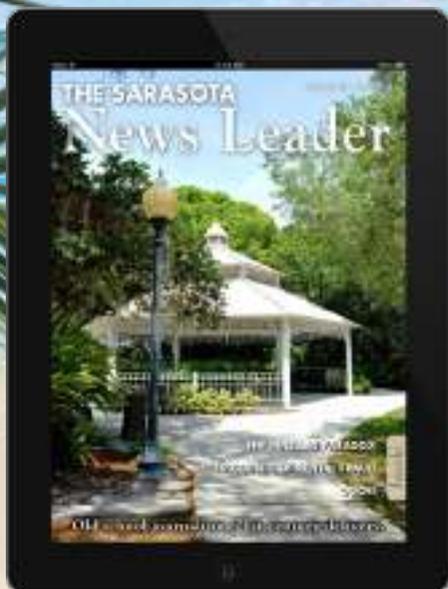
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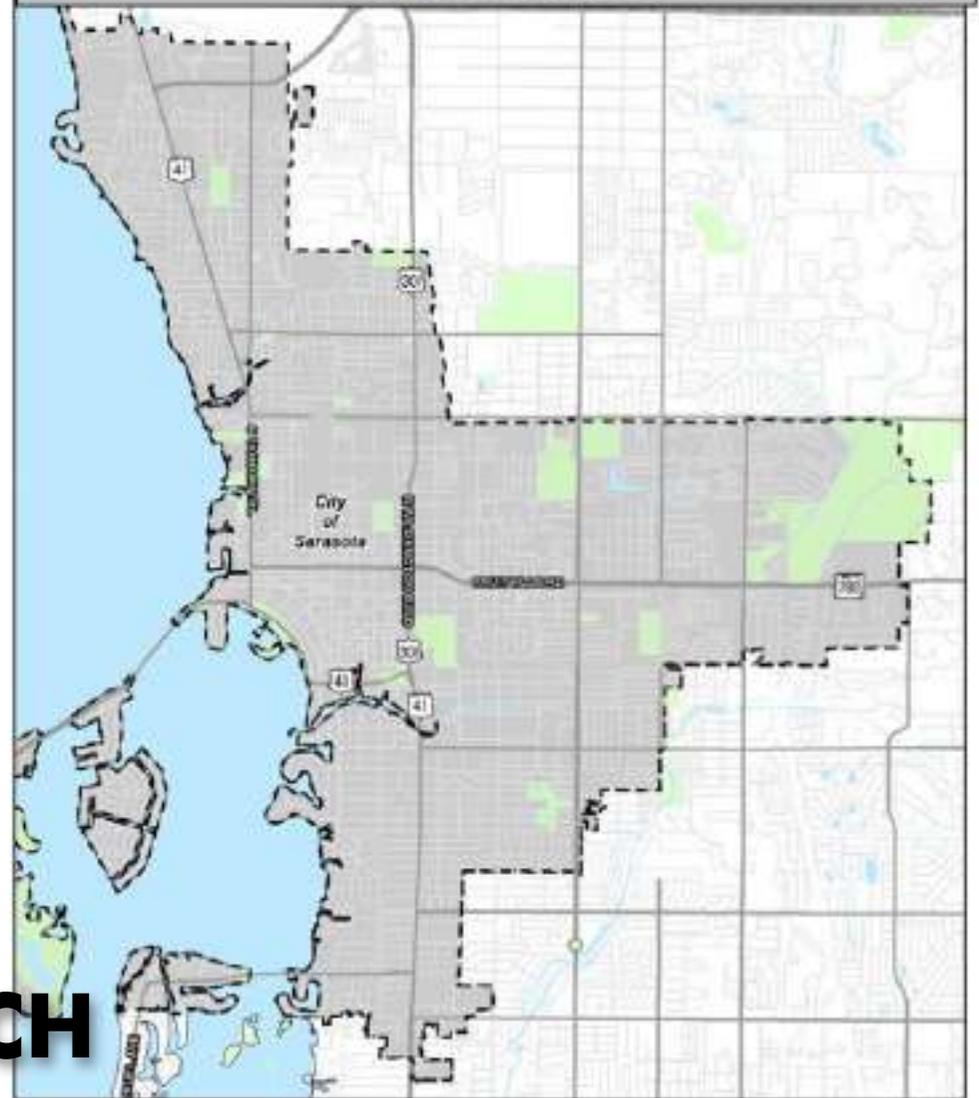
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## Road Impact Fee Interlocal Agreements:

- Exist for all four municipalities
- Interlocal with the City of Sarasota was adopted in 1990
- Fees collected in City of Sarasota are to be used within or close proximity to the City

### City of Sarasota Municipal Road Facility Service District



## AN IMPACT FEE SWITCH

*A slide provided to the County Commissions offers background on the road impact fee interlocal agreements. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

## THE COUNTY COMMISSION AGREES TO LET THE CITY COMMISSION SUBSTITUTE A 'MULTI-MODAL' MODEL FOR ONE FOCUSED ON ROADS

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

Bicyclists, pedestrians, babies in strollers and people in wheelchairs have reason to celebrate. The Sarasota County Commission this week unanimously approved a city plan that authorizes the expenditure of road impact fees on something besides automobiles.

The July 9 action caps a months-long effort by City Engineer Alex DavisShaw to create a “multi-modal impact fee” to replace the road impact fee paid by developers to buffer the cost of transportation improvements.

DavisShaw gave a short presentation to the County Commission, outlining the advantages of the city’s being able to use the funding for more than extra streets and wider ones. Of course, street improvements will still be possible with the new funding scheme, but now the money can be used for “complete streets,” with provisions for urban avenues featuring wide medians, as well as neighborhood thoroughfares with plenty of space for bicyclists and wider sidewalks for baby strollers and wheelchair users.

The road impact fee system was organized countywide through an interlocal agreement nearly a quarter of a century ago. The money was collected by all four municipalities and transferred to the county; funds were then doled back out for projects within or near the four cities.

Since the agreement's inception, the City of Sarasota has collected \$15.2 million in road impact fees. About \$3 million has been spent, and \$7.7 million has been allocated to current projects. The remaining \$4.5 million is for pending and future projects, such as the proposed roundabout at U.S. 41 and Gulfstream Avenue.

The city's desire to replace the road impact fee with a city-administered multi-modal fee required an amendment to the interlocal agreement with the county. Although the county action officially followed a public hearing, no one addressed the board on the matter.

In light of recent city-county frictions, city officials hoped the county commissioners would simply take a vote on the change. And that is what they did, approving the termination of the city's participation in the road impact fee system by a 4-0 vote, virtually without comment. Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson was absent from the room when the action was taken. 



## Overview of the District Revenues & Expenditures

- **City of Sarasota Road Impact Fees:**
  - \$15.2M collected
  - \$3M expended
  - \$7.7M allocated to projects (FY 2014)
    - US 41 / Fruitville Road
    - US 41 / 10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Street roundabouts
    - Advanced Traffic Maintenance System (ATMS) project
    - Myrtle Street Turn lane
  - \$4.5M (remaining balance)
    - US 41 / Gulfstream Avenue, pending Board approval
    - Fully utilized in FY2015 allocation

# FOR THE ARTS



*The Sarasota Concert Association presented Russia's historic St. Petersburg Philharmonic in a Sarasota performance in February. For the first time, the Concert Association has received a county grant to help cover the expenses of its programming. Contributed photo*

## **34 ORGANIZATIONS HAVE WON \$1,580,600 IN ARTS AND CULTURAL GRANTS FOR THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**

*Editor*

For the first time in three years, Jim Shirley won unanimous approval of more than \$1 million in arts grants for Sarasota groups without first having to respond to questions about his outreach to South County organizations.

The executive director of the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County appeared briefly before the County Commission on July 9 to introduce Fran Tavalin, his office's grants director, before the Sarasota County Commission awarded \$1,580,600 to 34 projects for the 2015 fiscal year, which starts Oct. 1.

In 2012 and 2013, Commissioner Christine Robinson, who represents South County

interests on the board, pressed Shirley about the number of meetings he had conducted to assist representatives of South County arts groups interested in the grants process. In 2012, she cast the solitary "No" vote on the annual awarding of funds, citing concerns of constituents who had found difficulty in navigating the application process.

Last year, Robinson joined her colleagues in unanimous support of the grant awards after Tavalin pointed out that 8 percent of the funding would be divided among three South County entities and Shirley provided more details about his contacts with South County organizations.

Organization Name	Title	Amount Requested	Raw Score	Percentage Score	Adjusted Request	Award Recommendation
Art Center Sarasota, Inc.	Merging Parallels	\$41,573	18.9	0.95	\$39,286	\$39,652
Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota, Inc.	Season Nineteen	\$40,100	17	0.85	\$34,085	\$34,405
Asolo Theatre Inc.	The American Character, Year Three	\$87,500	19.7	0.99	\$86,188	\$86,990
Avenida de Colores, Inc.	Sarasota Chalk Festival	\$50,000	18.7	0.94	\$46,750	\$47,185
Coexistence, Inc.	Embracing Our Differences	\$48,161	19	0.95	\$45,753	\$46,179
Florida Studio Theatre, Inc.	Summerfest 2015	\$43,750	19.6	0.98	\$42,875	\$43,274
Florida Studio Theatre, Inc.	2015 Sarasota Festival of New Plays	\$43,750	19.6	0.98	\$42,875	\$43,274
Florida West Coast Symphony, Inc. dba Sarasota Orchestra	Sarasota Orchestra 2014-2015 Season Programming	\$87,500	19.6	0.98	\$85,750	\$86,548
Fuzion Dance Artists, Inc.	Fuzion Dance Artists 9th Season Concert	\$6,217	17.9	0.90	\$5,564	\$5,616
Gloria Musicae, Inc.	Gloria Musicae Fall Concert	\$11,745	18.4	0.92	\$10,805	\$10,906
Gulf Coast Heritage Association, Inc.	Holly Days and Mangrove Lights	\$49,783	18.7	0.94	\$46,547	\$46,980
Jazz Club of Sarasota, Inc.	35th Annual Sarasota Jazz Festival	\$14,315	19.6	0.98	\$14,029	\$14,159
Key Chorale, Inc.	The First Thirty Years: A Celebration	\$18,984	18.3	0.92	\$17,370	\$17,532
La Musica di Asolo, Inc.	Things New	\$18,349	19.3	0.97	\$17,707	\$17,872
Mote Marine Laboratory, Inc.	Sea Amore	\$87,500	19.6	0.98	\$85,750	\$86,548
Ringling College of Art and Design, Inc.	2014-15 Selby Gallery Exhibitions & Visiting Artists Program	\$35,000	19.1	0.96	\$33,425	\$33,736
Ringling College of Art and Design, Inc. on behalf of the Englewood Art Center	Celebrating the Florida Landscape	\$15,000	18.3	0.92	\$13,725	\$13,853
Sarasota Ballet of Florida, Inc.	Twenty-Fourth Season	\$87,500	19.1	0.96	\$83,563	\$84,340
Sarasota Concert Association, Inc.	70th Anniversary Season	\$23,100	18	0.90	\$20,790	\$20,984
Sarasota Film Festival, Inc.	17th Annual Sarasota Film Festival	\$87,500	19.7	0.99	\$86,188	\$86,990
Sarasota Opera Association, Inc.	Opera Lovers Weekends 2015	\$87,500	19	0.95	\$83,125	\$83,899
SARASOTA POPS ORCHESTRA, INC.	The Pops 2014-15 Season:	\$5,910	18.4	0.92	\$5,437	\$5,488

*A chart shows about 60 percent of the programs recommended for county funding through the Arts and Cultural Alliance during the 2015 fiscal year. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

This year, four South County groups received a combined \$160,077 in grant funds, or about 10 percent of the \$1,533,965 divvied up among 34 organizations.

On July 9, Tavalin told the commissioners two new applicants would be among the recipients, the Englewood Art Center and the Sarasota Concert Association. According to the list the Alliance provided, Ringling College of Art and Design applied for the funding on behalf of the Englewood Art Center. The \$13,853 grant will pay for an exhibit titled *Celebrating the Florida Landscape*.

The Sarasota Concert Association won \$20,984 to help cover the expenses of its 70th anniversary season.

Another South County entity, [Venice Museum and Archives](#), intends to submit an application next year, Tavalin noted.

Following Tavalin's remarks, Commissioner Joe Barbetta pointed out, "It's all pretty straightforward."

A staff memo provided to the commissioners says the Alliance's Cultural/Arts Grant Panel received and evaluated 35 grant applications for 35 new projects for the next fiscal year. "The only project that was not selected was determined to be incomplete and included outdated financials," the memo notes.



*Jim Shirley, executive director of the Arts & Cultural Alliance, addresses the County Commission as Fern Tavalin, the Alliance's grants director, waits her turn at the podium. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## THE GRANTS

The following grant awards were made for the 2015 fiscal year:

- Art Center Sarasota, *Merging Parallels*, in the amount of \$39,652.
- Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota, Season Nineteen, in the amount of \$34,405.
- Asolo Theatre, *The American Character, Year Three*, in the amount of \$86,990.
- Avenida de Colores, Sarasota Chalk Festival, in the amount of \$47,185.
- Coexistence, *Embracing Our Differences*, in the amount of \$46,179.
- Florida Studio Theatre, Summerfest 2015, in the amount of \$43,274.
- Florida Studio Theatre, 2015 Sarasota Festival of New Plays, in the amount of \$43,274.
- Florida West Coast Symphony, dba Sarasota Orchestra, Sarasota Orchestra 2014-2015 Season Programming, in the amount of \$86,548.



*The Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe has won a grant to help cover expenses of its 2014-15 season. Purlie was one of its 2013-14 productions. Image courtesy Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe*



*The annual Chalk Festival produced by Avenida de Colores, which is moving from Sarasota to Venice this year, won a grant of \$47,185. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

- Fuzion Dance Artists, Fuzion Dance Artists Ninth Season Concert, in the amount of \$5,616.
- Gloria Musicae, Fall Concert, in the amount of \$10,906.
- Gulf Coast Heritage Association, *Holly Days and Mangrove Lights*, in the amount of \$46,980.
- Jazz Club of Sarasota, 35th Annual Sarasota Jazz Festival, in the amount of \$14,159.
- Key Chorale, *The First Thirty Years: A Celebration*, in the amount of \$17,532.
- La Musica di Asolo, *Things New*, in the amount of \$17,872.
- Mote Marine Laboratory, *Sea Amore*, in the amount of \$86,548.
- Ringling College of Art and Design, 2014-15 Selby Exhibitions & Visiting Artists Program, in the amount of \$33,736.
- Ringling College of Art and Design on behalf of the Englewood Art Center, *Celebrating the Florida Landscape*, in the amount of \$13,853.
- Sarasota Ballet of Florida, Twenty-Fourth Season, in the amount of \$84,340.
- Sarasota Concert Association, 70th Anniversary Season, in the amount of \$20,984.
- Sarasota Film Festival, 17th Annual Sarasota Film Festival, in the amount of \$86,990.
- Sarasota Opera Association, Opera Lovers Weekend 2015, in the amount of \$83,899.
- Sarasota Pops Orchestra, The Pops 2014-15 Season, in the amount of \$5,488.
- The Circus Arts Conservatory, Winter Production, in the amount of \$63,918.
- The Circus Arts Conservatory, *Holiday Spectacular* and Spring Shows, in the amount of \$20,644.
- The Florida State University on behalf of The John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art Foundation, *Behind Closed Doors: Art in the Spanish American Home, 1492-1898 and RePurposed*, in the amount of \$83,457.
- The Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, *Fantastic Florida!/Gardens Treasures*, in the amount of \$83,899.
- The Perlman Music Program/Suncoast, *Hear & Now Concerts: The Next Generation of PMP Artists*, in the amount of \$42,921.
- The Players, Broadway Theatre Series, in the amount of \$39,161.
- The Players, Summer Sizzler Series, in the amount of \$9,790.
- The Venice Symphony, *The Grand Inauguration of the Venice Performing Arts Center*, in the amount of \$30,808.
- Van Wezel Foundation, *World Class Entertainment*, in the amount of \$85,224.
- Venice Art Center, 2014-2015 exhibits, in the amount of \$31,517.
- Venice Little Theatre, *Shoulder to Shoulder '14-15*, in the amount of \$83,899.
- Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe of Florida, WBTT Love, Laughter and Legends Season 2014-2015, in the amount of \$48,952. 

# A LIBRARY, A TROLLEY, PARKING AND PAVING



*An aerial view of the construction of Gulf Gate Library, provided to the county by Willis Smith Construction in late June, shows the parking parcel across the street that the Friends of Gulf Gate Library gave Sarasota County in December. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

## **THE COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES A RANGE OF JULY 8 CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS, RANGING FROM FURNITURE FOR THE NEW GULF GATE LIBRARY TO A CONTRACT FOR SOUTH COUNTY ROAD RESURFACING**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

With the new two-story Gulf Gate Library scheduled to open in late January 2015, the Sarasota County Commission this week approved the purchases of furniture, fixtures and equipment for it in an amount not to exceed \$600,000.

The item was among those approved on the board's July 8 consent agenda with no comment.

During the commissioners' June 25 budget workshop, Sarabeth Kalajian, director of libraries and historical resources for the county, said the library construction was

70-percent complete at that point and on schedule.

She reminded the board that the original Gulf Gate Library, which opened in November 1973, comprised 1,500 square feet. The new facility, located on the 7211 Curtiss Ave. site of its immediate predecessor, will have 25,920 square feet, Kalajian added.

A July 8 memo provided to the commissioners explains that furniture, fixtures and equipment purchases and installation typically are handled through State of Florida contracts outside construction contracts.

“This allows for discounts that can be significantly greater than can be provided through the Construction Manager,” the memo notes.

In a July 3 email to the board members, Kalajian wrote that the covered walkway at the entrance to the new facility and garden shade structures are in place. “Interior wall painting is steadily progressing,” she added.

During the June 25 workshop, Kalajian reminded the commissioners that the [Friends of Gulf Gate Library had donated a 25,000-square-foot parcel](#) across the street from the new library that will be used to supplement on-site parking. The organization is continuing to conduct fundraising for the facility, Kalajian continued, especially for the areas that will be used by children and teens and for the two planned reading gardens.

The library has been operating at [Westfield Sarasota Square](#) while the construction has been under way. “We think the temporary location at the mall has been a great success,” Kalajian said. “We’ve attracted new library users who will follow us to the new Gulf Gate Library.”

## SIESTA TROLLEY FUNDS

With Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) [Route 10 being launched on July 12](#) to serve Siesta Key, the County Commission on July 8 adopted a resolution authorizing a Joint Participation Agreement with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for a \$1,087,500 grant that will cover 50 percent of the operating expenses for the first three years of the service.



*An aerial photo shows the rear of the new Gulf Gate Library. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

In February 2011, the county obtained the FDOT grant for the trolley, or “island bus,” as SCAT is calling it, which will run from the Westfield Southgate mall on Siesta Drive through the Pavilion Shopping Centers in the Gulf Gate area, with stops in Siesta Village, at Siesta Public Beach and Turtle Beach. The trip from Southgate to Turtle Beach will take about an hour, according to SCAT staff.

The grant required a 50-percent local match, according to a memo provided by SCAT Director Glama Carter. That will come in the form of salaries for the bus drivers, the memo notes.

After the state funding for the service is exhausted, other sources of money will be

needed to continue the route, the memo points out.

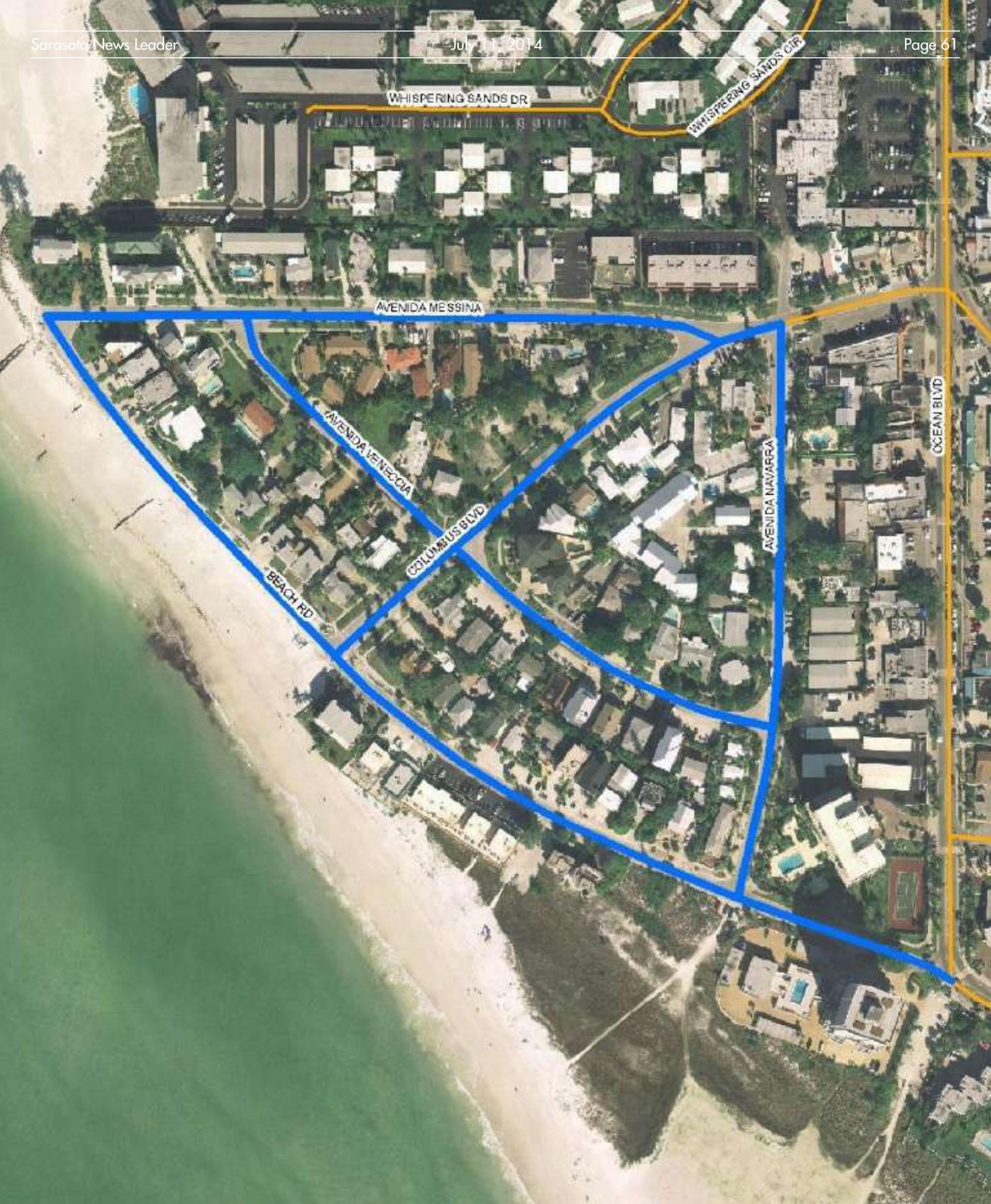
Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on Siesta Key, has urged Siesta business owners to encourage use of the route. County staff and a future County Commission will consider ridership when they look at extending the service beyond the initial three-year period, she has pointed out.

A Feb. 24, 2011, letter from FDOT to then-SCAT General Manager Anthony Beckford says the project was designed to “alleviate beach and Siesta Village parking.”

The route will operate seven days a week in conjunction with the existing Route 11 that



*The Siesta trolley, which is being rebranded as an ‘island bus,’ will leave the Sarasota County Area Transit stop at Southgate mall about every 20 minutes. File photo*



A map shows the boundaries of the Mira Mar District on Siesta Key. Image courtesy Sarasota County

serves Siesta Key. The goal is to make waits for a bus to the island no longer than 20 minutes, SCAT staff says.

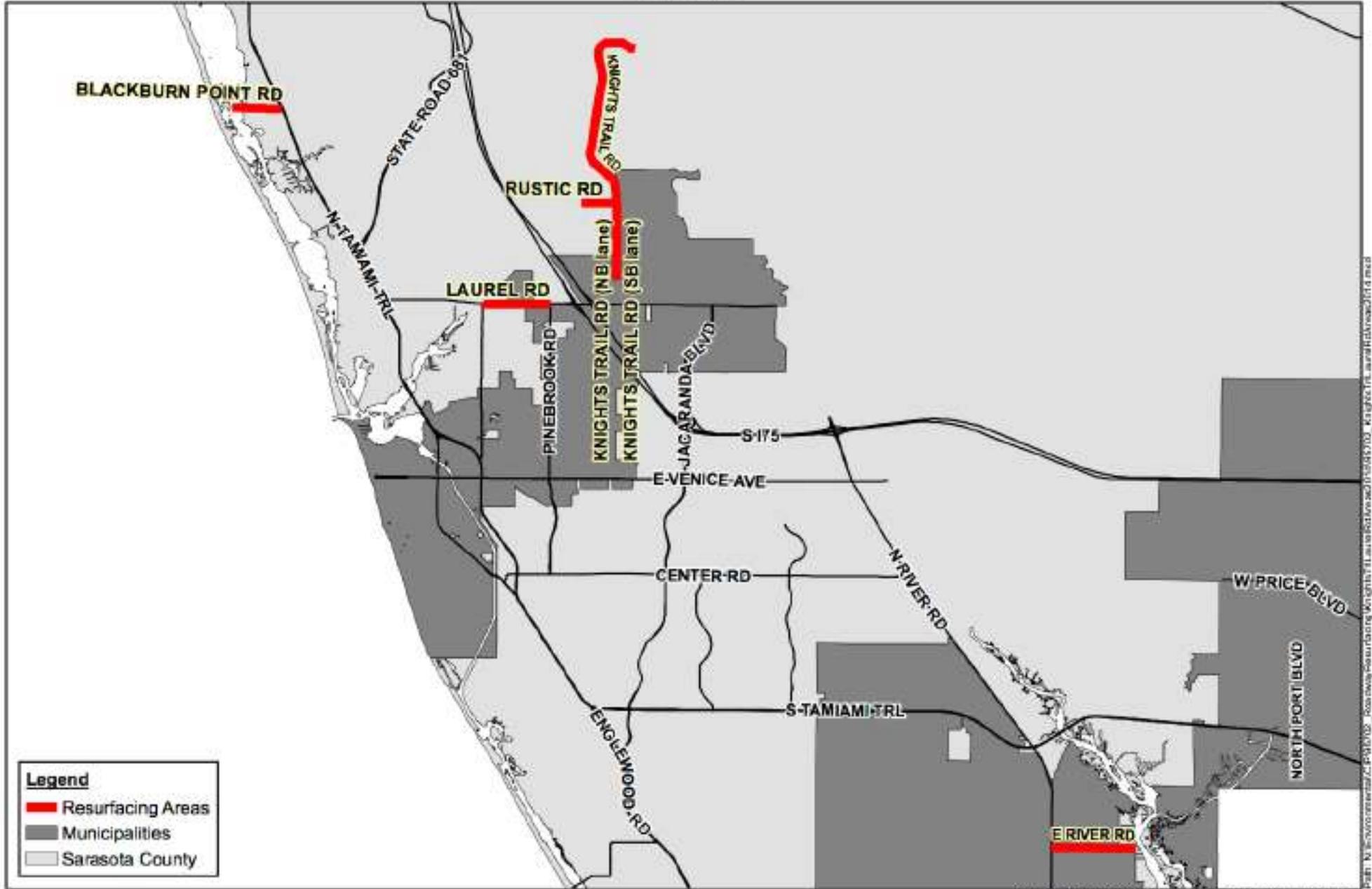
### 'IF IT AIN'T BROKE'

In the end, the vote was unanimous to hold a public hearing on Aug. 26 to extend the sunset date of the Residential Permit Parking Program ordinance for the Mira Mar District on Siesta Key. However, it came only after several minutes of discussion initiated by Commissioner Patterson.

A July 8 memo to the County Commission from Lisa Cece in the county's Public Works Transportation Office, pointed out that the Mira Mar District parking ordinance was adopted on June 20, 1995. The district is bordered by Avenida Messina, Avenida Navarra, Avenida Venecia, Columbus Boulevard and the section of Beach Road west of Ocean Boulevard in Siesta Village. The memo from Cece notes that the last time the board acted on the ordinance was Jan. 12, 2011, when it approved an amendment providing that

### Roadway Resurfacing - Knights Trail, Laurel Road area and Various Roads

CIP# 95702



A map shows the segments of roads that will be paved in South County beginning this month. Image courtesy Sarasota County

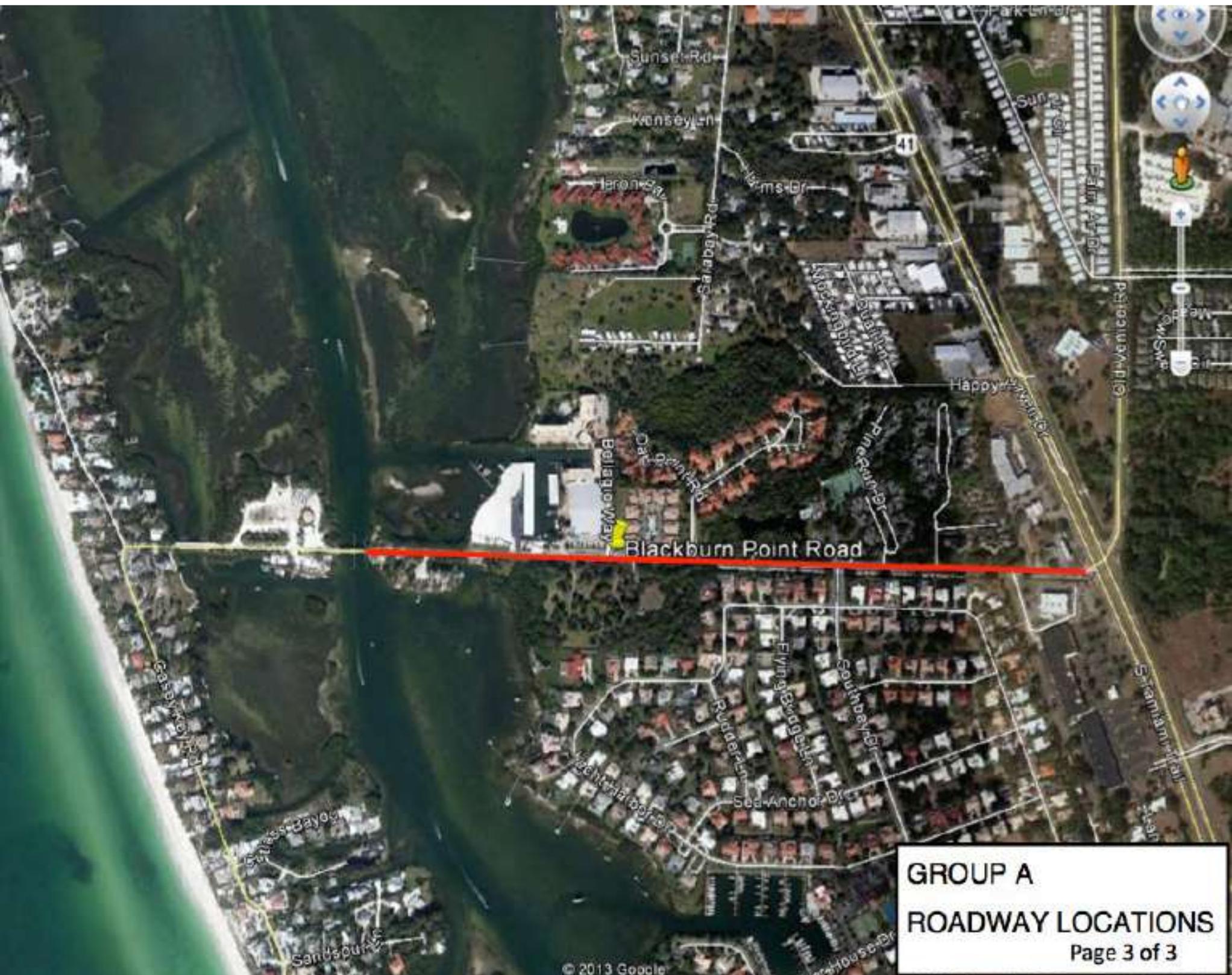
vehicles with handicapped stickers could park in the marked handicapped parking spaces within the Mira Mar District. The sunset date was not extended at that time.

Without commission action, the ordinance will sunset on Nov. 1, 2014. Staff is recommending that the new sunset date be Nov. 1, 2019. That is the matter the board will address on Aug. 26.

As Patterson put it during the board's regular meeting on July 8, "It's kind of an unusual

parking district. ... The residents actually don't get a permit, so calling it a 'residential parking permit program' is actually not what it is."

The permits go to owners of the short-term rental units in the district, "which, in many cases are duplexes that have been carved up into five-plexes and six-plexes," Patterson noted. The owners distribute the permits to renters. The goal is to make sure the renters, who have no on-site parking available to



An aerial view shows the section of Blackburn Point Road that will be repaved. Image courtesy Sarasota County

them at the units, are able to park legally on the street, she added.

Prior to adoption of the original ordinance, as Patterson explained it, frustrations were aired over the number of people parking on the street to use what locals refer to as “the dog beach,” even though a county ordinance forbids dogs at any of the public beach accesses and the public beach itself on Siesta Key.

Patterson questioned whether the commissioners should amend the ordinance to allow “probably only a handful” of homeowners in the Mira Mar District to apply for parking permits as well. She told her colleagues, “I haven’t had complaints about this in years, but I used to from the one or two lone homeowners ...”

Cece took the podium to note of the ordinance, “It’s been pretty successful. It has reduced the vehicular congestion on neighborhood streets.”

“Do you think that there are enough [homeowners] who live there that allowing them to pay five bucks for a permit if they needed to or desired to would somehow unbalance what’s working?” Patterson asked.

Staff could go back out to the area and conduct a survey of the residents and then report on its findings at the public hearing, Cece responded. In response to another question from Patterson, Cece said staff also could conduct a phone call poll of the neighborhood’s residents.

“I don’t want to create a bunch of work over what’s a pretty small issue,” Patterson replied.

“We have the ability to amend this ordinance at any time if we should find a problem, correct?” Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson asked County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh.

“Yes, you do,” he told her.

With Chairman Charles Hines and Commissioner Joe Barbetta both referencing old adages — “Let sleeping dogs lie” from Hines and “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” from Barbetta — Patterson again acknowledged, “I have not had a call on it in about five years.”

Commissioner Carolyn Mason made the motion to advertise the public hearing for the ordinance as is except for the change in the sunset date. Robinson seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

## **SOUTH COUNTY RESURFACING PROJECTS**

The County Commission on July 8 also approved a \$2,624,145.45 contract with Ajax Paving Industries of Florida, which is based in Nokomis, for the resurfacing of a total of 7.86 miles encompassing Knights Trail Road and segments of Laurel Road, Blackburn Point Road and East River Road in South County.

Work is scheduled to begin this month with substantial completion expected in October, according to a memo provided to the board.

The only other firm that bid on the project was Preferred Materials Inc. of Tampa. Its bid was for \$2,932,827.82, a county Procurement Department tabulation sheet shows. 

# SHARE





# Siesta Seen

## A SIGN 'SWITCHEROO' OCCURS ON NORTH SHELL ROAD; ROBERTS POINT ROAD HAS ITS OWN PARKING PROBLEMS; THE SIESTA CHAMBER MEETS ITS FIREWORKS FUNDRAISING GOAL; AND THE PUBLIC BEACH PARK IMPROVEMENTS ARE ON SCHEDULE



By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

Although the new public parking spaces on North Shell Road were substantially complete on July 3, a couple of issues remained to be resolved. The primary one, I learned this week, involves incorrect signage.

Unlike the “No Parking” signs that went up in February on Avenida de Mayo, those on North Shell Road also bore the notice, “Tow Away Zone.” Therefore, the North Shell Road signs

were being replaced this week, Tom Maroney, the county’s transportation manager in the Public Works Department, told me on July 7.

“They were exuberantly put up there by the contractor,” Maroney pointed out, adding that the “Tow Away Zone” notices were not included at the county’s direction. “For consistency’s sake, we are going to take them down.”



*The North Shell Road public parking project is almost complete. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

The same rules apply on North Shell Road and Avenida de Mayo, he said. Anyone who parks in a “No Parking” zone is subject to a \$25 ticket. However, the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office can have a vehicle towed if it presents a safety hazard on either street, Maroney noted.

Maroney and Sgt. Scott Osborne, who heads up the Sheriff’s Office’s Community Policing Station in Siesta Village, had discussed the situation shortly before I spoke with him, Maroney said.

As for the other element of the project that needs to be addressed, the county’s chief

engineer, James K. Harriott Jr., emailed the county commissioners on July 3 to tell them sod had not been installed around the back sections of the parking areas. “This will happen next week,” he wrote. The contractor felt that undertaking the work before the July Fourth holiday “would make the necessary watering a challenge through the weekend,” Harriott added. “Most of the sod is the St. Augustine variety (replacing what was removed) so watering until it is established is necessary.” Harriott continued in his email, “I have met with a couple of residents from the area. Generally, they seem pleased and are optimistic the more formal approach to



*‘Tow Away Zone’ signs on North Shell Road were expected to be replaced this week. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# *Siesta Seen*

parking will be an improvement to past parking practices.”

One resident on the street did request some cleanup work and general maintenance at the beach park,” Harriott noted, referring to Beach Access 1, which is at the west end of North Shell Road. Those requests would be forwarded to the Parks and Recreation Department for review, he wrote.

By the way, the post-and-rope design provides even more protection for the fire hydrant on the street, it appears. Still, the posts previously planted in front of the hydrant did not deter people from parking next to it, in direct violation of the law. That was a point Harriott made to the County Commission on April 9,

before it voted to approve the public parking plan for North Shell Road.

“I don’t get it. I don’t understand it,” Harriott told the commissioners. “As long as I’ve been alive, I think, it’s been illegal to park in front of a fire hydrant. People [here] do it all the time.”

“I don’t get it,” was exactly what Maroney said on July 7, too, when he and I also discussed that same point.

## **ROBERTS POINT ROAD WORRIES**

While the contractor was at work on North Shell Road’s new designated spaces, residents on Roberts Point Road — whose entrance is right across Higel Avenue from North Shell Road — were becoming alarmed at the



*Roberts Point Road is on the east side of Higel Avenue, across from the entrance to North Shell Road.  
Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

number of people jamming up their street with vehicles.

In late June, one Roberts Point Road resident emailed the commissioners, urging them to install “No Parking” signs along the street up to the first turn. “Please take this into serious consideration,” the woman added, noting that she was sending the board members a number of signed petitions in support of the request. She included a photo of a syringe, pointing out that it was one of many that had been found near residences where young children live.

Deputy Chris McGregor of the Sheriff’s Office alluded to the parking situation last week during his report at the Siesta Key Village

Association (SKVA) meeting. “Now what scares me is across the street [from North Shell Road],” he said, adding that he had talked with residents of Roberts Point Road over the past several weeks about their woes.

In response to the email the woman resident sent the county commissioners, Chairman Charles Hines put her in contact with Paula Wiggins, the county’s transportation planning manager. On June 26, Wiggins emailed the resident a copy of the form for her and her neighbors to use in petitioning action of the county’s Traffic Advisory Council (TAC). She directed the resident to return the form to another county staff member, along with the letters and photos the resident had referenced in her email to the commissioners.



A ‘No Parking’ sign stands in front of one residence on Roberts Point Road. Photo by Rachel Hackney

# *Siesta Seen*

The TAC hears petitions related to parking before they are addressed by the County Commission.

## **MEETING THE GOAL**

As it has in the past, the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce met its fundraising goal again this year for the \$35,000 July Fourth fireworks show at the beach, Executive Director Debra Lynn-Schmitz told me on July 7. The Chamber covers the entire expense; no county money goes toward the event.

Past Siesta Key Association Director Peter van Roekens was kind enough to share some highlights with the *News Leader* this week.

The Chamber's VIP picnic, a fundraiser that is held before the pyrotechnics, "was pretty much sold out," Lynn-Schmitz said. "I think it all went very smoothly."

County staff had promised the new beach parking lot would be completed in time for the festivities, and it was. During the July 1 SKVA meeting, Deputy Chris McGregor remarked that the facility "looks beautiful,"



*The new parking lot at Siesta Public Beach opened just in time for the July Fourth holiday. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

including the brick walkway that leads visitors around the construction site to that Siesta quartz sand.

And no “heavenly fireworks” arrived to disrupt the man-made show, Lynn-Schmitz pointed out.

“I can promise it’s not going to rain this year because we paid for a 60-foot by 90-foot tent to put over the picnic tables,” SKVA member Kay Kouvatso said during the organization’s July 1 meeting.

Lynn-Schmitz told me she worked on the cleanup after the fireworks show ended until

about 10 p.m. and was back at the beach at 7 a.m. on Saturday to finish the job, “pretty much all by myself.” It only took about two hours, she added.

Though volunteers who had gathered for a special beach “garbage detail” offered to assist her in the VIP picnic area, she said she declined. “They had their hands full,” she pointed out. As in the past, a lot of the fireworks spectators just left behind what they had brought with them for the day. “My area was nothing compared to what people left on the beach,” Lynn-Schmitz said.



*A walkway from the new Siesta Public Beach parking lot to the beach skirts the construction area.  
Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# ***Siesta Seen***



*Siesta resident Peter van Roekens was kind enough to share his photos of the Siesta July Fourth fireworks with the News Leader.*

# ***Siesta Seen***



*Contributed photo by Peter van Roekens*

# ***Siesta Seen***



*Contributed photo by Peter van Roekens*

# ***Siesta Seen***



*Contributed photo by Peter van Roekens*

# Siesta Seen

## SPEAKING OF THE CLEANUP ...

Siesta Key Association (SKA) President Michael Shay organized the volunteer “Liberty Cleanup” on July 5. In an email he sent that afternoon to all those who had helped, he extended his thanks and the gratitude of county staff. “The Beach was a MESS,” he wrote, and your help made a profound difference! Your work today was truly ‘above and beyond’ and I am personally ... very satisfied at the way our County residents rise to the challenge. I am especially grateful to those who don’t live on the Key, but yet answer the call. All of you who helped out today are truly HEROES in my book!”

Shay asked for estimates of how many bags of recyclables and trash individuals filled, so he could file a report with county staff.

Along with the public beach initiative, the volunteers undertook the usual Adopt-A-Road cleanup on Higel Avenue from the “hump bridge” to the north Siesta Drive bridge, on Ocean Boulevard and in the Village.

## PUBLIC BEACH PARK IMPROVEMENTS

During the June 25 County Commission budget workshop, Carolyn Brown, director of parks and recreation, praised the firm that has been handling the “construction manager at risk” responsibilities for the Siesta Public Beach improvements.

“[Jon F.] Swift has just been outstanding to work with,” she said.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta told his colleagues and staff he felt the board owed gratitude to representatives of the community’s building firms, who urged the commissioners to advertise the project with that type of management. Swift has been responsible for finding and supervising all the subcontractors to ensure the project comes in at or under budget.

Brown also complimented the county’s Capital Projects Department staff assigned to the beach park improvements, “[They have] been great, so kudos to them, too.”

All signs indicate the project will be completed early in the 2016 fiscal year, she added. “It just seems like everything is going very, very well ....” 

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*The Sarasota County School District saw its overall property value rise 7.61 percent from 2013 to 2014. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **NORTH PORT, SCHOOL DISTRICT, SEE BIG JUMPS IN PROPERTY VALUES**

Sarasota County realized a slightly higher overall property tax value for this year than the earlier forecast showed, according to the Sarasota County Property Appraiser's Office.

The total final value submitted to state officials was \$43,466,046,705, up 6.65 percent from the 2013 value and a slight increase over the preliminary figure of 6.5 percent that Property Appraiser Bill Furst conveyed to the County Commission during its June 25 budget workshop. The change translates into about \$250,000 more for the county to incorporate into its 2015 fiscal year budget than staff had planned on as of June 25.

The City of North Port saw the highest increase in value of all taxing entities, the Property Appraiser's Office reported. Its total

property value of \$2,655,030,789 for 2014 is 10 percent higher than the 2013 number.

The Sarasota County School District was in second place. Its property value of \$46,981,167,444 for 2014 is up 7.61 percent compared to the 2013 figure.

In third place is the Siesta Key Lighting District, with its total value 7.47 percent higher than the 2013 number.

The City of Venice saw its total property value rise by 6.95 percent, while the Town of Longboat Key realized an increase of 5.18 percent.

As previously reported, the City of Sarasota's property value is up 5.53 percent this year.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

## COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES ADVERTISEMENT OF MILLAGE RATE

It was a matter of formality during the July 9 Sarasota County Commission meeting, but the board voted unanimously to advertise its millage rates for the 2015 fiscal year.

Kim Radtke of the county's Office of Financial Management pointed out that the board will have an opportunity to revisit the aggregate millage rate of 3.3912 when it holds its last budget workshop on Aug. 20. However, board members have been united in saying they will hold it steady.

Chairman Charles Hines was met with silence when he asked on July 9, "Any motion to increase the rate?" He quickly added, "I'm just teasing."

Radtke noted that the rate will not be adopted until after the commission holds its public hearings on the budget. Those are set for

Sept. 8 and Sept. 22. The first will be at the R.L. Anderson Center in Venice; the second, at the Sarasota County Administration Center on Ringling Boulevard in downtown Sarasota. The board traditionally votes to approve the budget after the final public hearing.

The proposed millage rate will be reflected on the TRIM notices that will go out to property owners in August, according to a staff memo. By law, the County Commission can lower the rate during one of the September public hearings. However, it cannot increase the rate unless each taxpayer is sent a notice by first class mail, the memo points out.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta made the motion to advertise the total millage rate. Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson seconded it.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

	<b>Adopted FY 2014</b>	<b>Proposed FY 2015</b>	<b>Difference</b>
General Operating	3.0607	3.0607	0.0000
ESLPP Operating	0.0669	0.0779	0.0110
<b>Total General Operating</b>	<b>3.1276</b>	<b>3.1386</b>	<b>0.0110</b>
Debt Service	0.1831	0.1721	(0.0110)
Mosquito Control	0.0805	0.0805	0.0000
<b>Aggregate Millage Rate</b>	<b>3.3912</b>	<b>3.3912</b>	<b>0.0000</b>

*A chart shows the proposed Sarasota County millage rates for the 2015 fiscal year. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

# MID-COUNTY TAX COLLECTOR OFFICE SITE PURCHASE APPROVED

Without comment on July 8, the Sarasota County Commission approved the purchase of 6.5 acres for a new 9,100-square-foot Mid-County Tax Collector Office and driving test range.

It also agreed to a loan from an internal fund to pay for the land and early phases of the project.

The facility is necessary because of the Florida Legislature’s mandate that county tax

collector offices take over the issuance of all drivers’ licenses by June 30, 2015.

The total purchase price for the new facility, which will be located at 5000 Sawyer Loop Road, south of Clark Road, is \$1,550,000, according to a July 8 memo from county staff to the commissioners. The county plans to buy two parcels. The first, from Culverhouse Limited Partnership, comprises 2.96 acres. Its cost is \$805,000. The second, with a total of

## Mid-County Tax Collector Office

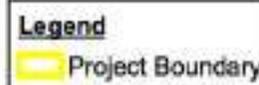
CIP# 83299



Map published using ArcGIS 10.x by igines on Friday, June 06, 2014



Aerial Imagery Provided by Pictometry International  
Sarasota County, FL  
February 2013  
4" Resolution



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A county map shows the Sawyer Loop Road site of the planned Mid-County Tax Collector’s Office. Image courtesy Sarasota County

2.77 acres, is owned by Cheshire Hunt Inc. Its price is \$745,000. The closing date is Oct. 6, the memo notes.

The memo notes that county staff identified about 30 sites in its effort to find property that would meet the demands Sarasota County Tax Collector Barbara Ford-Coates explained would be necessary for the drivers' license work. Among them is a closed driving course, a feature highly recommended by the state for safety purposes, she has told the commissioners.

The county has until Sept. 5 to complete its due diligence on the two parcels, the memo points out. The contracts also "are conditioned upon the County obtaining two appraisal reports," showing the average value

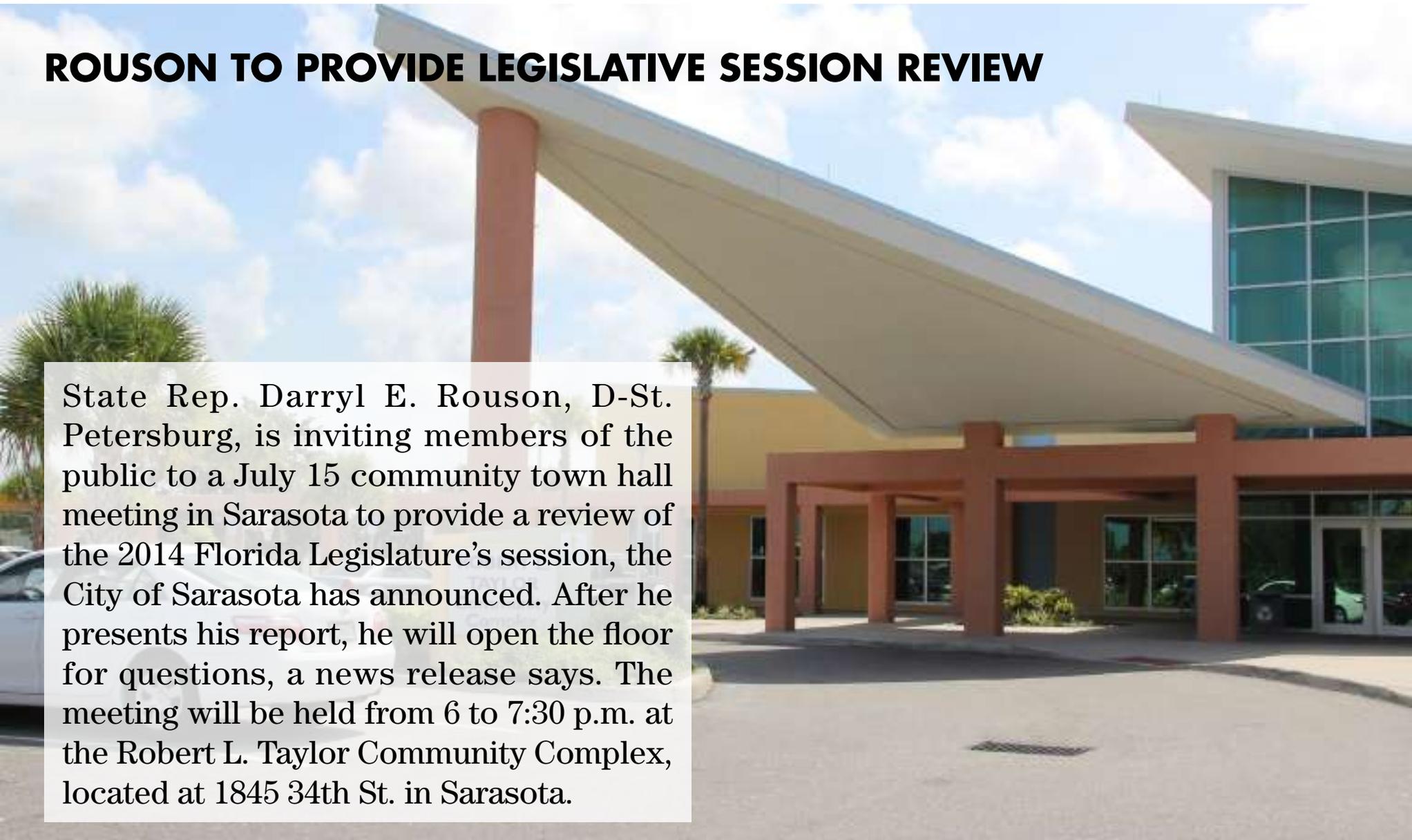
for the property is not less than the purchase price, the memo adds. If county staff is not satisfied with the due diligence reports, the memo notes, the county has the option to terminate the contracts.

The estimate for the due diligence is \$50,000.

To provide interim financing for the purchase of the parcels, projected closing costs and some initial design and engineering work, staff proposed the county pursue an inter-fund loan in the amount of \$2,143,000, the memo explains. That will be repaid to the county's general fund when a bank loan is secured prior to the start of construction, the memo says.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

## **ROUSON TO PROVIDE LEGISLATIVE SESSION REVIEW**



State Rep. Darryl E. Rouson, D-St. Petersburg, is inviting members of the public to a July 15 community town hall meeting in Sarasota to provide a review of the 2014 Florida Legislature's session, the City of Sarasota has announced. After he presents his report, he will open the floor for questions, a news release says. The meeting will be held from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Robert L. Taylor Community Complex, located at 1845 34th St. in Sarasota.

*The Robert L. Taylor Complex is in north Sarasota. File photo*

## PARENTS ENCOURAGED TO HAVE CHILDREN VACCINATED BEFORE SCHOOL

With local schools scheduled to resume Aug. 18, Sarasota County public health and school officials are reminding parents to get their children's immunizations updated.

A parent of a child enrolling at a Sarasota County school for the first time must provide the office staff with a completed Florida Certification of Immunization (DH 680), a Health Department news release points out.

Available through healthcare providers and at the Florida Department of Health (DOH) in Sarasota County (formerly known as the Sarasota County Health Department), that certification "is the official record showing that school-age children have had all the immunizations needed for their grade level," the news release explains.

By the time a child starts school, he or she should already have had a number of required immunizations, the release continues. However, proof of updates, boosters and series completion is required before any child can become a student of the Sarasota County Schools or advance to some grade levels.

Children entering seventh grade in August must have proof they received a tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis booster (TDaP) within the past five years, for example, the release points out. Parents also should make sure their college-bound teenagers have up-to-date required and recommended vaccines, which usually include those for meningitis and HPV.

The registrar must be at the child's school to process a DH 680 form, the release adds. "While some school staff members work year-round, the majority of Sarasota County School District school registrars will return to work July 24," it says. According to school

district staff, schools will be closed on all Fridays through Aug. 8.

Students who do not have the required immunizations will be sent home from public schools on the first day, Aug. 18, the release notes. In addition, they will not be able to ride a bus or participate in sports, band or other extracurricular activities until the school has the DH 680 forms showing they have received the required immunizations, the release adds.

The Department of Health, through the federally funded Vaccines for Children program, offers immunizations to eligible children at no cost, the release points out. No appointment is needed. A parent or legal guardian must be present and must bring prior shot records, the release says. Immunizations are also available free of charge to children with insurance. "Please bring your insurance card information," the release adds. Immunizations for children are available at the following locations:

### **WILLIAM L. LITTLE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES CENTER**

Call 861-2900 for hours or visit [sarasotahealth.org](http://sarasotahealth.org).

The Walk-In Immunization Clinic is located at 2200 Ringling Blvd. in downtown Sarasota.

### **NORTH PORT HEALTH CENTER**

Call 861-3864 for hours or visit [sarasotahealth.org](http://sarasotahealth.org).

The Walk-In Immunization Clinic is located at 6950 Outreach Way in North Port.

For more information, contact a healthcare provider or the DOH-Sarasota's Office of School Health at 927-9000, Ext. 32101. For a complete shot schedule, visit the Sarasota County School District's health [website](#).

## **POLICE DEPARTMENT HOLDS INAUGURAL JUNIOR ACADEMY**

The Sarasota Police Department held its inaugural Junior Law Enforcement Academy for 30 children on July 9, the department has announced.

The event gave children a chance to observe the inner workings of the Police Department, a news release says. Chief Bernadette DiPino spent time talking with children, sharing safety tips and encouraging the youngsters to keep in touch with the Police Department, the release adds.

Academy participants had the opportunity to try on equipment, such as a “bomb suit,”

and take part in a SWAT Challenge on the west lawn of the Police Department grounds, the release continues. Other specialty units participated in the activities, including the Marine Patrol and Dive Team, Criminalistics, K9 and the Emergency Response Team, the release notes.

Plans are in the works for other future junior law enforcement days, the release says.

To see video highlights of the July 9 activities, click [here](#).

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## **NEW MOTE BOAT TO ENHANCE RESPONSES TO DISTRESSED SEA LIFE**

The animal rescue and recovery team at Mote Marine Laboratory recently received \$12,104 from the Sea Turtle Grants Program to purchase a new boat that will enhance Mote’s response to distressed sea turtles, dolphins and whales and make possible “new research about the threats they face,” Mote has announced in a news release.

The funds helped pay for a 13-foot Boston Whaler for Mote’s Stranding Investigations Program, a 24-hour response service for sick, injured and stranded sea creatures in Sarasota and Manatee counties, the release notes. Mote bought the boat “at a substantial discount from Marine Max Sarasota, located on City Island,” the release says.

Between 2003 and 2013, Mote responded to 697 sea turtles, the most commonly stranded marine animals in the two counties, the release continues. Thirty percent of the cases during the past year required a marine vessel, the release points out. “Animals found alive are brought to Mote’s hospitals for treatment, while those recovered dead are given a

thorough necropsy (animal autopsy),” it says. “Findings are provided to state and federal wildlife managers and help fuel cutting-edge science.”

While Mote has several multi-use research vessels and its staff works closely with wildlife officials to address each stranding quickly, “having a powerboat dedicated to the Stranding Investigations Program allows even more efficient responses at all hours,” the release explains.

“Speed is essential whether the animal is reported dead or alive,” said Gretchen Lovewell, manager of Mote’s Stranding Investigations Program, in the release. “For living animals entangled in fishing gear, a swift response may be all that saves them from drowning with the rising tide or exhausting their energy reserves. For an animal that has recently died, an hour in the Florida heat can make a major difference in how much their tissues have decomposed — and in turn, how much we can learn from examining them. This new vessel allows for a quicker, more

efficient response, and the boat's shallow draft means it can go virtually anywhere."

Mote's new boat will also allow scientists to develop new research studies to document boat traffic and monitor for sea turtles in Sarasota Bay, the release notes. Their goal is to look for hot spots where boat strikes on turtles happen most frequently. Mote is seeking additional funds for this project online at [mote.org/donate](http://mote.org/donate), the release adds.



*(From left) Mote Marine Stranding Investigations Program Manager Gretchen Lovewell, Iain Stephenson of Marine Max and Rebeccah Hazelkorn, Mote staff biologist, stand with Mote's new Boston Whaler. Contributed photo*

## SARASOTA SCHOOLS CUSTODIAL DAY BUILDS TEAMWORK, SKILLS

About 320 Sarasota County School District custodians converged on Riverview High School on July 3 for their district-hosted annual professional development day, the district has announced.

Each of them selected five sessions to attend from among the 21 offered, a news release says.

They studied subjects ranging from cash management to CPR and defibrillator use to fire safety and security to Internet navigation, the release notes. Other classes focused on subjects that would benefit them and their families, such as nutrition, home repair, health

insurance and preparing for retirement, the release adds.

Although the day had a serious goal in its endeavor to raise the productivity level of the custodial staff, the release continues, “the team-building activities were clearly the most fun.” Organized around the theme of *Custodial Olympics*, teams of custodians from individual schools went head-to-head in a series of activities that culminated in three trophies being awarded. Those events were the Golf Cart Rodeo, Duct Tape Wars, Olympic Games and building a spaghetti structure.

“The Golf Cart Rodeo required drivers to navigate a slalom course of tennis balls on stands



*Tuttle Elementary School custodians Blondel Alexandre (left) and Gilda Williams participate in a team-building exercise called Duct Tape Wars during Custodial Day activities at Riverview High School. Contributed photo*

without knocking them over and to negotiate a series of turns and stops to demonstrate their knowledge of campus safety protocols,” the release explains.

“In the Duct Tape Wars, they had to manipulate long duct tape ribbons connected to a magic marker to write the word ‘teamwork’ on a pad,” it adds. In the spaghetti structure event, they were tasked with building the tallest possible structure from spaghetti and masking tape that would be capable of holding a marshmallow at its top.

The Olympic Games was a series of timed events involving bowling with toilet paper rolls, solving a three-dimensional puzzle made of plastic pipe, and balancing a tennis ball on parallel mop handles.

The Tuttle Elementary School team had the highest score at the end of the day, earning it the gold trophy. The Venice Elementary contestants won the silver, and the Toledo Blade Elementary team earned the bronze.

“The Sarasota County Schools custodial staff is widely recognized as one of the most efficient in Florida, cleaning 8,820,835 square feet of floor space in 1,213 buildings every day with a staff of 320,” the release points out. “The average district custodian cleans more than 27,000 square feet of space a day.”

The Florida Department of Education standard is 19,000 square feet per day, the release notes. “Staffing the district at that level would require 144 more custodians.” 



*Pine View Head Custodian Marcia Hill (left) and driver Nikita Korsakov negotiate the tennis ball portion of the Golf Cart Rodeo under the watchful eye of monitor Brenda Green during Custodial Day. Contributed photo*



*A female suspect and the three young girls who accompanied her are seen in surveillance video from the Ulta store on South Tamiami Trail on June 26. Image courtesy Sheriff's Office*

## **PUBLIC'S ASSISTANCE SOUGHT IN IDENTIFYING THEFT SUSPECT**

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is asking the public to help identify a woman who is suspected of stealing more than \$600 worth of cosmetics from the Ulta store, located at 6515 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, on Thursday, June 26, around 3:30 p.m.

The suspect, who is described as a white female in her 40s, was accompanied by three young girls wearing matching striped dresses, a news release says. Surveillance video captured the woman carrying merchandise into the Ulta restroom, "where items were removed from their boxes and the packaging discarded," the release adds. "The suspects left the store in a silver Saturn Vue," it notes.

Anyone with information is asked to call Criminal Investigations at 861-4900, leave an

anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 366-TIPS (8477), going online at [sarasotacrimestoppers.com](http://sarasotacrimestoppers.com) or texting TIP109, plus a message, to CRIMES (274637).



*The Sheriff's Office has released surveillance video showing the suspect at the Ulta store. Video courtesy Sheriff's Office*

## 15 CONVENIENCE STORES CITED FOR SELLING ALCOHOL TO MINORS

Fifteen local convenience store clerks were cited for selling alcohol to a minor during the most recent undercover operation conducted on June 30 and July 1 by the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Juvenile Alcohol Task Force (JATF), the office has announced.

The following businesses were found to be in violation of selling alcohol to a person under 21, a news release says, and each of the clerks was given a misdemeanor Notice to Appear:

- Marathon, 6212 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.
- Citgo, 4529 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota.
- Mobil, 4350 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota.
- BP, 2791 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota.
- Mobil, 2308 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota.
- Mobil, 8445 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.
- Murphy USA, 117 S. Tamiami Trail, Osprey.
- Shell, 1166 S. Tamiami Trail, Osprey.
- Sam American Pantry, 810 Colonia Lane, Nokomis.
- Shell, 4300 S. Tamiami Trail, Venice.
- Mobil, 2745 Beneva Road, Sarasota.
- Marathon, 1135 Beneva Road, Sarasota.
- Shell, 5100 Fruitville Road, Sarasota.
- Shell, 3440 S. Osprey Ave., Sarasota.
- 7-Eleven, 5232 Ocean Blvd., Sarasota.

The clerk at the Osprey Shell, Arthur Kleszczynski of Venice, was arrested, as he was cited for selling alcohol to a minor



*The Shell convenience store at the intersection of Siesta Drive and South Osprey Avenue in Sarasota was among those where a clerk was cited for selling alcohol to a person under 21. Image from Google Maps*

during the last JATF operation, the news release notes.

The results of this operation were forwarded to the Florida Bureau of Alcohol Beverages and Tobacco, Department of Business & Professional Regulation, which licenses alcohol sales at each establishment, the release adds.

Another 64 businesses in Sarasota, Osprey, Venice, Nokomis and North Port were in compliance and will be sent letters to commend owners and employees for helping to reduce the sale of alcohol to minors, the release points out.

This is the second JATF operation this year, resulting in a combined 22 store clerks being cited for selling alcohol to minors, the release says.

## MAN CAUGHT ON VIDEO STEALING A PURSE AT THE BEACH CLUB

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a West Palm Beach man caught on camera stealing a purse at a bar in Siesta Key Village.

Early Tuesday morning, July 1, the victim told the manager at the Beach Club that someone had stolen her purse, a news release says. The manager watched surveillance video, which shows the crime and then the suspect leaving the property. However, the suspect returned to the bar a short time later and was detained by security staff until deputies arrived, the release points out.

The 45-year-old victim, who lives in Port Charlotte, told a deputy she found her purse



*Keith Hernandez/Contributed*



*Surveillance shows the theft of a purse at a Siesta Village bar. Video courtesy Sheriff's Office*

missing when she returned from the restroom, according to the report.

The purse, which contained a phone and nearly \$500 in cash, was recovered from Keith Hernandez, 27, who was arrested for Grand Theft, the release says.

Hernandez first told a deputy that someone had thrown the phone into his pocket, the report continues. When the deputy asked who did that, Hernandez replied that it was someone on the security staff of the Beach Club, the report adds. Then Hernandez said it was another deputy, who had arrived on

the scene earlier. After he made that statement, the report says, Hernandez “became uncooperative and would not answer any more questions.”

He was released from jail after posting \$5,000 bond.

“Watching this video shows how quickly a crime can occur,” said Sheriff’s Office spokesperson Wendy Rose in the release. “It’s also a good reminder to not leave purses unattended or carry large amounts of cash when it’s not absolutely necessary.”

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## FINGERPRINTS CONNECT SUSPECT TO SEVERAL BURGLARIES

The Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office arrested a Venice man on the morning of July 2 for allegedly burglarizing several vehicles late at night, the office has reported.

From June 17 to June 25, two victims reported items were stolen from vehicles parked at their homes on Flamingo Road and Hourglass Drive in Venice, a news release says. A third victim reported someone tried to break into his truck on Argyle Road, but a witness scared the suspect away, the release adds.

The Sheriff’s Office latent fingerprint examiner determined prints recovered from each crime scene match those of Michael Morris, 32, of 290 Palmetto Drive, Venice. He is also the man seen on video using one of the victim’s credit cards at a Walmart, the release notes.

Morris is charged with two counts of Burglary, one count of Attempted Burglary, one count of Fraudulent Use of a Credit Card and three counts of Criminal Use of Personal Identification. This is the 25th arrest for Morris, who was released from prison in



*Michael Morris/Contributed photo*

January following a two-year sentence for Motor Vehicle Theft, the release adds. He also has prior arrests for Carrying a Concealed Weapon, Domestic Battery and Dealing in Stolen Property.

## PUBLIC REMINDED ABOUT DISTRACTION SCHEMES FOR BURGLARIES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is reminding the public about distraction schemes that can be a cover for residential burglaries.

Typically, one suspect approaches a resident and requests to be allowed inside or to have access to the back yard, a news release explains. "As that person is distracting the homeowner, another suspect or suspects enter the residence to steal jewelry and cash in just a matter of minutes," the release says.

The situation varies, with suspects claiming to have arrived at the home to inspect a water leak, check property lines or to show the resident needed repairs. "The suspects might also identify themselves as county employees or utility workers," the release points out.

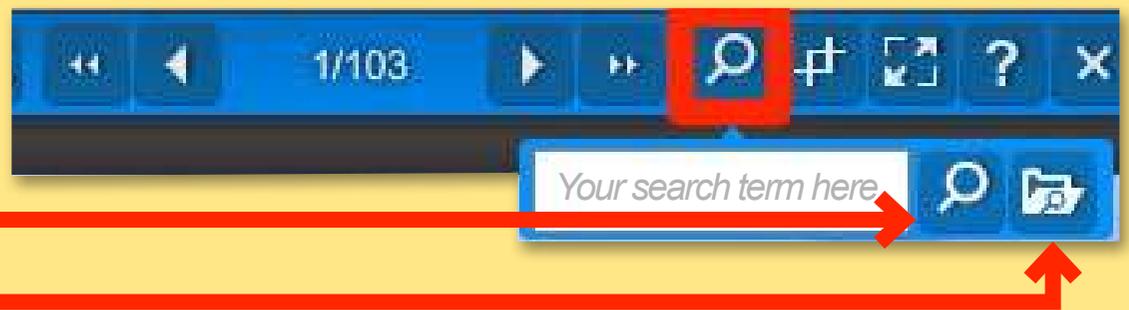
Homeowners are advised not to open their doors for someone who arrives unannounced — "and never allow the person into your home," the release says. Ask him or her to leave a business card in the door and request the person's employee identification number "so you can contact [the] employer to verify whether [the person is] there on legitimate business," the release adds.

"Immediately contact the Sheriff's Office to report any suspicious activity, and if possible, try to obtain a tag number and description of the vehicle the person is driving," the release continues. Notifying law enforcement officers will allow deputies to determine the real reason the person or persons are in the neighborhood. Call the non-emergency number, which is 316-1201, the release says. **SNL**

### QUICK TIP

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Search All Issues



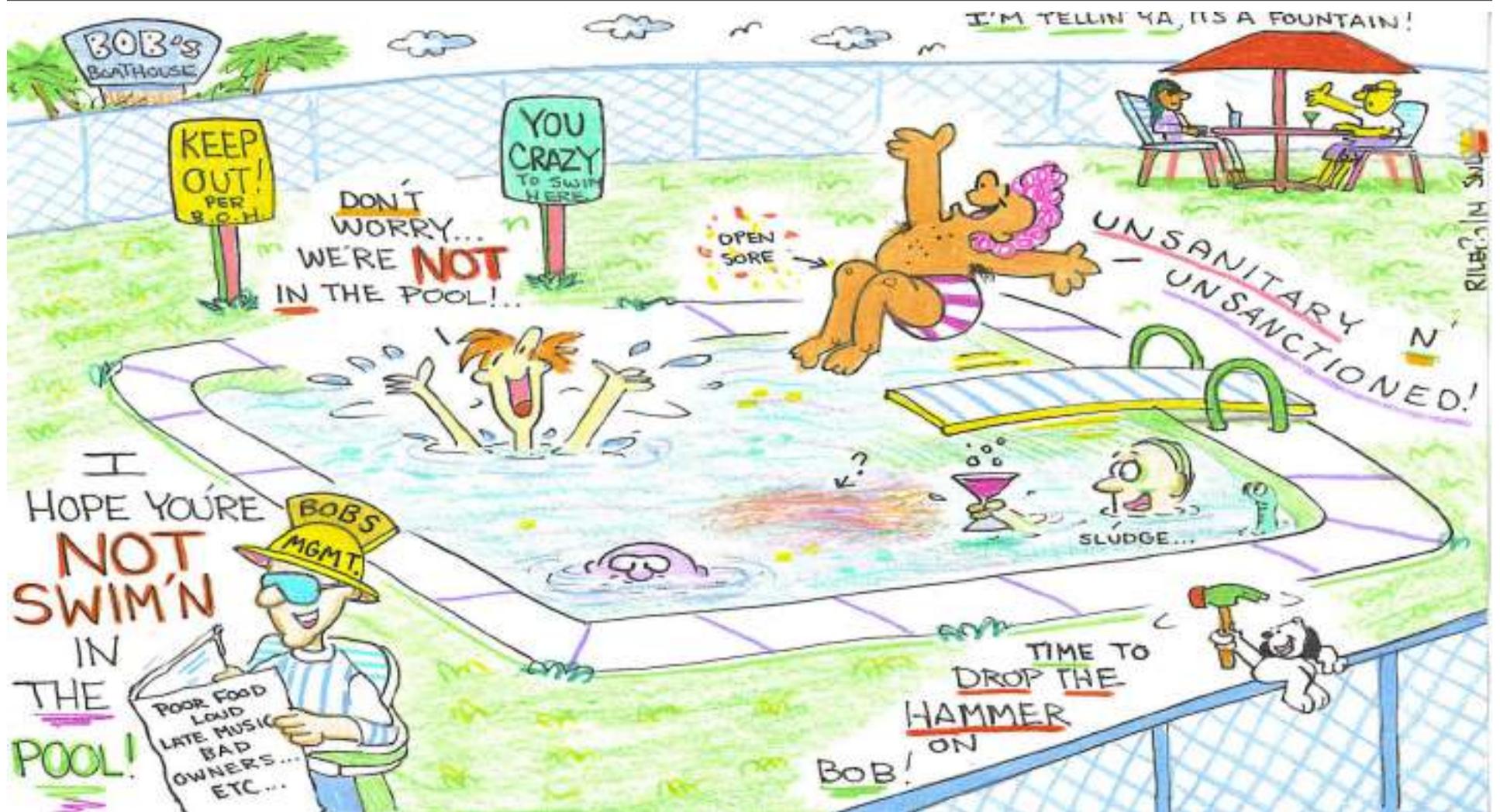
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# OPINION



## BOB'S BOATHOUSE'S DEFIANCE AN AFFRONT TO THE PUBLIC

### EDITORIAL

Laws and ordinances do not exist solely as a mechanism for identifying wrongdoers and the sanctions against them. In a civilized society, laws and ordinances provide a framework — boundaries, if you will — whereby honest folk know what is and is not permissible behavior.

Those boundaries normally function quite well, with the overwhelming majority of citizens remaining in compliance with them.

And those who do not comply usually are apprehended, charged and tried. If convicted, they face appropriate penalties for their wrongdoings.

Interestingly, in this modern era in which the U.S. Supreme court is anthropomorphizing corporations, granting them the previously

human-only rights of freedom of speech and religion, there remains one area where corporations are not being treated as people: when they break the law.

In the beginning, corporations were allowed to exist as legal entities so the collective will of the owners, directors and officers could be expressed in their name. Corporations could buy and sell property, enter into contracts, sue and be sued. What was not contemplated in those early days was the notion that a corporation, which is a legal entity only for the conduct of the corporation's affairs, could be a lawbreaker ... and, if a lawbreaker, subject to the judicial penalties prescribed for lawbreakers.

Instead, most governments find themselves dealing with corporate wrongdoing as a civil

# OPINION

matter, subject to the same drawn-out processes that seem to define civil jurisprudence. And, unlike humans, corporations cannot be sent to prison — or executed — for criminal wrongdoing. The owners, directors and officers could be so penalized, but that rarely has happened in the history of corporations in this country.

So it is that Sarasota County and the Florida Department of Health find themselves at odds with Bob's Boathouse (BBH) — or rather its owners, directors and officers — as it flouts county zoning and noise ordinances and operates a permitted fountain as an illegal swimming pool, in defiance of state law and a cease-and-desist order from the Department of Health.

We have previously pointed out in this space that frustrated Sarasota County Sheriff's deputies have taken to arresting managers at Bob's for continued violations of the county's noise ordinances, since simply citing them for noncompliance was having no effect.

Now the Department of Health, after spending two months exhorting BBH to keep patrons out of the fountain, is on the cusp of a long, expensive (to the taxpayers) legal process to force compliance and the closure of the illegal pool ... all because BBH has essentially thumbed its corporate nose at existing laws and ordinances and the standards of orderly, law-abiding conduct in a civilized society.

“*The cavalier and uncaring attitude of Bob's Boathouse in allowing young children to play in an illegal swimming pool, with the possibility of grievous injury or death lurking just beneath the surface, should be shocking to the people of Sarasota County.*”

As reported last week by *The Sarasota News Leader*, patrons continue to use the fountain as a swimming pool. Large pieces of furniture, apparently placed there by BBH personnel, make it obvious that the fountain is intended to be used as a recreational pool. Yet, the “pool” is so out of compliance with state health regulations for a public swimming facility that Health department employees ovetaxed their computer system as they entered all of the violations of state regulations, in seeking to document the situation for the issuance of a cease-and-desist order.

According to the Department of Health, the “pool” is too close to food service areas. It does not have the required width of pad around it for safe use. It does not have a proper filtration system on its circulating pumps. It does not have a system for regulating the proper chemical balance of the water or for controlling bacterial contamination. And it apparently does not have anti-entrapment devices on any drains or water-circulating system inlets.

That last point is a serious concern. Photos obtained by the *News Leader* show small children playing in the pool. Most regulations for the operation of public pools now require anti-entrapment devices as a consequence of a tragic mishap in North Carolina.

A young child sat on a drain in a public pool in Raleigh and, before she could be rescued, had 80 percent of her intestines sucked out of her anus by the

# OPINION

vacuum. In a case that garnered national attention, a jury awarded the child and her family \$25 million in damages. But no amount of money could restore the child's ruined body or undo the countless surgeries she had to endure or prevent the lifetime of suffering she can expect.

The cavalier and uncaring attitude of BBH in allowing young children to play in an illegal swimming pool, with the possibility of grievous injury or death lurking just beneath the surface, should be shocking to the people of Sarasota County.

But almost as shocking is the fact that some patrons of Bob's Boathouse apparently lack the mental capacity to protect themselves. Despite several prominent signs posted by the Department of Health proclaiming that the pool is "closed" and not for public use, patrons still voluntarily enter into an illegal, unlicensed and dangerous body of water. Worse, they let their small children play in that body of water, ignoring the horrific risks their children face as a result. In almost any other instance, such behavior would be deemed child endangerment, and the parents or guardians would be subject to criminal penalties for those actions.

Because BBH has decided to hide behind its attorneys, who have capitalized on the glacial pace of the civil justice system to delay compliance and frustrate the county and state authorities, the danger to the public of the continued use of this fountain as an illegal swimming pool continues unabated.

We hope that the owners of BBH have an ethical renaissance and this menace to the public health is shut down ... as in the pool drained, the furniture removed and the fence that previously enclosed this area restored.

The owners and operators of BBH might think they have no responsibility to their patrons, if their patrons are so dimwitted as to engage in the dangerous use of this illegal pool in spite of clear signage warning against it. Yet a serious injury to or death of one of those patrons will acquaint BBH owners and operators with the personal injury case law that has stemmed from that tragic situation in North Carolina. Their out-of-state residence and the corporate veil will afford little protection in a multi-million-dollar wrongful death suit.

We just hope that a death or debilitating injury does not have to be the price paid for the callous disregard for the public welfare by Bob's Boathouse and its owners and operators. 



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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



# IS FOR SPANISH MOSS

**THIS ADORNMENT OF NATURE HAS BEEN GATHERED FOR MANY USES THROUGH THE CENTURIES**

**Story and Photos**  
**By Fran Palmeri**  
*Contributing Writer*

*Editor's note: This is the third in Palmeri's "Florida Alphabet Soup" series, and she points out, "Letters float to the top in no particular order!"*

On June 25, 1564, Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues stepped off a French ship onto a beach in northeast Florida into a throng of Timucua. The heavily tattooed men wore deerskin loincloths; the women, skirts of Spanish moss.

In *Painter in a Savage World*, Miles Harvey relates that Le Moyne, the first European artist to document the "New World," noted in

his journal "The chief's wife and her maid servants were all dressed in a special kind of moss hanging from their shoulders or around them as a girdle. The moss grew on many trees and hung together like a chain, with its greenish azure color shining like silk. The trees on which this moss grew were beautiful to look at because it hung down to the ground from the highest branches."

Spanish moss is not Spanish. It is not a moss. It is an epiphyte — an air plant — and, surprisingly, a member of the pineapple family. Surviving on air, rain and minerals washed off leaves of vegetation, it produces tiny flowers



from spring through summer. Found as far north as Maryland, it is a symbol of the South. Like tinsel on a holiday tree, it can be festive — or spooky in a Gothic sort of way.

*Tillandsia usenoides* has always been put to practical use. Thousands of years ago, indigenous peoples tempered clay pots with moss. The Seminoles used it to make cord, blankets, clothing, sieves and a tea to cool a fever. Florida's settlers stuffed mattresses with it. The auto industry used it in car seats.

I think of the moss as a weathervane, which not only tells me which way the wind is blowing, but how hard. Along with pine needles, it makes great mulch for the garden.

In springtime, nesting birds fly by, trailing tufts of Spanish moss. The great horned owl will lay a bit of moss in the crotch of an oak to cushion its eggs. Bats nest in it. Owls rest by day camouflaged in moss-laden trees.

Is it good to eat? Cattle think so.

On his thousand-mile walk to the Gulf, John Muir made a bed of the stuff among the gravestones at Savannah's St. Bonaventure Cemetery. Penniless at the time, he spent a peaceful week in that place, which he considered the most beautiful he had ever seen.

Without Spanish moss, our trees would be diminished. Florida naturalist Archie Carr said it best: "A big old live oak tree without its moss looks like a bishop in his underwear." 











# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**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](http://floridastudiotheatre.org).

**11+**  
JULY

**Banyan Theater Company presents *The Price* 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. *The Stye of the Blind Pig* (July 17 to Aug. 3) by Phillip Hayes Dean and *Collected Stories* by Donald Margulies (Aug. 7-24). Information: [banyantheatercompany.com](http://banyantheatercompany.com).

**11+**  
JULY

**Players Theatre presents *Knowing Me, Knowing You: The Hits of Abba***  
Through July 20; times vary. 838 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$18. Information: 365-2494 or [theplayers.org](http://theplayers.org).

**11+**  
JULY

**FST presents *Becoming Dr. Ruth***  
Through July 27; times vary. Keating Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$34 to \$44. Information: [floridastudiotheatre.org](http://floridastudiotheatre.org) or 366-9000.

**11+**  
JULY

**Allyn Gallup Gallery presents *A Few Great, Big Pictures***  
Through July 28; times vary. 1288 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Information: 366-2454 or [AllynGallup.com](http://AllynGallup.com).

**11+**  
JULY

**Florida Studio Theatre presents *Clearly Invisible, Magic Up Close with Carl Seiger***  
Through Aug. 3; times vary. John C. Court Cabaret, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$32 to \$36. Information: 366-9000 or [floridastudiotheatre.org](http://floridastudiotheatre.org).

**11+**  
JULY

**Art Center Sarasota presents *Florida Flavor***  
Through Aug. 15; times vary. 707 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Free. The all-Florida, all-media juried exhibition showcases two- and three-dimensional works. Information: 365-2032 or [artsarasota.org](http://artsarasota.org).

**YOUR LIFESTYLE GUIDE TO THE SUNCOAST**

# THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**11+**  
JULY

**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](http://www.FloridaStudioTheatre.org).

**11+**  
JULY

**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](#).

**11+**  
JULY

**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](http://dabbertgallery.com).

**12+**  
JULY

**Bookstore 1 Sarasota presents *Breakfast Serial Book Club***

July 12 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](http://bookstore1sarasota.com) or 365-7900.

**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.

**12**  
JULY

**Fogartyville presents *Passerine with special guests The Blue-Eyed Bettys***

July 12, 8 p.m. Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota. Tickets: \$8 in advance; \$10 at the door. Information: 894-6469 or [wslr.org](http://wslr.org).

**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-comedy will focus on the lives of Mark Bowers and Joey Panek. Information: 951-2576 or [Alsoyouth.org](http://Alsoyouth.org).

**19**  
JULY

**Venice Theatre Guild presents *Twinkle and Rock Soul Radio***

July 19, 8 p.m. 140 W. Tampa Ave., Venice. Tickets: \$20. Show is part of the Summer Concert Series. Information: 488-1115 or [venicestage.com](http://venicestage.com).

**Submit Calendar Events To**  
[News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

# A PRIMITIVE TELEVISION ANTENNA



**PRESS**



**Norman Schimmel**  
Photographer

**The Sarasota News Leader**  
Since 1971  
Date: 10/15/2008

## 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.*



Neal Schafers



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

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