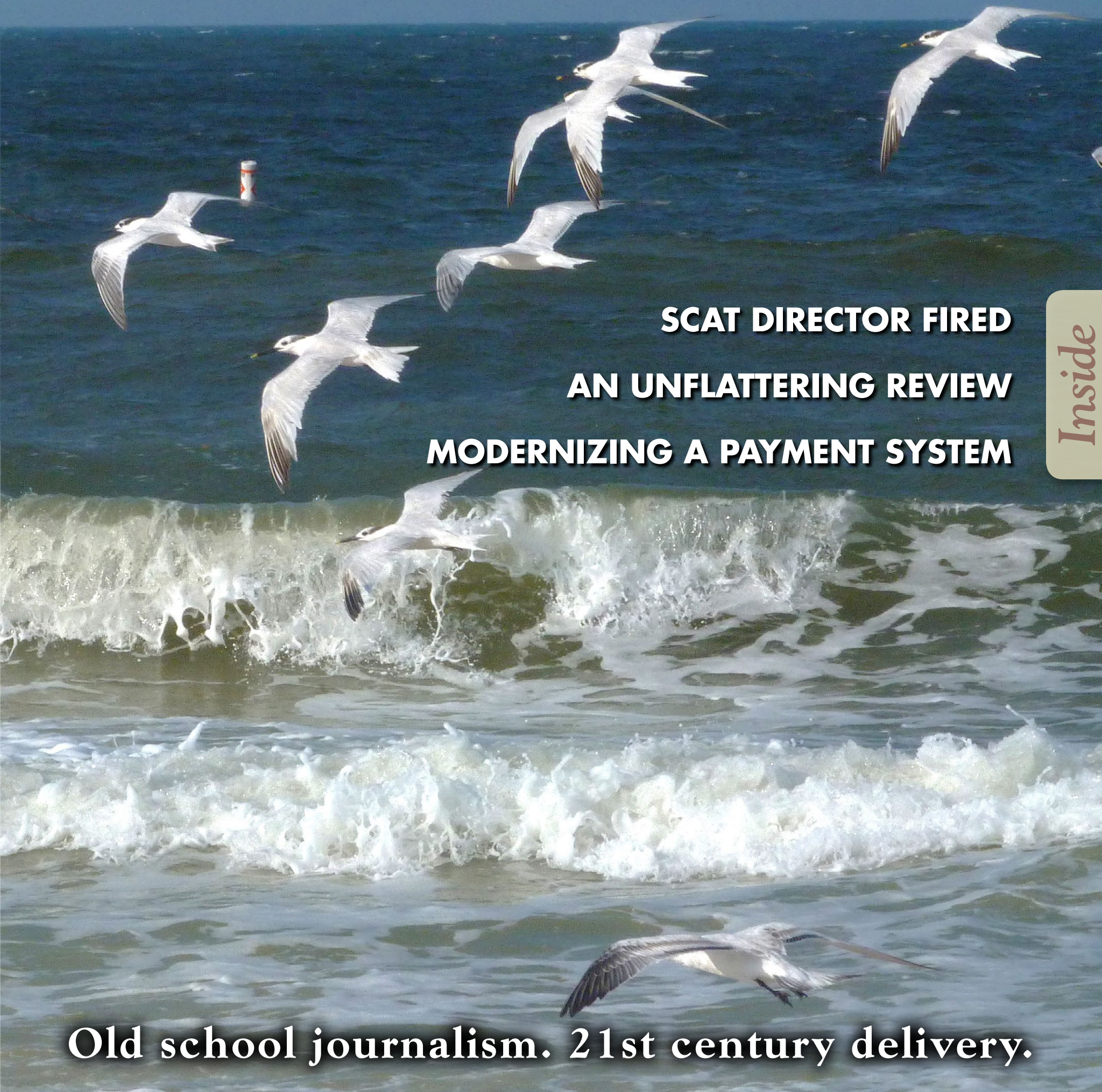


THE SARASOTA

Vol. 2, No. 44 — July 18, 2014

News Leader



**SCAT DIRECTOR FIRED
AN UNFLATTERING REVIEW
MODERNIZING A PAYMENT SYSTEM**

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Welcome

Who says summer is dull around here? This week, we found ourselves with two big scoops. By now, you may have read about one of them elsewhere, but I strongly assert that our version is far more comprehensive. And it has a companion piece that makes for interesting reading, if I do say so myself.

City Editor Stan Zimmerman already was holding tightly, in a manner of speaking, to information about a highly unfavorable audit of the city's Information Technology Department when we learned that Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) Director Glama Carter had been fired. County Editor Roger Drouin spent quite a bit of time on the latter story, waiting to see if it would become common knowledge before our issue appeared.

At the same time, I was working on a story about why SCAT has been unable to accept debit and credit card payments for the purchase of passes — a very hot topic at the last Siesta Key Village Association meeting, because SCAT was on the verge of launching its new Siesta trolley service.

As it turns out, a more favorable take on Carter in my story took on opposite polarity in Roger's story.

Along with those topics, we have quite a bit of diversity in our coverage — from Roger's first look at the revival of the Palmer Place project in Sarasota to Stan's preview of the City Commission's "mega-agenda" for Monday.

This week, we also are most fortunate to have another of contributor Barbara Dondero's wonderfully entertaining articles. This time, her focus is The Ringling Museum's current exhibit on the art world's "con artists."

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher





SCAT DIRECTOR FIRED

AN UNFLATTERING REVIEW



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Tonya Herschberger & Linda Keefe

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SCAT DIRECTOR FIRED

Glama Carter speaks to members of the Siesta Key Village Association in April. File photo

ALTHOUGH SHE HAD LESS THAN TWO YEARS IN THE POSITION, SOME COMMUNITY RESIDENTS AND LEADERS SAW GLAMA CARTER AS THE KEY TO GETTING THE TRANSIT SYSTEM BACK ON TRACK

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

After a tenure of slightly less than two years as Sarasota County Area Transit's director, Glama Carter will no longer be at the helm.

In a July 15 letter, Assistant Sarasota County administrators terminated her and scheduled her last day of employment as July 18.

County Administrator Tom Harmer's decision to fire Carter took the only county commissioner reached by *The Sarasota News Leader* by surprise, and a public transportation

advocate told the *News Leader* he is worried the action will leave a void in the county's transit system.

"I was surprised," Commissioner Nora Patterson said in an interview with the *News Leader*. "I wasn't aware of problems."

She added, "It was an administrative call."

“I like her. She was reasonable, and she knew what she doing. I am sad.”

Richard Thomas
Public Transportation Advocate
Sarasota County

Public transportation advocate Richard Thomas of Sarasota was also surprised to hear about Carter's termination. He thinks

**Notice of At-Will Termination****For Hand Delivery**

July 15, 2014

Glamarie Carter

Dear Ms. Carter:

As an at-will employee, the employment relationship may be terminated any time, at the will of either party. Sarasota County Government has elected to exercise its option to separate you from employment effective close of business July 18, 2014.

You are eligible for salary continuation leave with benefits for four (4) weeks, ending on August 15, 2014. For questions regarding the continuation of benefits after August 15, 2014, please contact Steve Marcinko, Employee Health and Benefits, at 941-451-7910.

You may request a meeting with the Chief Human Resources Officer prior to termination. To schedule an appointment, contact Mary Kay Curcio at 941-861-5815.

Sincerely,

Mark Cunningham
Assistant County Administrator

c: Joanie Whitley, Chief Human Resources Officer
Michele Green, Employee and Labor Relations Manager
Human Resources

Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) has lost a competent manager.

“I like her,” Thomas said. “She was reasonable, and she knew what she doing. I am sad.”

Carter was hired in August 2012 by previous County Administrator Randall Reid. She replaced Anthony Beckford, who resigned after a negative evaluation and the discovery that about half the buses in the fleet carried expired fire extinguishers. With a wide range of management experience in both the private and public sectors, including a stint as Collier County’s public transit manager, Carter was seen at the time as the optimal choice to replace Beckford.

Although SCAT has dealt with some hurdles during her tenure — ranging from [commissioners’ complaints about the high costs of bus shelters](#) to a [report earlier this month](#) showing the system’s total operating expenses were higher than those of 11 comparable systems in the Southeast — SCAT was seen by some as getting back on track.

On July 15, before the board members were notified of Carter’s firing, Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson told the *News Leader*, “There have been significant improvements” since Carter took over as manager of SCAT. The switch to accepting payments by debit and credit cards “is another one of those,” Robinson said. (See the related article in this issue.)

During her most recent evaluation in November 2013, Carter received above-average marks. The evaluation noted a number of achievements and did not indicate significant areas of concern.

However, in his comments, Assistant County Administrator Mark Cunningham wrote,

DOWNLOAD THE PDF



Read Glama Carter’s last performance review.



(From left) Rob Lewis joins County Administrator Tom Harmer and Acting Assistant Administrator Steve Botelho during a May workshop with the County Commission. Lewis was named Interim Sarasota County Area Transit director this week. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Over the past months, commissioners have been critical of the high cost of county bus shelters and have complained that the structures are not being erected quickly enough. Photo by Norman Schimmel

“Glama recognizes the need for her to become more flexible, and to develop skills that are essential for coping with change and to not resist new ways of embarking upon desired outcome.”

Under the heading of “Opportunities,” the evaluation included this note among three others: “Accept credit cards for the purchase of bus passes.”

Cunningham concluded his comments by writing, “I am confident that Glama will be successful in the accomplishment of all goals and expectations for the upcoming reporting period.”

She was approved for a 3-percent merit pay increase, making her total salary about \$103,000.

According to the July 15 termination letter, she is eligible to receive salary and benefits through Aug. 15.

‘MISSION REMAINS THE SAME’

Rob Lewis, the county’s intergovernmental liaison was named SCAT’s interim director

until a replacement can be found for Carter. He previously supervised the department as director of the county’s Planning and Development Services Office.

Carter was among about 140 “at-will” employees of Sarasota County Government, mainly directors and executives. At-will workers can be dismissed by employers for any reason and without warning, according to Florida law.

“[The] administration has elected to exercise its option to end this individual’s employment, allowing for a change in the leadership of SCAT,” county spokeswoman Jamie Carson told the *News Leader* on July 16, referring to Carter.

The change at the helm will not impact recent efforts to launch new routes and a marketing campaign or to erect signs with [QR codes](#) that provide real-time information about when buses will arrive at stops, Carson said; all are actions designed to improve county transit. Nineteen new buses feature decals reading, “We’ll take you there!” An additional six have been wrapped in an island-themed design for service on the barrier islands, thus helping



One highly successful initiative former SCAT Director Glama Carter touted this year was the implementation of Route 33 during the tourist season. It operated between Siesta Key and the Amish and Mennonite community of Pinecraft in Sarasota. File photo

riders easily identify them as means to reach the beaches.

The county's two new routes are serving Siesta Key and University Parkway. "Both ... are under way," Carson pointed out.

The transit system will be using Twitter and Facebook as part of the effort to "engage riders," she added.

"We want the community to know that we are steadfast in our commitment to customer service and providing quality public transportation for our citizens as we move forward with the new SCAT routes and services," Carson said. "The goal and mission remain the same."

SCAT has also been facing the possibility of more significant changes.

The evaluation of the system released earlier this month marks the first step toward a County Commission decision on whether privatization or merging SCAT with another bus system would save money. The commissioners will discuss the findings during their Aug. 20 budget workshop.

Carson emphasized Carter's termination this week "has no connection" to that evaluation of SCAT or talk of consolidation or privatization.

ABOVE AVERAGE

In her November 2013 job evaluation, Carter received an overall performance rating of 4 out of 5. (See the accompanying link.)

Assistant County Administrator Cunningham wrote, "Glama is a very hard-working, dedicated and capable director who is task-oriented and focuses on getting the job done in an efficient and effective manner."

During the review period, which covered Nov. 1, 2012 to Nov. 1, 2013, Carter's achievements included helping negotiate a union employee contract after eight years at an impasse; re-assessing driver training; hiring 34 new drivers; and operating SCAT under challenges while staying within budget. She oversaw the addition of a new express route and reorganized the customer service phone network.

Carter was slated to be reviewed again in November of this year.


YET ANOTHER CHANGE

Public transportation advocate Thomas believes that because former County Administrator Reid hired Carter, her standing with new County Administrator Harmer was less favorable. "She was appointed by the former administrator, so that kind of explains it right there," Thomas said. "How many times do we have to go through this?"

In March, Harmer began reshuffling the county's organizational plan, resulting in two managers losing their jobs: Ethics and Compliance Officer Steve Uebelacker and Natural Resources Department Director Amy Meese.

The county will likely seek a replacement for Carter soon.

Patterson said it is important to fill the SCAT position before November, when Lewis, the interim director, might be needed to help with legislative matters.

Patterson added that she thinks other competent staffers will help to make sure there are no interruptions in bus service, in the meantime. 



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AN UNFLATTERING REVIEW

Image courtesy of freeimages.com

AN AUDIT OF THE CITY'S INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT FINDS A MULTITUDE OF DEFICIENCIES, INCLUDING SECURITY RISKS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The City of Sarasota's Information Technology Department (ITD) is once again under a microscope. Results of a "risk assessment" released in mid-June gave a very unflattering review of its operations. The findings will be discussed by the city commissioners on Monday evening, July 21, under "New Business" on their regular agenda.

The mini-audit's executive summary cited 10 findings, starting with "lack of a clear understanding of ITD

personnel responsibilities." It also called out "minimal cross training ... limited standardization ... minimal understanding of why things fail no current and accurate network diagrams" and other issues. The audit was conducted by ReliaQuest, which has offices in Tampa, Atlanta, Chicago and Washington, D.C.

“ [S]enior leadership and the IT director need to evaluate the personnel currently in the department. ”

ReliaQuest Risk Assessment

The IT Department was wrenched away from then-City Manager Bob Bartolotta in November 2011 and

assigned to the office of City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini. Bartolotta resigned the following February.

Nadalini expressed support for the IT Department in a June 20, 2014, cover letter for the audit. “While much work has been done to move the department forward, the most recent audit has identified additional opportunities for growth and improvements and to enhance the capabilities of the professional staff,” she wrote. “It is my intent, as well as that of the IT Director and IT staff, to implement the auditor’s recommendations to ensure a secure and effective computing environment for the City of Sarasota.”

THE FINDINGS

The two opening sentences of the audit’s executive summary are chilling. “Overall the City of Sarasota’s ITD is mostly reactive and does not seem to be aware and prepared to address the risks identified, in detail, below. The IT team seems to be comprised of individuals that are not working together to solve common IT security problems,” the document begins.

The audit cites “the top 10 risks to the organization” and then goes into detail on each one, offering findings and recommendations. The first problem (“lack of a clear understanding”) cited staff members taking on more work that “ultimately leads to them neglecting their base tasks.”

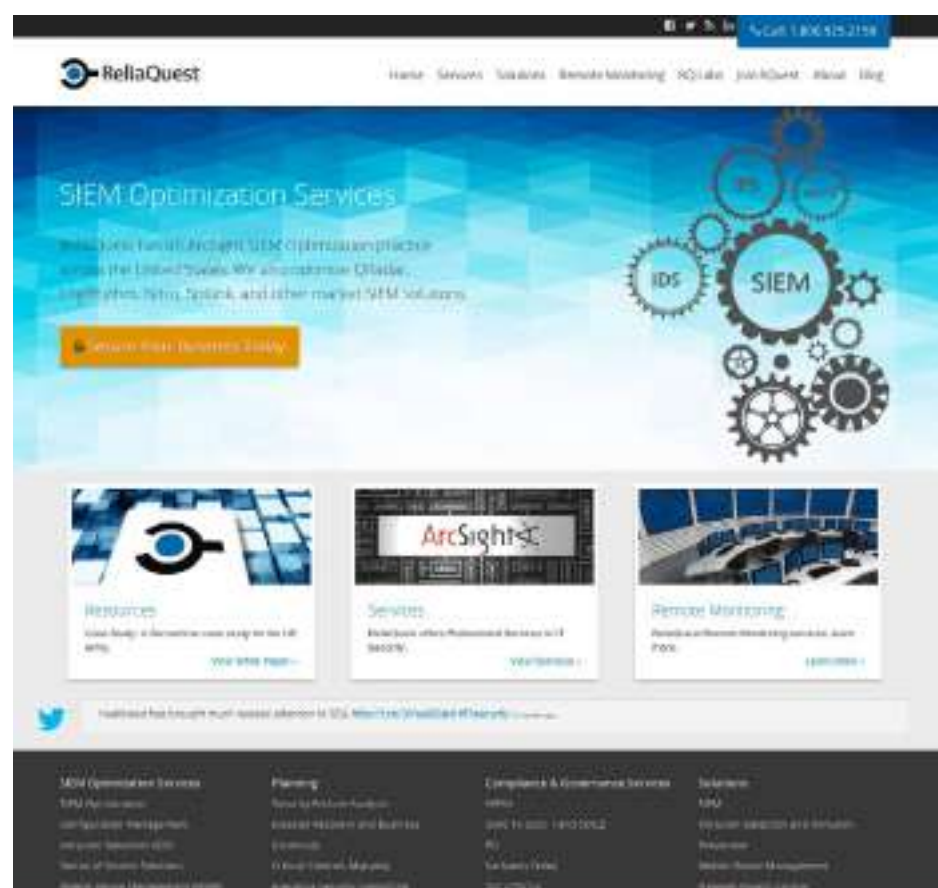
It recommends “the leadership of the ITD needs to re-focus the staff ... making sure their core responsibilities are taken care of.”

The second problem noted was the lack of a formal “security manager.” The audit says,

“The IT Network Manager has assumed this role, but does not have any explicit authorization to perform IT security tasks. This causes the individual to be timid in running security scans that may disrupt service.” The audit also points to a deficiency in the handling of basic security tasks. “One example is the fact that ITD staff did not realize that over 250 machines went 48 hours without getting the latest anti-virus updates.”

Users of the Microsoft operating system are familiar with the sometimes weekly “patches” needed to plug security holes in Windows. “The City of Sarasota has over 2,500 missing Microsoft security patches across its workstations and server,” the audit found. It recommended the department “commit to a patch schedule.”

The audit also determined that some workers in IT use Windows 8, while the rest of the



The firm ReliaQuest undertook the recent audit of the City of Sarasota’s Information Technology Department. Image from the firm’s website

city's computers run Windows 7. "This handicaps the ability to help the entire customer base that is running MS Windows 7," says one finding.

The final issue is the lack of "current and accurate network diagrams." One auditor wrote, "Although I asked multiple times for a network diagram of the City of Sarasota's computing systems, I never received one. ITD staff members did not seem to know the status (existence or version) of a network diagram. This severely handicaps the department's ability to troubleshoot, recover from [an] incident or have a sound plan for upgrading old infrastructure."

ANOTHER PURGE?

In October 2011, former state Sen. Bob Johnson said top city officials were deleting emails. The next month, John Jorgensen of the firm Sylint was hired not only to investigate the missing email charge, but also to conduct an overview of the city's IT system.

A witch-hunt mood swept City Hall. Nadalini placed IT Director Craig Chance and his deputy, Sandra Coleman, on paid administrative leave in January 2012. City commissioners wrenched the IT Department from the city manager, and Bartolotta resigned in February. On March 12, 2012, Nadalini fired Chance.

Federal, state and local law enforcement officers investigated Johnson's allegation. A year later, after the dust cleared, no evidence of wrongdoing was found by the FBI, the U.S. Housing and Urban Development or the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.



*Pam Nadalini is the city's auditor and clerk.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*


After a year on paid leave, Coleman was cleared of any illegal or inappropriate actions and returned to work.

In an op-ed piece just before leaving office in 2013, then-City Commissioner Terry Turner said the episode "cost Sarasota taxpayers \$537,000 on consultants and lawyers," plus the costs of Bartolotta's expulsion. He had voted consistently against the Sylint investigation and referral of the issue to law enforcement.

The city's IT Department remains a hotbed of turmoil. The audit said, "During the engagement it was noted that there has [sic] been five (5) different IT Directors within the past nine (9) years." After Chance was fired, 124 people applied for the job. The winner was the man now holding the job — and the bag: Philip Hurwitz.

He responded to each of the 10 findings and acknowledged some of the problems. "With the shortage of personnel, particularly with a critical position open, there is definitely an expansion of responsibilities beyond the standard job descriptions," he wrote.

Concerning the missing security patches, "a schedule is being developed to match the server patching schedule, based around [Microsoft] Patch Tuesday dates," he responded.

The audit concludes with what seems an ominous tone, "The department needs a period of stable leadership. Furthermore senior leadership and the IT director need to evaluate the personnel currently in the department." 



Former City Manager Bob Bartolotta ended up resigning in 2012 over allegations of improprieties involving city email. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota



The City Commission is expected to discuss the audit findings at its July 21 regular meeting at City Hall. Photo by Norman Schimmel

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MODERNIZING A PAYMENT SYSTEM



Siesta Key leaders say tourists will be more inclined to use Sarasota County Area Transit's new service on the island if they can pay for passes with debit and credit cards. File photo

SARASOTA COUNTY AREA TRANSIT STAFF HOPES TO HAVE A SYSTEM IN PLACE BY EARLY 2015 TO ALLOW ONLINE DEBIT AND CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS FOR PASSES

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) staff is working toward allowing passengers to use debit and credit cards to purchase passes online by Jan. 1, 2015, *The Sarasota News Leader* has learned.

“Nowadays, it’s a preferred method of payment,” Kendra Keiderling, the new marketing and outreach coordinator for the county bus service, acknowledged in an interview this week with the *News Leader*.

Keiderling encountered [a barrage of](#)

[questions and comments](#) when she told members of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) on July 1 that SCAT accepts only cash or checks, even if a person wants to buy a monthly or seasonal pass.

“Nobody carries cash,” past SKVA President Cheryl Gaddie noted.

“*I think it will be easier for college students — for anyone — to go online to purchase their pass.*”

Kendra Keiderling
Marketing and Public Outreach Coordinator
Sarasota County Area Transit

“I don’t carry cash at all with me,” said Sheriff’s Deputy Chris McGregor.

In an interview with the *News Leader* on July 15, Commissioner

Nora Patterson concurred with those sentiments, noting that she was unaware of the situation with SCAT until she learned of the SKVA discussion. “I don’t think it makes sense,” she said, pointing out that tourists in London and Paris, for example, long have been accustomed to using debit and credit cards to pay for mass transit.

Keiderling explained to the *News Leader* on July 15 that in talking this week with Cindy Zambella, the long-time manager of SCAT’s finances, Keiderling learned “there really hasn’t been a huge demand” for use of debit and credit cards among SCAT users until recent years.

The transit service is working on a system that will incorporate [payment card industry \(PCI\) security standards](#), Keiderling added. “I think it will be easier for college students — for anyone — to go online to purchase their pass.”

Patterson told the *News Leader* she had spoken earlier in the day with Glama Carter, who was still the SCAT director at that time (see the related article in this issue). When Carter took over the position in August 2012, Patterson noted, Carter found the transit system had no means of accepting payments unless they were cash or check transactions.

| Table 5 - Sources of Operating Funds Expended | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Transit Authority | Fare Revenues | Local Funds | State Funds | Federal Assistance | Other Funds | Total Operating Funds Expended |
| Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) | \$2,323,261.00 | \$14,428,471.00 | \$1,828,705.00 | \$1,383,223.00 | \$53,833.00 | \$20,017,493.00 |
| Space Coast Area Transit (Brevard County) | \$1,859,961.00 | \$1,706,041.00 | \$3,710,780.00 | \$3,462,472.00 | \$119,224.00 | \$10,858,378.00 |
| Charleston (SC) Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA) | \$3,815,766.00 | \$7,366,160.00 | \$525,560.00 | \$5,017,351.00 | \$282,518.00 | \$17,007,375.00 |
| Chatham Area Transit Authority (Savannah, GA) | \$3,458,466.00 | \$9,365,999.00 | \$0.00 | \$2,363,894.00 | \$1,211,646.00 | \$16,400,005.00 |
| Collier Area Transit (CAT) | \$1,354,270.00 | \$4,173,737.00 | \$1,505,437.00 | \$2,237,359.00 | \$0.00 | \$9,270,803.00 |
| Escambia County Area Transit (ECAT) | \$1,907,034.00 | \$3,815,282.00 | \$1,413,825.00 | \$2,470,378.00 | \$40,504.00 | \$9,647,023.00 |
| LeeTran (Lee County) | \$3,238,400.00 | \$11,432,785.00 | \$3,460,418.00 | \$1,294,437.00 | \$583,948.00 | \$20,009,988.00 |
| Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT) | \$1,132,060.00 | \$4,596,368.00 | \$1,962,426.00 | \$878,979.00 | \$102,790.00 | \$8,672,623.00 |
| Pasco County Public Transportation (PCPT) | \$1,144,207.00 | \$1,332,154.00 | \$2,645,634.00 | \$1,383,700.00 | \$0.00 | \$6,505,695.00 |
| Polk County Transit Service/Citrus Connection (Lakeland) | \$1,755,531.00 | \$3,459,330.00 | \$2,613,207.00 | \$7,089,781.00 | \$994,301.00 | \$15,912,150.00 |
| Votran (Volusia County) | \$3,027,765.00 | \$8,281,616.00 | \$2,823,130.00 | \$4,438,972.00 | \$518,933.00 | \$19,090,416.00 |
| Wave Transit System (Mobile, Alabama) | \$966,516.00 | \$6,352,159.00 | \$0.00 | \$1,759,518.00 | \$75,777.00 | \$9,153,970.00 |
| PEER GROUP AVERAGE | \$2,150,906.91 | \$5,625,602.82 | \$1,878,219.73 | \$2,945,167.36 | \$357,240.09 | \$12,957,129.64 |

A chart compares the fare revenue for Sarasota County Area Transit in 2012 to the totals for 11 other peer systems. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Carter indicated to Patterson that SCAT transfer stations will have machines similar to ATMs that will accept credit and debit cards in the future, Patterson said.

County Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson told the *News Leader* on July 15, "SCAT has been a work in progress since I've been in office."

Robinson was appointed in late 2010 to fill out Commissioner Shannon Staub's unexpired term. Robinson then was elected to the board in November 2012.

"There have been significant improvements," Robinson said, since Carter took over as manager of SCAT. The switch to accepting debit and credit cards "is another one of those," Robinson added.

The Sarasota County library system just began allowing its patrons to use debit and credit cards for payments, Keiderling told the *News Leader*. SCAT will follow its lead, she said, working through the Sarasota County Clerk of Court's Office to set up the online system.

Although the new fiscal year will start on Oct. 1, "We're shooting for [the start of] 2015" to get the service up and running, Keiderling pointed out. "That would be great."

COMPARABLE SYSTEMS

On July 8, Jonathan Paul, the county's interim transportation planning director, provided the County Commission a summary of the findings from an organizational evaluation of SCAT that was conducted this spring. SCAT's operations were compared to those



Sarasota County Area Transit buses are not equipped to take debit or credit cards. File photo

of 11 peer systems in communities in the Southeastern United States of similar size to Sarasota County.

Paul did not research whether any of those other systems accept debit and credit card payments, he told the *News Leader* through a county spokesman so the *News Leader* looked into that this week.

As reported in the *News Leader*'s July 11 issue, SCAT's total operating expenses were the highest in the group.

Only three other bus systems surveyed in the evaluation do not allow any payments by debit or credit cards. They are Manatee County Area Transit; Collier Area Transit, based in Naples; and Pasco County Public Transportation.


SCAT's total fare collections in 2012 were slightly above the average for the systems, the

evaluation showed. SCAT took in \$2,323,261, while the average was \$2,150,906.91.

Those with the highest revenue from fares were Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority (SC), which collected \$3,815,766 in 2012, and Chatham Area Transit Authority (GA), which had income of \$3,458,466.

Collier's total was \$1,354,270, while Manatee's system took in the second-lowest amount: \$1,132,060. Pasco County collected \$1,144,207.

The WAVE Transit System in Mobile, AL, had the lowest total: \$966,516. It accepts credit and debit card payments only at its office, a spokeswoman told the *News Leader*.

The population served by the Charleston system in 2012 was 510,286, the data shows. For Chatham, it was 265,128; for Sarasota County, 388,474; for Manatee County, 322,833; for Collier, 323,785; and for Pasco, 464,697. 

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A REAPPEARANCE

An aerial map in an application submitted to county staff last year shows the location of the Palmer Place development. Image courtesy Sarasota County

AN APPLICATION FOR THE LONG-PLANNED PALMER PLACE DEVELOPMENT IS SUBMITTED TO COUNTY'S DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

The long-planned Palmer Place development has reappeared.

The firm behind the project filed pre-submittal documents with the county on July 10, and representatives of the developer appeared before the county's Development Review Committee (DRC) on Thursday, July 17.

The proposal for 300 market-rate and 300 affordable homes east of Interstate 75 was approved by the County Commission in 2008 after the developer scaled back the plans.

A representative for the developer declined to talk to *The Sarasota News Leader* after the DRC meeting Thursday. "There is no story here," said the person, who was not identified during the meeting and declined to offer his name. "This is procedural."

The DRC meeting was one step in the process required for developer Billy Springer to finalize his plans and begin construction of the homes on 412 acres of property at Palmer Boulevard and Iona Road in Sarasota.

The pre-submittal plans, filed by Palmer Place LLC, show residential village areas throughout the property. A 30-acre affordable housing village is shown on the western edge of the parcel.

Palmer Place was first pitched in 2007, but it has been scaled back in response to concerns that the density of homes would be too high for the location. One proposal in 2008 called for 1,488 housing units, with half priced to be affordable to families that make no more than 20 percent of the typical income in Sarasota County. That larger version of the project met opposition from the Bee Ridge Neighborhoods Association and a split County Commission.

DEVELOPER'S PROPOSAL

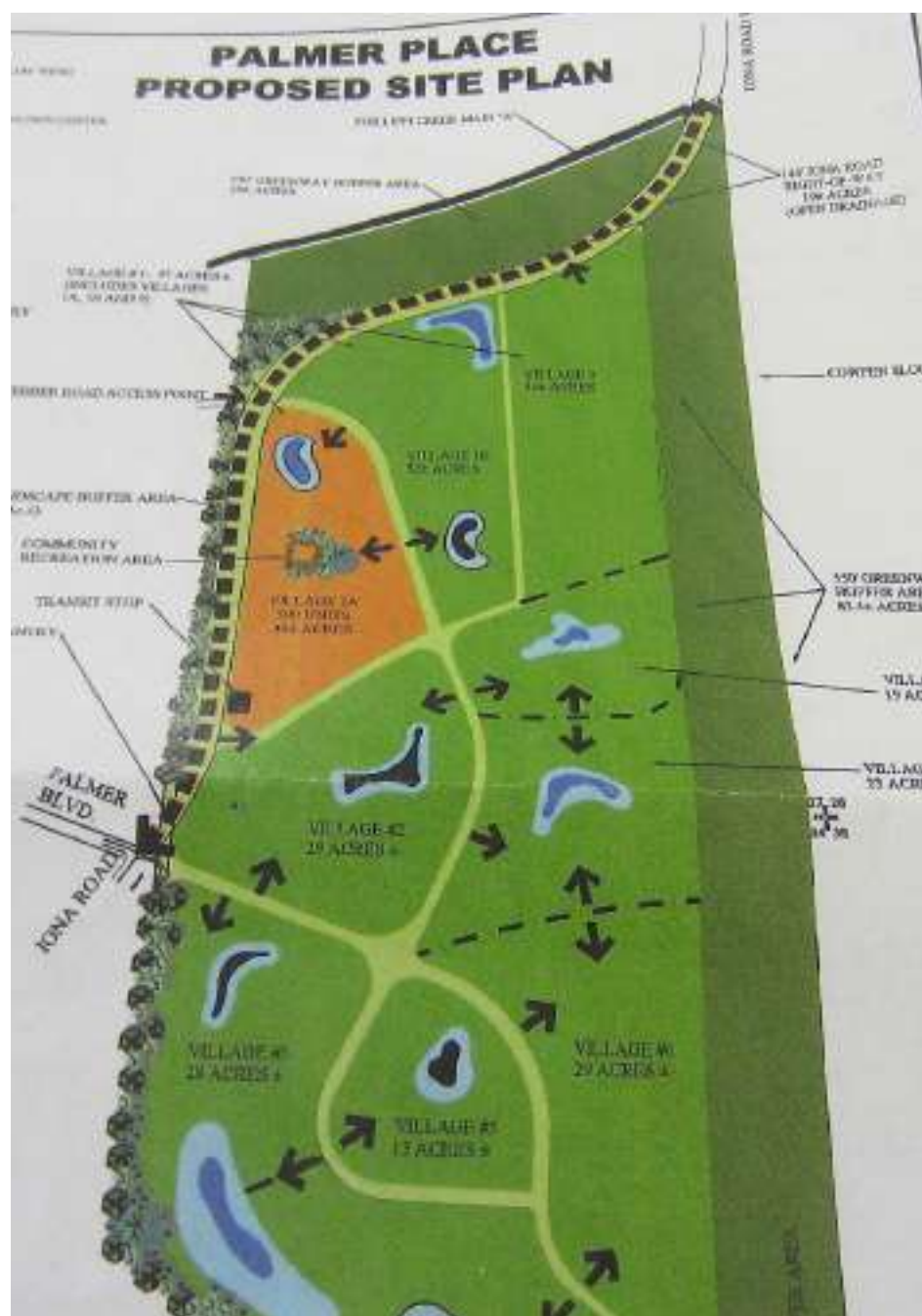
The scaled-back project of 600 homes narrowly won approval in May 2008.

Even with this smaller proposal, which includes 300 “affordable” townhouses, the development would offer the largest number of attainable homes in a single county project, if it comes to fruition.

The developer previously received rezone approval under the density bonus provision of the county’s affordable housing overlay zoning measure. Before the change, the property was zoned [Open Use Rural, allowing one unit per 10 acres for a maximum of 41 units](#).

The Palmer Place project is resurfacing at a time when affordable housing once again has become a community focus because of the shortage of attainable homes for purchase and rent.


The 300 affordable units would be developed in coordination with the Community Housing



Plans for Palmer Place submitted as part of a pre-application packet show residential village areas throughout the property. The affordable housing section is in orange. Photo by Roger Drouin

Trust and remain attainable “in perpetuity,” according to [information posted online](#) by the developer.

The project would also result in the developer’s transfer of right of way to the county, so Iona Road could be extended.

The county also requires the developer to follow requirements for a greenway buffer, which is shown in the plans along the eastern and northern property lines. The developer told county staffers native habitat would be protected. 

OLD PLANS AND NEW RULES



This Second Street structure covers part of the property where entrepreneur Jesse Biter is proposing to build a 10-story rental complex. Photo by Norman Schimmel

FOR THE CITY COMMISSION ON JULY 21, A 'MEGA-AGENDA' AWAITS, INCLUDING DISCUSSION OF JESSE BITER'S PROPOSED SECOND STREET DEVELOPMENT

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

There are many items of interest on the July 21 Sarasota City Commission agenda. There is something for everyone, including a couple of items that may spark commissioner outrage.

The city commissioners will start on a very positive note as they begin the evening session. They will recognize the achievements of a man who has molded the future of this community as few others have. The commissioners will declare July 21 "Dan Kennedy Day" to

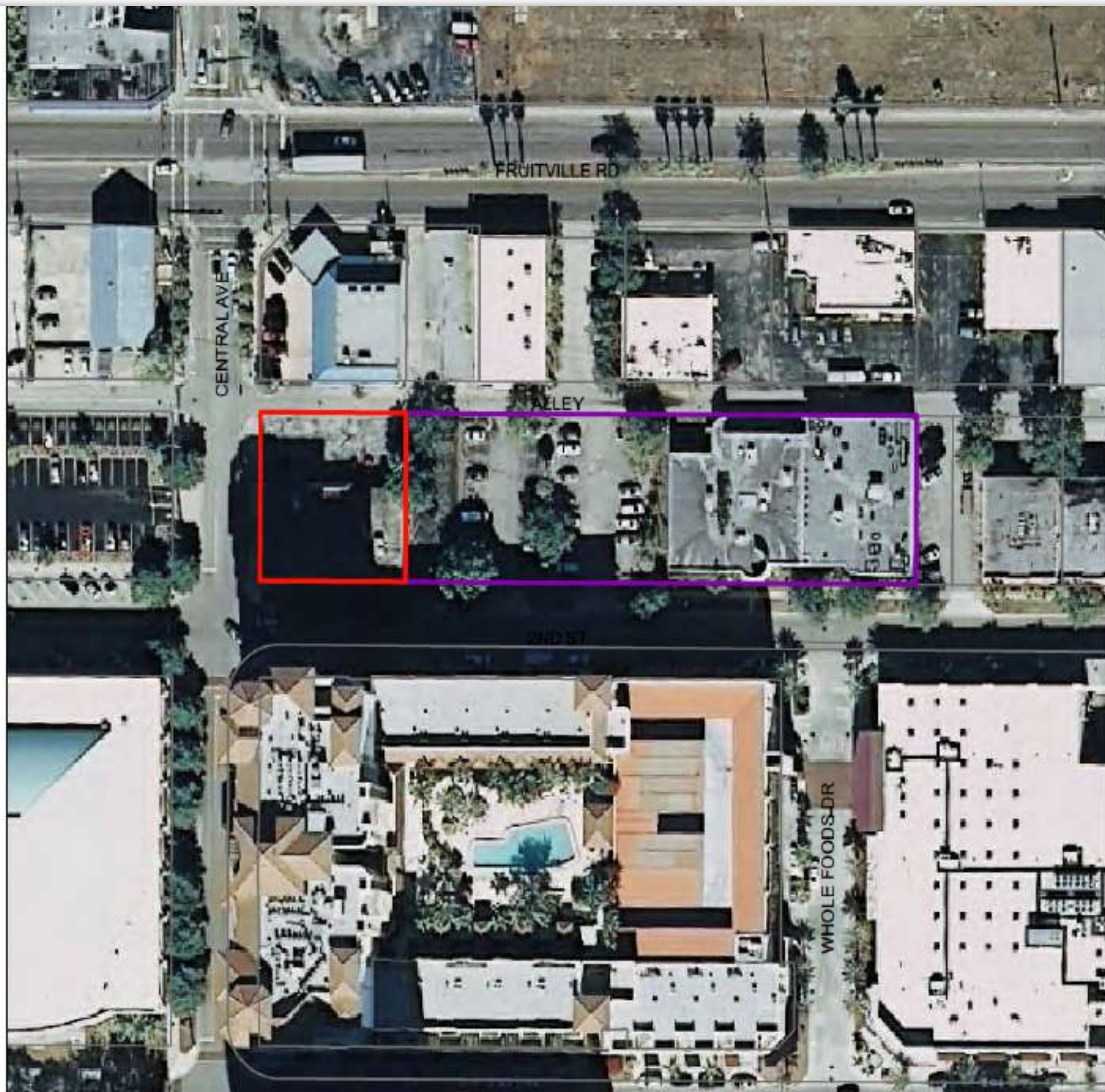
recognize the man who started the Sarasota Military Academy. Before that, he was principal of Sarasota High and vice principal of Riverview High.

In 2001, Kennedy left the public school system to start what some considered to be impossible — a high school with real discipline. By last year, 96 percent of Sarasota Military Academy's graduates had attended college. He will receive a key to the city, a rare honor for a resident.

“ *Businesses located in the Newtown business district should have set prohibited hours of operation from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.*

Bernadette DiPino
Police Chief
City of Sarasota





Legend



Site Plan Amendment 14-SP-04



Site Plan 07-SP-17

This satellite view with Fruitville Road at the top and the downtown Selby Library in the lower left corner shows the site of Jessie Biter's proposed 10-story development. The 2006 property line is outlined in purple, with the added parcel boundaries in red. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

BAYSIDE RESOURCES

In the afternoon session, the commissioners will ponder briefly the uses of their waterfront property. They will be asked to approve an Invitation to Negotiate, seeking a concessionaire to run the Lido Beach Pavilion. The firm would operate the snack bar, gift shop and pool. And it would keep the public restrooms open and clean from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week.

Lido Beach residents worked with the city to develop a master plan for the area that includes a tiki bar, meeting room, catering kitchen, small stage and a splash pad. However, the concessionaire would be required to fund all such improvements.

The next item would authorize City Manager Tom Barwin to be the city's representative in a public-private discussion on the future

of the 42 acres the city owns in and around the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall. A group called 20:20 is proposing to update the city's 2007 Cultural District Master Plan, which faltered in the recession.

City Attorney Bob Fournier says that if Barwin participates, all the discussions must follow the requirements of the Florida Open Meetings Act. Barwin would update the commission in the fall, and perhaps schedule a workshop in January to provide more details about the initiative.

APPOINTMENT REQUIREMENTS

Two city commission seats fall vacant on Nov. 18 because two incumbents are seeking higher office and must comply with Florida's "Resign to Run" law. Commissioners Shannon Snyder and Paul Caragiulo are vying for the seat being vacated by County Commissioner



A vote on an Invitation to Negotiate regarding the Lido Pool and pavilion facilities will be on the July 21 City Commission agenda. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Joe Barbetta under term limits imposed by the county's charter.

The remaining city commissioners will meet in special session on Wednesday, Nov. 19, to pick interim commissioners for Districts 2 and 3. Anyone interested in serving an interim appointment is required to file paperwork in the City Clerk's office between Sept. 2 and Sept. 12.

Applicants not only will fill out a simple city form, but they also will be asked to complete an extensive questionnaire used by the Governor's Office for his appointments. The time frame will allow the remaining city commissioners roughly eight weeks to evaluate the applicants for the two open seats. Several names have been floated for the District 2 seat, but so far, no District 3 candidate has surfaced.

WATER AND SEWER RATE COMPARISON

| Utility | Water | Sewer | Total |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Bradenton | \$24.01 | \$30.35 | \$54.36 |
| Punta Gorda | \$27.38 | \$31.12 | \$58.50 |
| Palmetto | \$30.46 | \$28.83 | \$59.28 |
| Clearwater | \$26.13 | \$34.16 | \$60.29 |
| Longboat Key* | \$23.06 | \$37.98 | \$61.04 |
| Sarasota County | \$24.70 | \$46.42 | \$71.12 |
| Sarasota | \$28.53 | \$46.99 | \$75.52 |
| Northport | \$31.71 | \$51.20 | \$82.91 |
| Venice | \$40.95 | \$47.89 | \$88.84 |
| Cape Coral | \$32.92 | \$57.23 | \$90.15 |
| Ft. Myers | \$29.63 | \$64.83 | \$94.46 |

Based upon 4,000 gallons of water usage at currently available FY 2015 rates.

*FY 2014 Rates

**Questions regarding this notice, please call:
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City water bill payers have received notice of a proposed rate increase. This table shows how Sarasota's fees stack up against those charged by other nearby local governments. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

Regular city elections will be held in March 2015, with a runoff (if necessary) in May. The interim appointees will serve until May, when the newly elected commissioners will be sworn into office. There is nothing preventing an interim appointee from running for a seat.

REGULAR PUBLIC HEARINGS

Two non-judicial public hearings are on the July 21 agenda; they will be in the evening, as required by law. One will affect virtually everybody in the city. The Utilities Department wants a 6-percent increase in water and sewer rates starting Sept. 1 and another 6-percent jump a year later. The first hike for a 4,000-gallon-per-month user will be \$4.28; in 2015, it will be \$4.53.

About half the new revenue will pay to replace the 50-year-old pipeline to the Verna

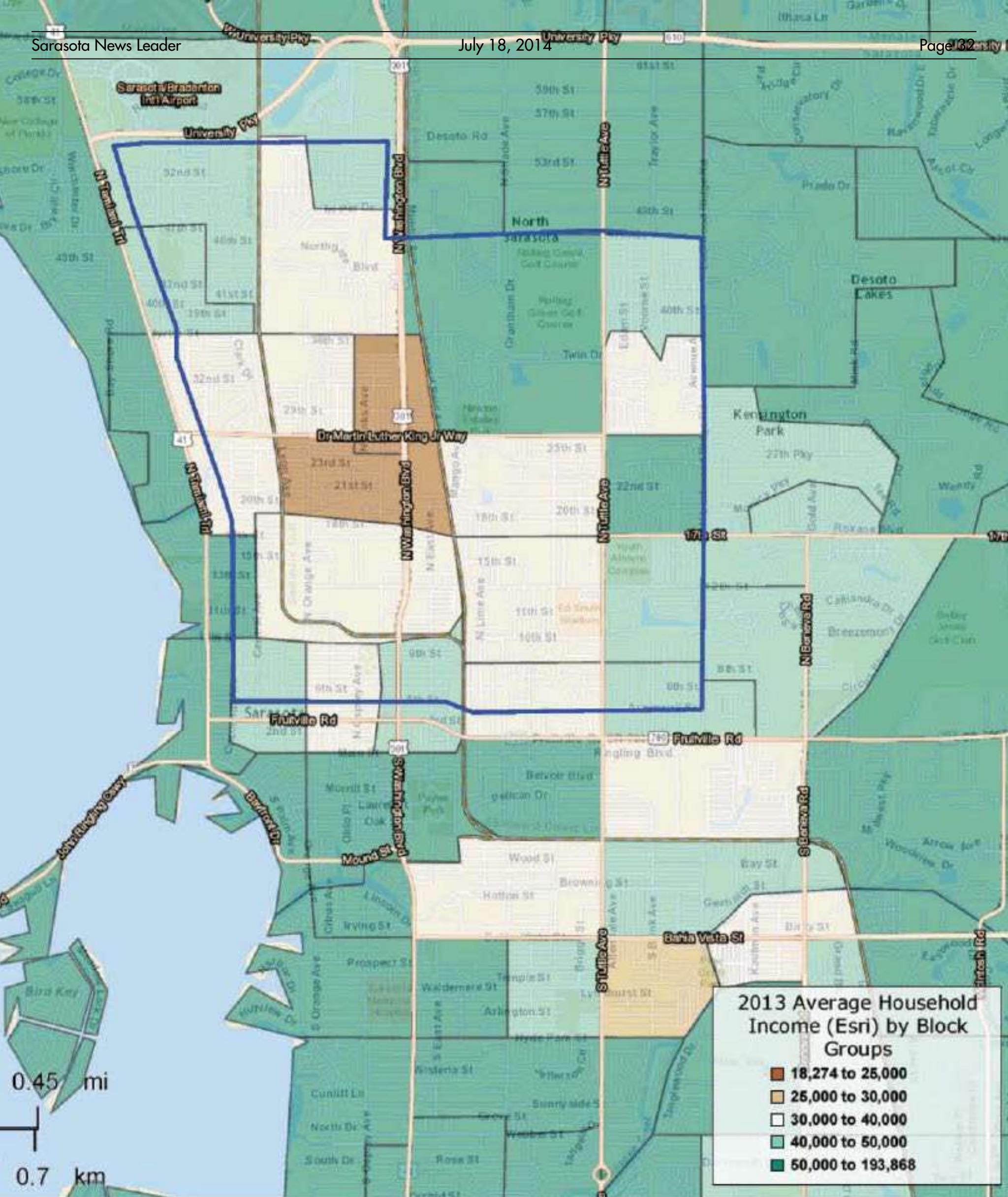
Well Field. The hikes will yield long-term savings, because the city will not have to borrow money with revenue bonds to pay for the pipeline and other maintenance items. Not only do bondholders receive their principal back, but they also end up with roughly twice the original amount in interest.

The second non-judicial public hearing involves a hot issue on St. Armands Circle. A flap earlier this year concerning a late-season art festival sparked the staff and City Commission to look at the regulation of special events citywide, with particular attention paid to “the Circle.”

The commissioners will get an earful, because City Attorney Robert Fournier is offering five different options on the number of special events the city will allow, including whether side streets can be closed off.



More discussion Monday will focus on the Cultural District that has been proposed to encompass a bayfront swath, including part of the parking area for the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall. Photo by Norman Schimmel



One of many maps in Robert Gibbs' report shows income disparity in 2013 by geography in the City of Sarasota. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

EIGHT YEARS AND COUNTING

A downtown affordable housing project proposed in 2006 will come up for final approval Monday evening after a quasi-judicial public hearing. Sworn testimony and evidence will be used to decide if developer Jessie Biter can expand the 2006 “Alcazar” project by adding another lot and then combining it with the other three he owns for a unified 10-story complex on the north side of Second Street at the corner of Central Avenue.

The Planning Board approved the unification of the parcels on a 3-1 vote with member Chris Gallagher recusing himself for conflict of interest. The concept at one point befuddled the city planning and zoning staff, because Biter did not want to waste money to create detailed plans if staff was going to torpedo the unification proposal. “How can we decide something with no plans?” asked one city staff member.

But building review staff signed off on the project as did the Planning Board. The proposal is unusual because the bulk of it (the original three lots) was permitted under the Downtown Residential Overlay District, which granted a fourfold increase in density to 168 residential units. The original developer, Leonard Garner, called his building “The Alcazar.” He planned it as an affordable housing project, with rents of \$1.33 per square foot. That worked out to \$532 for a 400-square-foot studio and \$1,296 for a two-bedroom/two bath unit in a brand new building in the middle of downtown when property values were at their peak, just before the real estate implosion.

As a matter of historical interest, Commissioner Snyder was then Vice Chairman Snyder on



Chief Bernadette DiPino began work in the city on Dec. 31, 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel

the Planning Board in 2007 when it approved Garner's plans 4-0 (with one member absent). If Snyder and two other city commissioners say "Yes" on Monday night, the project will set an endurance record from inception to approval.

NEW BUSINESS, WHOLESALE

Several touchy items appear at the end of the agenda under "New Business." One is a "crystal ball analysis" of business futures in four retail areas: downtown, St. Armands Circle, the Rosemary District, and the commercial strip along Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way.

Robert Gibbs, a national expert on retail, will present boilerplate recommendations for all four areas, saying they need to recruit new businesses, improve facades and window displays (perhaps through a revolving loan fund), use new signage and adopt a "sunset" provision requiring existing businesses to adopt the storefront, signage and awning "design standards" within five years of the new code's implementation.

Gibbs' study contains a wealth of information about local housing profiles, household incomes, vacancy rates, rent per square foot and real estate sales of office and commercial properties.

His most morbid observation concerns tourism in the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Way corridor. "Creating an effective strategy for attracting tourism through historical significance or alternative experiences in comparison to existing commercial areas has the potential to appeal to a number of the county's annual visitors," he wrote on Page 237 of his report. A pair of British tourists

was killed during their visit to the Newtown area in 2012.

That tragedy could have been on the mind of Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino's when she added a new item to the agenda. She will propose limiting business hours and overnight parking along the MLK Way business corridor.

"Businesses located in the Newtown business district should have set prohibited hours of operation from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m." DiPino says in a memo to City Manager Barwin. "Additionally we request parking restrictions along Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Way to coincide with the proposed prohibited hours of operation."

An audit and a news story are also on the New Business agenda. Commissioner Snyder wants to talk about the Sarasota Police Department's voluntary de-certification, following discovery of procedural lapses in 2012 (before DiPino's arrival). Last month, the police chief notified Barwin that she was asking that the department be de-listed, adding that she would pursue recertification.

Unfortunately, neither Barwin nor DiPino notified the City Commission or the city's Independent Police Policy Panel. In a short interview, Barwin told *The Sarasota News Leader* he personally apologizes to both groups for failure to keep them informed. The police panel met July 11; three days later the story broke in the daily newspaper.

Finally, an unflattering audit of the city's Information Technology Department was made available, dated June 15. Vice Mayor Susan Chapman asked that it be put under New Business on the July 21 agenda. (See the related story in this issue). 



City commissioners and staff pore over the numbers at their Friday afternoon, July 11, budget workshop, looking to cover a \$3.6 million deficit. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

BENEFITS FUND RAIDED TO BALANCE NEXT YEAR'S CITY BUDGET

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The City of Sarasota is poised to deplete its budget reserves this year and tap into retiree benefits next year to balance both budgets. That was the message Friday, July 11, as Finance Director John Lege unveiled next year's budget.

But first he needs to get through this year's budget, and it's \$1.2 million in the hole. To deal with that, Lege proposed a spending reduction for the next 10 weeks equal to 10 percent of the current operations budget.

He is quick to point out no personnel changes are in the works to balance either year's budgets. But he faces a \$1.7 million decline in revenues in the current budget, including a

drop between budgeted and actual receipts from red light cameras (down \$1.5 million), communications service taxes (down \$967,000) and franchise fees on electricity and natural gas (off \$632,000).

Lege said the Florida Department of Transportation "lengthened the yellow light [time] slightly," which cut red-light-running revenue.

These shortfalls were offset by better-than-expected receipts from the excise taxes on electricity, water and fuel oil, as well as "other revenue sources." During last year's budget sessions, the City Commission decided to tap into its "budget stabilization" reserves for

\$1,140,305 to make up the difference between projected revenues and expenses for the current fiscal year.

With revenues down, even a 10-percent “crash savings plan” to generate \$1.2 million will not be enough to fill the budget hole, so Lege proposes using another \$1,167,011 of the “budget stabilization” reserves to keep the current year’s spending plan balanced. This virtually depletes the “budget stabilization” fund for use in the future. Only \$630,184 remains,

barely half of what the city has been using for the past several years to balance the budget. A new plan is needed.

In other words, as of Oct. 1, the city either will need to develop a balanced budget with revenues equal to expenses or find a new source of money to cover the difference. Right now the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2014-2015 is \$3.6 million in the red. One of the drivers of that deficit is the \$500,000 needed by the Parking Department because

Ad Valorem Comparison

| City | Population 2013 | Municipal Millage Rates | | Increase in Millage 2008 - 2013 |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------|------------------------------------|
| | | 2008 | 2013 | |
| Sarasota | 52,689 | 2.7771 | 3.1728 | 14.25% |
| North Port | 59,231 | 2.9805 | 3.4474 | 15.67% |
| Kissimmee | 63,662 | 3.7058 | 4.6253 | 24.81% |
| Port Orange | 57,060 | 4.6000 | 4.6991 | 2.15% |
| Bradenton | 50,475 | 4.2843 | 5.8976 | 37.66% |
| Ocala | 57,387 | 4.5288 | 6.2502 | 38.01% |
| Delray Beach | 61,801 | 6.3900 | 7.1611 | 12.07% |
| Tamarac | 61,110 | 5.3215 | 7.2899 | 36.99% |
| Margate | 55,245 | 6.7500 | 7.3300 | 8.59% |
| North Miami | 60,263 | 6.9195 | 7.9336 | 14.66% |
| Ft. Myers | 67,081 | 7.1634 | 8.7760 | 22.51% |
| Averages | 58,183 | 4.9967 | 5.9060 | 18.49% |

City Finance Director John Lege provided this comparison of tax rates of equivalent-size cities between 2008 and 2013, with their rates of increase. Sarasota remains near the bottom of all Florida cities. Other communities, such as Fort Myers, raised taxes to compensate for falling property values. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

city commissioners refuse to pass along the cost of downtown parking management to the people who use the spaces.

Lege proposed a variety of methods to plug the \$3.6 million hole. Florida governments now “harvest” money without strings on it, usually from enterprise funds, such as those for utilities with excess cash, or self-funded operations, such as insurance and pension funds.

This year the city budget uses \$657,000 “harvested” from such funds. But for next year, Lege sees only \$250,000 available — once again, from the solid waste enterprise fund.

The biggest pot of money in the city budget is for staff salaries and benefits, which comprise 80 percent of the expenses. Lege noted the city is already using a four-month hiring delay to fill authorized positions, saving \$500,000.

Instead of cutting staff, the administration is looking to hire six positions using general fund money while retiring eight police officers, for a net savings of \$14,000. Six more positions are proposed to be covered through the use of enterprise funds, while 3.5 full-time equivalents (FTEs) will be deleted from the budget for a net gain of 2.5 FTEs covered by enterprise funds, leaving a net change of one employee. So cutting staff is not the staff’s recommended option for balancing the budget.

A third option would be to decrease specified levels of service, but only City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo wanted to explore this option. Nobody expressed interest in an increase in the ad valorem property tax rate, either. Lege pointed out that a 19-percent hike would be required to cover the \$3.6 million gap.



The City Commission has declined to reinstitute paid parking along city streets downtown, even though its Parking Department has an annual deficit of about \$500,000. Photo by Norman Schimmel

It is worth noting that the value of property for tax purposes is still down about 30 percent from its peak in Fiscal Year 2008. Thus, taxpayers are paying 30 percent less than they were six years ago, because the tax rate is almost unchanged.

The current value of city property today is \$7.6 billion, equal to the value in 2006. For comparison, in 2006, the city employed 753 people; today it has 578 on the payroll.

After looking at the other options, Lege suggested using money budgeted for the OPEB Trust Fund. OPEB stands for Other Post-Employment Benefits, an accounting term for healthcare costs, life insurance premiums and deferred-compensation plans for retirees. It is a major financial obligation, and unlike some other cities, Sarasota has more than kept pace with payments to the OPEB Trust Fund.

Lege suggested reducing the city's contribution so it would be more in line with the expenses it pays off. For example, in 2013, the city put \$8.6 million into the trust fund, but it paid only \$6.3 million in claims. Some cities use a pay-as-you-go system; others have floated bond issues to cover the long-term liability, while many (like Sarasota) partially


fund the trust fund, paying more each year than necessary to build an actuarial "hedge."

For the next fiscal year, Lege suggests diverting \$3.9 million from the city's OPEB contribution to cover the \$3.6 million deficit. He would use the remaining \$300,000 to build the "budget stabilization fund" back up.

In the meantime, he said staff would "work with the insurance consultant and actuary to provide a recommendation to make Other Post Employment Benefits fiscally sustainable while providing an important benefit to retirees."

One of the new factors on the horizon that could reorganize how OPEBs are funded is the Federal Affordable Health Care Act, said Commissioner Shannon Snyder.

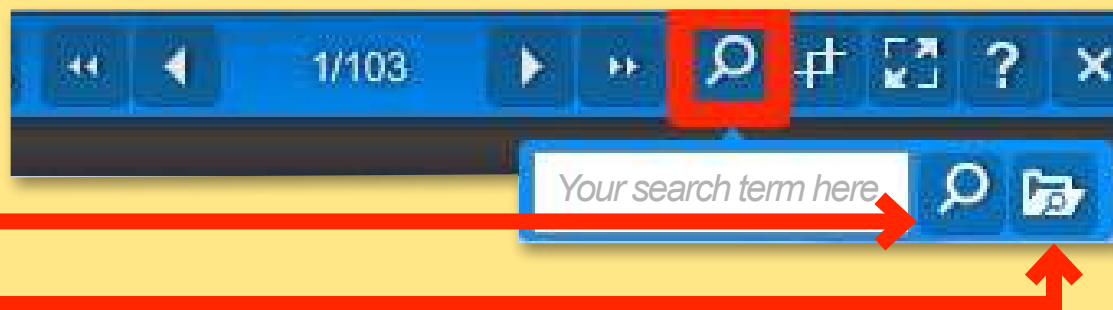
"There are a number of things we should consider that will reduce the actuarial payments," said City Manager Tom Barwin. "We need to do that over the next few years."

The commissioners go back into budget workshops on July 23 and 24, starting in the morning and continuing all day as departments defend their financial requests in detail. 

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DOES NOT SMELL LIKE CITY HALL



McKim & Creed has unveiled a rendering of the updated design of Lift Station 87. It was created by Christie and Christie, architects. Image courtesy Christie and Christie

AN HISTORICAL CITY ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN IS PROPOSED FOR THE LUKE WOOD PARK LIFT STATION IN SARASOTA

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

From “modern-invisible” to “century-old retro,” the design of the city’s new lift station, No. 87, might be called a study in whiplash. Initially, the structure was proposed as the city’s first all-underground facility. On Monday, July 14, the latest design was unveiled, and it harkens back to 1917, when the city purchased the Hover Arcade on the bayfront at the foot of Main Street for use as the first Sarasota City Hall. (Click [here](#) to see the architects’ “flyover” video showing the proposed lift station structure.)

The underground — and, therefore, invisible — design was favored initially to spare the residents of nearby condominiums and the rest

of the environs the view of a city lift station in the park. But faulty engineering by the former contractor on the job, AECOM, doomed that idea, and the company walked off the project. A lawsuit ensued. Then another engineering firm — McKim & Creed — was brought in to review the “missile silo” school of design, and its team said that model would never survive the storm surge of a major hurricane.

Since Lift Station 87 will handle roughly one-third of the city’s sewage flow and all of Sarasota Memorial Hospital’s effluent, city staff and McKim & Creed engineers decided to move all the critical equipment — generators, switchgear, odor controllers and much more

— not only aboveground but 25 feet above sea level to avoid the storm surge potential.

That required a 32-foot-tall building to encompass overhead cranes necessary for moving pumps and generators and other pieces of equipment.

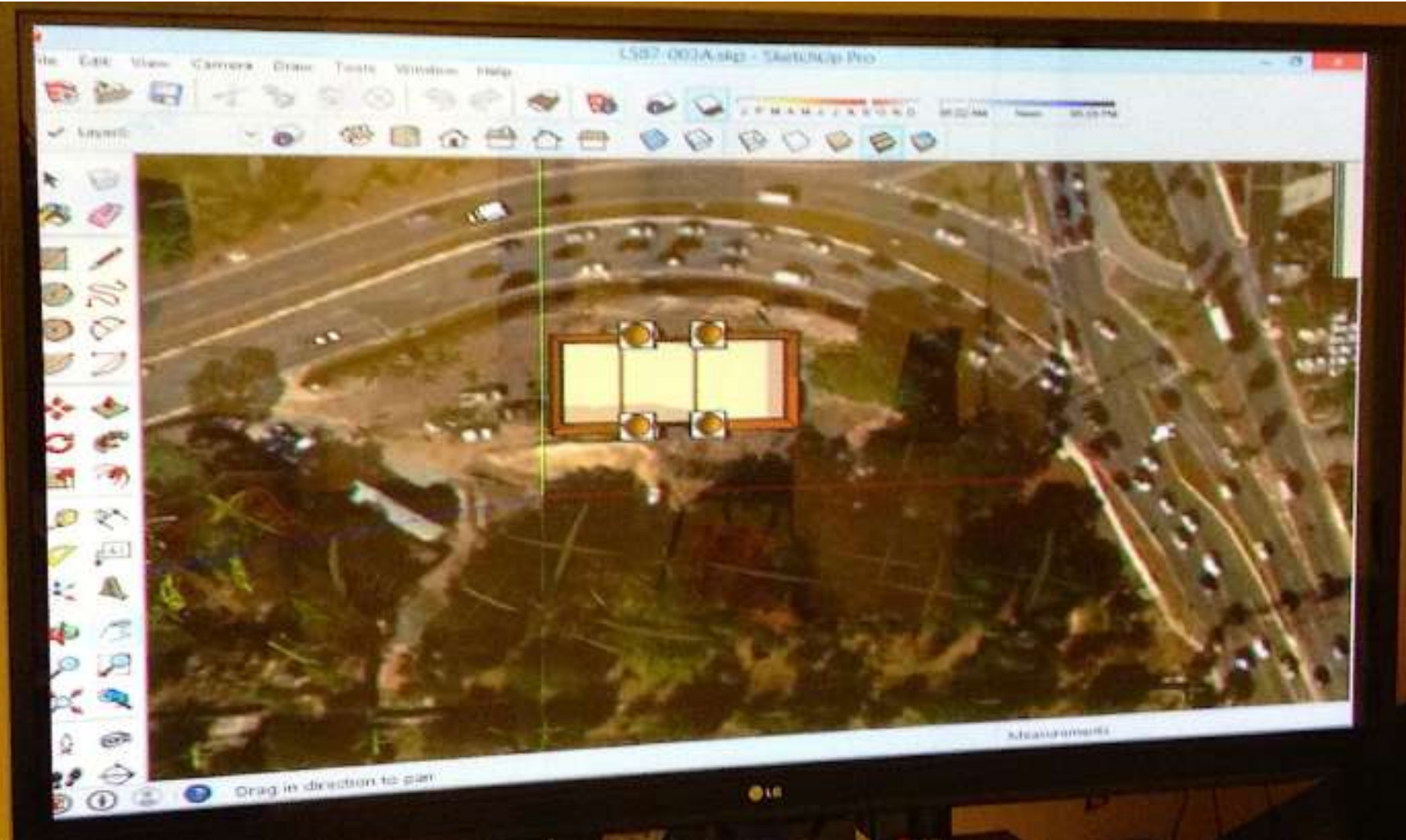
Architect Jack Christie initially doodled with Art Deco and Mission Style designs. But public reviewers suggested something more specific to Sarasota. Therefore, Christie decided to mimic the historic bayfront arcade. Because people also expressed a desire for bilateral symmetry, in which both sides look identical, the Lift Station 87 “arcade” will have two towers and an arched gateway on both its north and south sides.

Arched doors on the east and west sides will be functional, allowing heavy trucks to pick

up (and deliver) pumps and generators for repairs as necessary.

The four towers will be functional, as well. Two will disguise substantial intake and exhaust stacks that are an integral part of lift station designs. Vents will also serve the diesel generators that will be installed to power the pumps in the event of electrical failure. The other two towers will enclose stairways to the upper floor, where all the electrical equipment will be located.

The actual site plan is governed by the existing 25-foot-deep “wet well,” where the sewage will be collected. A gravity sewer main will be drilled underneath Hudson Bayou to reach the wet well. From there, pumps will raise the effluent and send it to the treatment plant on 12th Street.



This is one shot from a video ‘flyover’ showing the proposed lift station design from directly overhead. U.S. 41 is at the top of the image; it intersects with U.S. 301 at the right. Photo of the segment taken by Stan Zimmerman

The site plan was submitted July 16 for review by the city's Development Review Committee to ensure it complies with all appropriate city building and zoning codes.

By the time the ribbon is cut on the project, the total cost — including work on the “invisible” design — could exceed \$28 million. City staff and the City Commission hope some of

that can be recovered from the city's lawsuit against AECOM.

Depending on final cost estimates, the building could feature solar power panels on the flat roof, and it could be faced in brick or stucco.

The original Hover Arcade was demolished in 1967 to make way for the rerouting of U.S. 41 along the bayfront. 



Project Manager Robert Garland (left) with McKim & Creed points out details on the pseudo-Hover design proposed to hide the electrical components of Lift Station 87 in Luke Wood Park near the intersection of U.S. 41 and U.S. 301. Photo by Stan Zimmerman



ENOUGH'S ENOUGH

Visitors enjoy the focal point of Warm Mineral Springs. Photo by Rachel Levey-Baker

NORTH PORT VOTES TO TAKE FULL OWNERSHIP OF WARM MINERAL SPRINGS AFTER ALMOST TWO YEARS OF CONTENTION WITH THE COUNTY

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

After years of debate with Sarasota County over the future of Warm Mineral Springs, the North Port City Commission this week voted to put an end to their joint partnership, moving to buy out the county's 50-percent share of the Springs property. The decision puts the future of the property firmly in the hands of the city, whose board has refused to budge in its insistence that the land surrounding the springs be left largely untouched.

The county and city jointly purchased the Springs in 2010, each

shelling out \$2.75 million for the 81-acre property. But agreement on what to do with the land has been tough to come by, as evidenced by numerous discussions and one facilitated meeting under state guidelines. The County Commission has pushed for an aggressive redevelopment plan that would potentially include a hotel, while the City Commission recently voted for a lower-impact management plan to merely renovate and replace existing buildings.

That dispute has now come to a head, with

“*Think about all the criticism we've heard over the years. Let's make sure we have our ducks in a row.*”

Robert Robinson
City Attorney
City of North Port





An aerial map shows Warm Mineral Springs and adjacent parcels. Image courtesy Sarasota County

the county voting last week to sell its share of the property to the city and the city voting this week to take the county up on that offer. Despite all that, the move will not prevent the Springs from closing at the end of August, when the city and county's short-term management contract with National and State Park Concessions expires.

More than one attendee at the city's public meeting Monday called the Springs situation a "fiasco," but most speakers supported the city's decision to buy the resort. "The county doesn't always make the best partner," said former Democratic County Commission

candidate Jennifer Cohen, a North Port resident. "I think this is a lesson learned. We as a city need to keep in mind that we're pretty powerful."

While some on the North Port board had discussed amending the city's response to the county's offer to include other items, such as a request that the County Commission call a special meeting during its summer recess to address the issue, those plans were squashed. Referring to the city's response, City Attorney Robert Robinson urged the board, "I don't think you can couch this letter in terms of shifting the subject matter." He argued the



North Port City Manager Jonathan Lewis and Mayor James Blucher listen to a discussion at the Sarasota County Convocation of Governments meeting in January. Photo by Rachel Hackney

response should be limited to, “We want to buy it and here are our conditions.”


City Commission candidate Lorenzo Whitehead also urged the city to keep its response simple. He called the county’s offer “fragile.” “If we mess this up, we may not get it again,” he said.

Commissioner Cheryl Cook eventually made the winning motion, agreeing to the county’s price — the original \$2.75 million — and its insistence that the city pay all closing costs. Included also: a stipulation that the county allow the city to enforce the current management contract.

Mayor Jim Blucher, who has supported the county’s plans for the Springs throughout the process, argued against the motion. He said the overall price tag for the Springs would

balloon to \$7.5 million with the purchase, pointing out the North Port board hadn’t fully explored its options. He told *The Sarasota News Leader* last week his board has refused to negotiate over the property. “This commission has stuck to its guns about keeping it a park,” he said, “and the county has tried to negotiate some deals.”

The County Commission won’t meet again till Aug. 20, when it returns from its summer recess. Robinson said the sale process would take at least 30 to 60 days from that point, assuming the county takes up the issue then. In the meantime, two appraisals will be done.

Robinson urged patience. “Think about all the criticism we’ve heard over the years,” he told the city commissioners. “Let’s make sure we have our ducks in a row.” 

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LITTLE SAY IN THE MATTER

A map shows part of the area where the Florida Department of Transportation plans to build a sound barrier wall along Interstate 75 in Sarasota County. Image courtesy Sarasota County

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS EXPRESS DISDAIN FOR STATE PLANS FOR A 22-FOOT WALL TO MITIGATE NOISE ALONG PART OF A PLANNED SEGMENT OF INTERSTATE 75

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) will be erecting its first noise reduction wall in Sarasota County on a stretch of Interstate 75 between the Fruitville Road and University Parkway interchanges, the County Commission has learned. And even though the board members are not pleased with the prospect, their only say in the matter involved color and texture options.

County Chief Engineer
James K. Harriott Jr.

pointed out during the commission's July 9 regular meeting that although FDOT staff had sent the county an email essentially asking whether the board wants to proceed with construction of the 22-foot structure, "We did confirm that if your answer is 'No,' they're still proceeding with the sound wall."

“If there is a sound impact, FDOT and [other state departments of transportation] are required nationwide to mitigate [it].”

James K. Harriott Jr.
Chief Engineer
Sarasota County

"We're getting used to that," Commissioner Nora Patterson replied, referencing a discussion two weeks earlier when

board members bemoaned the fact that the department recently had been moving ahead on projects without giving the county advance notice.

At least FDOT did want the commission to offer its views on the design of the wall, Harriott noted. The board also had the option of paying as much as \$20,000 per panel for custom imagery, such as a series of rowers, given the proximity of the wall to the rowing venue at Nathan Benderson Park, Harriott added. The latter idea drew no board support because of the expense.

FDOT needs answers by Aug. 1, he said.

The day before, County Administrator Tom Harmer told the commissioners he understood

from Harriott “that this will be the first FDOT sound barrier in the county.”

It will be very similar to the walls along I-4 in the Orlando area, Harriott said.

On July 9, Harriott showed the board members the exact location of the structure. It will be between North Cattlemen Road and I-75 from just north of the Fruitville Road interchange to a point approximately perpendicular to the southern edge of Benderson Lake.

Residents of the Gateway Lakes apartments, located at 1000 Marlin Lakes Circle in Sarasota; the San Palermo condominium complex, which is just north of the apartment buildings; and other adjacent property owners

FDOT DESIGN INFORMATION

Disadvantages of Noise Barriers

- Noise barriers can affect sunlight by casting a fairly large shadow as the sun rises and sets or permanently shade some areas. This may adversely affect or cause the decline of nearby vegetation.
- Construction of noise barriers may adversely affect existing ornamental vegetation, trees, and shrubs located in close proximity to the barrier.
- Noise barriers act as visual barriers, blocking views for residents.
- Noise barriers may present a public safety concern because the view of police and other safety patrols traversing the highway will be blocked. Noise barriers can also create nighttime shadow areas.
- Noise barriers can obstruct breezes and sunlight.
- Noise barriers tend to attract graffiti.
- Noise barriers may block the view of commercial or landmark signs from the users of the roadway.
- Noise barriers may reduce, but cannot eliminate, the traffic noise.

A staff presentation to the County Commission on July 9 included information from the state about disadvantages of sound barrier walls. Image courtesy Sarasota County

have been polled by FDOT about their design choices, Harriott explained.

According to the chart he showed the commissioners, nine of the 12 Gateway Lakes respondents, 25 of the 27 San Palermo residents and one of the three isolated homeowners responding to the FDOT survey want the wall.

When Chairman Charles Hines asked where the request for the wall originated, Harriott pointed out that the Federal Highway

Administration requires a sound impact study in conjunction with major new road projects. The county had to undertake one itself, he added, when it started planning to lengthen North Cattlemen Road in the same vicinity.

A May 22 email to county staff from an FDOT noise specialist said, “As part of a design project for the widening of I-75 from north of Fruitville Road in Sarasota County to north of University Parkway in Manatee County, FDOT is considering a noise barrier along a segment of the west side of I-75.”

7

TEXTURE OPTION 1 – ASHLAR STONE



Gray (Federal Shade No. 36314)



Light Beige (Federal Shade No. 33578)



Dark Beige (Federal Shade No. 33522)

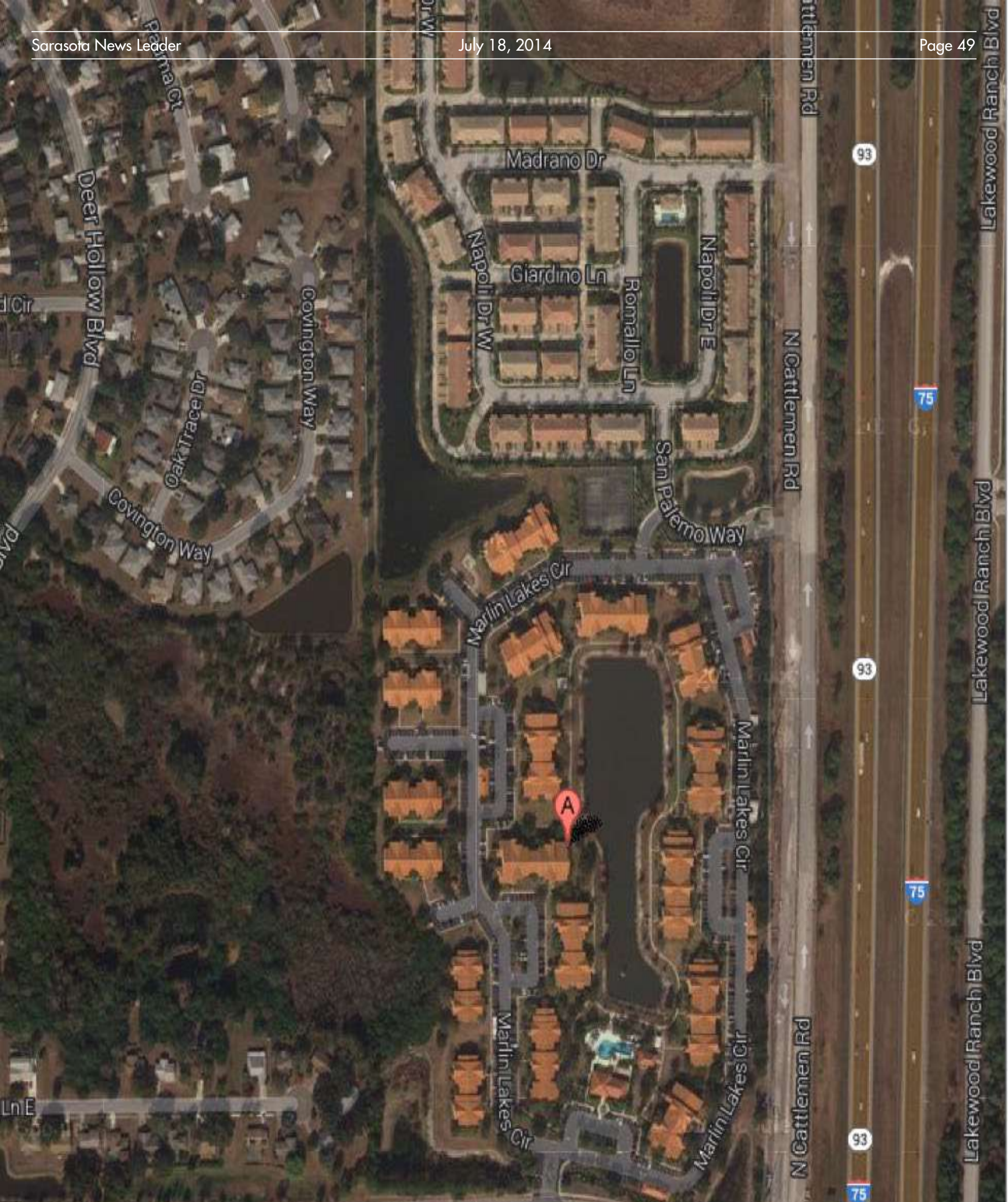


Representative Texture

| Horizontal Band Width to vary as follows: | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Barrier Height | Top Horizontal Band Width |
| 8 feet or less | 8 inches |
| 9 feet to 14 feet | 16 inches |
| Greater than 14 feet | 24 inches |

PANELS: Ashlar Stone (Index 5201, Type B) With Smooth (Index 5201, Type A) Horizontal Band at top, Recessed Panel (Index 5203)
POSTS: Smooth (Index 5201, Type A)
Colors may vary due to reproduction

The County Commission joined the majority of residents in the affected area in endorsing an Ashlar stone design for the wall. Image courtesy Sarasota County



An aerial view shows the San Palermo condominium complex just north of the Gateway Lakes apartments. Both are west of North Cattlemen Road and Interstate 75. Image from Google Maps

Harriott explained to *The Sarasota News Leader* that **the diverging diamond interchange** planned at University Parkway and I-75 is the project that will create the need for the wall.

“If there is a sound impact, FDOT and [other state departments of transportation] are required nationwide to mitigate [it],” Harriott told the commissioners. Usually, the result is a wall, and it is constructed as high as it needs to be to reduce the noise.

“Are we going to see these walls pop up all along the interstate [in Sarasota County]?” Hines asked.

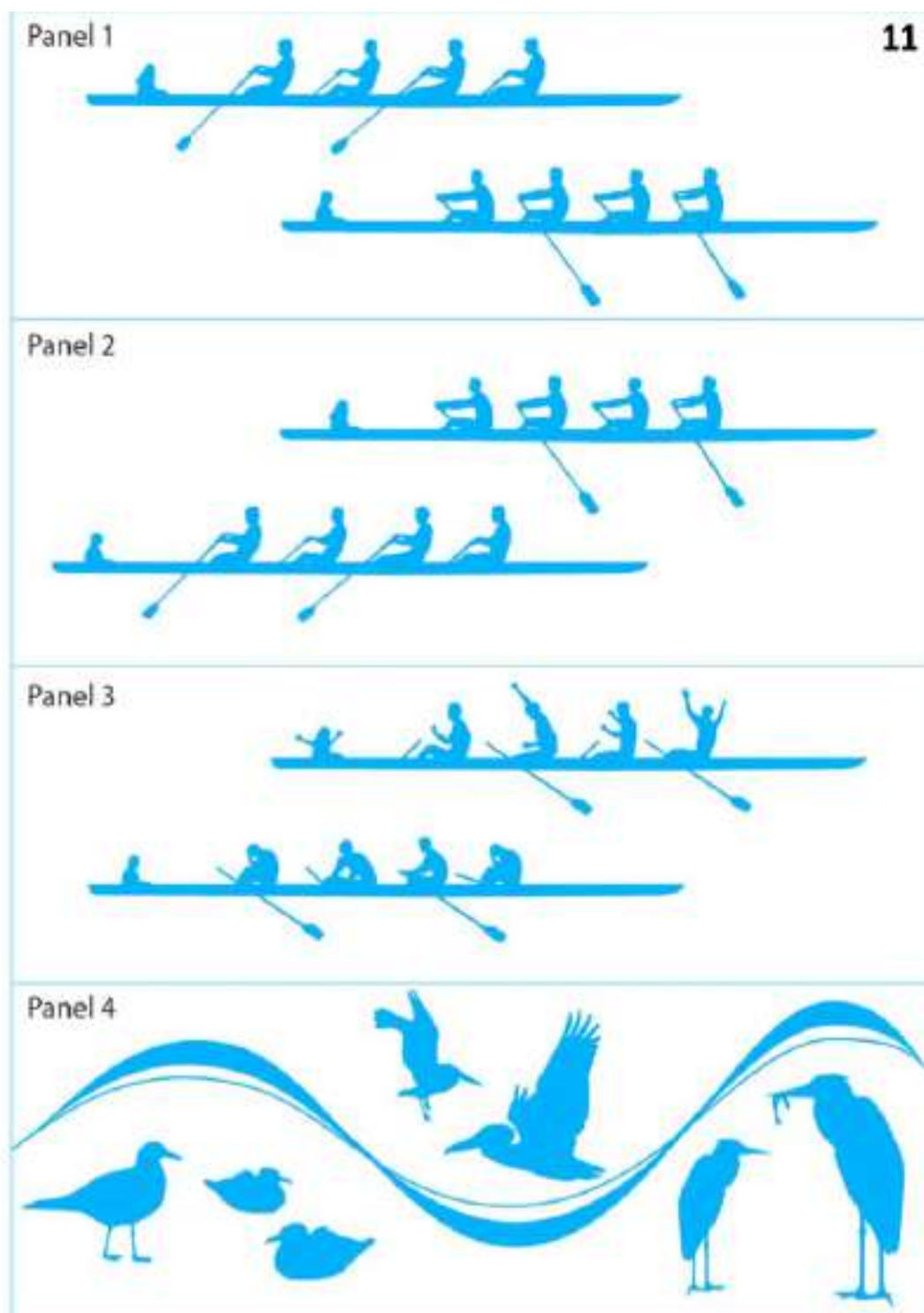
“Most definitely,” Harriott replied, “and we have no say about it.”

Lee County is seeing such walls erected in conjunction with the widening of I-75 through its jurisdiction, he added.

When Hines asked whether landscaping could mitigate the noise sufficiently that a wall would not be needed in the Sarasota County

CUSTOM PANEL DESIGN EXAMPLES

- Custom panels would cost the County \$12,000 - \$20,000 per design
- A separate funding agreement with the FDOT would need to be approved by mid-September 2014



Because of the expense, the County Commission nixed the idea of a special design on the wall panels. Image courtesy Sarasota County

case, Harriott explained, “Landscaping doesn’t do that.”

One other FDOT option in these cases, Harriott continued, “is start buying the houses out,” a comment which drew wry chuckles from the board members. “[FDOT staff members will] do a cost analysis to say, Is it more expensive to just buy the homes out than it is to build the wall?” The answer generally is that the wall is less expensive, he added.

“It’s going to be like driving through a tunnel through Sarasota County,” Hines said.

At the last [Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization](#) meeting, Patterson pointed out, “It sounded like, ultimately, [FDOT’s] goal is to add two additional lanes to the entire length of I-75 through Sarasota County,” with the extra lanes either requiring toll payments from drivers or designated for vehicles with multiple passengers. “So that possibly is going to trigger this concept all along there.” Patterson wondered whether FDOT officials could be persuaded to use a berm, “which really is a lot less ugly,” instead of a wall to mitigate noise in areas where residents desire some means of sound reduction.

“You need the distance to get the slope,” Commissioner Joe Barbetta told her. “You’d need 80 feet [of right of way].”

When Patterson then asked whether a berm would have to be 22 feet tall, Harriott told her, “You would need ... almost half the interstate right of way to build a berm 22 feet high.”

“All right. That’s hopeless,” she conceded.

“I think it’s more the neighbors want [the wall],” Commissioner Carolyn Mason noted.

“Wait till they start seeing ’em,” Patterson responded. “They may not.”

COLOR, TEXTURE AND LANDSCAPING

Harriott told the board FDOT had provided three color choices for the wall: two shades of beige — one light and one dark — and a gray tone. The residential poll showed respondents split in favor of one of the beige shades, he said, “and I guess in Florida sun, [the colors will] both be about the same light beige in a few years anyway.”

That comment also drew chuckles.

When Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson asked whether landscaping would be added, Harriott replied, “They do not have room to do landscaping” on the interstate side of the wall because of the placement of stormwater ponds. “But they are doing enhanced landscaping at the interchange locations, the hubs at University [Parkway] and Fruitville Road.”

“Honestly, you could plant [podocarpus](#) there. They grow 40 feet and their breadth can easily be kept to 15 feet at the most,” Patterson suggested regarding the side of the wall adjacent to North Cattlemen.

“We can ask them to do [landscaping],” Harriott said.

As for the color and texture: Commissioners Hines and Barbetta suggested the light beige, and Barbetta proposed the board go along with the neighbors’ request for the Ashlar stone texture. The board approved those options unanimously.

“Ultimately,” Robinson said of FDOT officials, “they can do whatever they want.” 

A DEAD PETITION DRIVE

IT'S TIME SARASOTA CITY CHARTER 2014

We the people of the City of Sarasota, in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the State of Florida, adopt this charter to secure the benefits of home rule, and accountable Mayor-Council government. By this action we affirm the values of representative democracy, professional management, effective political leadership, and strong diverse citizen participation.

[Charter Information](#)[View Charter Document](#)[About It's Time / Press Links](#)[Contact](#)[Print a Petition to Sign](#)[Contribute](#)

It's Time Sarasota has pushed for a strong-mayor form of city government. Image from the organization [website](#)

THE GROUP SEEKING A STRONG-MAYOR FORM OF GOVERNMENT ADMITS FAILURE

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Political crow is a very unpalatable dish, eaten hot or cold. It is on the menu this week at the political action committee It's Time Sarasota.

On Wednesday, July 16, the organization publicly announced that its petition drive to put a strong-mayor charter initiative on the November ballot failed.

"It's Time Sarasota is withdrawing our current petition to place a complete [sic] revised Charter for the City of Sarasota on the November 2014 ballot. As we plan for our next campaign in 2016, It's Time will place greater emphasis on seeking broader community


input and expanding community awareness of the need for reform," the press release said.

The committee opposing the strong-mayor plan, The Citizens Voice, noted in its own press release, "This was the seventh failed push for a strong mayor system," adding, "In 1996, 2002 and 2009 voters defeated a variety of such initiatives — in 2002 by 70-30 percent. The City Commission voted not to put a similar measure on the ballot in 2012. The Charter Review Committees of 2006 and 2010-11 also recommended against a change from the Commission-City Manager form of government."

The Sarasota News Leader reported last week that the strong-mayor advocacy group would throw in the towel, having obtained about 2,000 of the 3,500 signatures needed in the 180 days allowed for the petition drive. For the record, this was the first city ballot measure petition drive allowed to run for 180 days. A charter change in 2012 doubled the number of days from 90.

The proposed rewrite of the Sarasota City Charter was drafted by a Cincinnati political science professor and backed by City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo and County

Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Carolyn Mason. Failed City Commission candidate Linda Holland was the coordinator of the effort. It's Time Sarasota's steering committee included Andy Dorr, former City Clerk Billy Robinson, David Moriss, Diana Hamilton, Ian Black, Jason Swift, Mary Slapp, Michael Barfield, Peter Fanning, Peter Wish and Matt Woodall.

The City of Sarasota has used a city manager-commission form of government for more than 60 years. 



The screenshot shows the Facebook profile of 'The Citizens Voice Political Organization'. The cover photo features a cityscape with the text 'NO BOSS MAYOR for Sarasota' and a logo for 'the CITIZENS VOICE'. The page has 93 likes and 1 visit. The 'ABOUT' section describes the group as a diverse group of Sarasota residents opposing the Boss Mayor charter amendment. The 'TIMELINE' shows two posts: one from May 29 sharing a link to an article titled 'Why the mayor proposal struggles' and another from May 27 sharing a link to an article titled 'Citizens Voice makes a difference!'. The 'PEOPLE' section lists recent visitors.

facebook

Email or Phone Password Log In

Keep me logged in Can't log in?

Create Page

Recent 2014

NO BOSS MAYOR
for Sarasota

P.L. Pol. Adv. paid for by The Citizens Voice Committee, P.O. Box 1767, Sarasota, FL 34230

the CITIZENS VOICE

The Citizens Voice
Political Organization

Timeline About Photos Reviews Likes

PEOPLE

93 likes
1 visit

ABOUT

Diverse group of Sarasota residents opposing the Boss Mayor charter amendment promoted by Its Time Sarasota PAC.
<http://nobossmayor.com/>

PHOTOS

the CITIZENS VOICE

the CITIZENS VOICE

the CITIZENS VOICE

The Citizens Voice shared a link.
May 29

Why the mayor proposal struggles <http://wp.me/p4qPHj-4Y>

Why the mayor proposal struggles - nobossmayor.com
nobossmayor.com

By JOHN WESLEY WHITE, Guest Columnist Published: Thursday, May 29, 2014 at 1:00 a.m. Regarding the article in Tuesday's Herald-Tribune, "It's Tough Sledding for Strong Mayor Measure," I appreciate your reporter's difficulty... [661 more words.]

Like Comment Share 1

The Citizens Voice shared a link.
May 27

Citizens Voice makes a difference! —According to today's SHT article the "Its" group is having difficulty gathering signatures. Our

The Citizens Voice opposed the petition drive of It's Time Sarasota. Image from the group's [Facebook page](#)

Right Message, Right Place, Right Time



KEEP THE MONEY FLOWING

Visit Sarasota County staff showed the county commissioners a sample of its marketing messages. Image courtesy Sarasota County

WITH TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX REVENUE CONTINUING TO RISE, THE COUNTY'S TOURISM OFFICE PLANS ON TWO NEW LOCATIONS TO ENTICE EVEN MORE VISITORS TO THE AREA

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

As Tourist Development Tax revenue continues to climb, Visit Sarasota County is keeping one goal for the 2015 fiscal year that was exceeded in the 2013 fiscal year: increase the number of visitors by 3 percent. But it also plans to generate a 4-percent uptick in tourists' direct spending in Sarasota County.

In the 2013 fiscal year, Visit Sarasota County (VSC) reported a 5.7-percent increase in the

number of tourists after setting its 3-percent goal, and it saw their spending climb 10 percent, meeting a second target it had set, the office's data shows.

Just last month, Doreen Buonpastore, a staff member in the county's Office of Financial Management, told members of the Sarasota County Tourist Development Council that Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue

could hit \$16 million for the current fiscal year after reaching a new high of \$14,876,325.28 in the 2013 fiscal year. Through the end of May, according to information from the Sarasota County Tax Collector’s Office, the TDT revenue total was \$12,652,242.72.

Though May’s income of \$1,121,009.87 reflected the typical decline in tourism spending after the height of season — the April collections added up to \$1,724,529.43 — it still was \$136,066.71 higher than the amount generated during same month in 2013. Moreover, total TDT revenue thus far this fiscal year is up \$1,566,529.71 over the same period in 2012-13.

Additionally, statistics compiled for VSC show the total number of visitors staying in a

commercial lodging from Oct. 1, 2013 through the end of April was up 5 percent, to 604,400, in comparison with the same period in the 2013 fiscal year. Their spending was 9.9 percent higher.

Condominium rentals are included in the data, Virginia Haley, president of VSC, has pointed out.

In the comparisons for April alone, direct spending was up 13.1 percent year-over-year, while the total economic impact had risen to \$158,448,700 in comparison to \$140,076,400 for the same month of 2013, the report shows.

Revenue per room increased 20.4 percent, according to the year-over-year statistics for April, with the average room rate at \$184.82

Our ‘Sota Visitor (FY ‘13)

| Visitor Origin | |
|------------------------|---------|
| Florida | 218,300 |
| Southeast | 87,550 |
| Northeast | 200,140 |
| Midwest | 216,020 |
| Canada | 49,800 |
| Europe | 102,920 |
| Markets of Opportunity | 54,270 |

| Visitor Profile | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Length of Stay (Days) | 6.5 |
| Number in Party | 2.7 |
| Travel with Children | 26.8% |

| Purpose of Trip (Multiple Responses) | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Vacation / Getaway | 79.4% |
| Visit with Friends/Family | 25% |
| Business Travel / Conf. / Mtg. | 14% |
| Special Event | 8.5% |

in April this year compared to \$160.46 in the same month of 2013.

The information is compiled by Research Data Services Inc. of Tampa for the County Commission and VSC.

Haley appeared before the County Commission on July 9 to present her business plan and budget proposal for the 2015 fiscal year, which the commissioners accepted as a matter of formality. She told them she would be back before them in September for formal approval of her budget prior to the Oct. 1 start of the new fiscal year.

CHANGES AFOOT

Among other facets of her report, Haley noted that since she and her staff began a marketing focus three years ago to support all the direct air service to Sarasota-Bradenton

International Airport (SRQ), the number of visitors to the county who flew directly to SRQ had risen from 16 to 22.6 percent.

Haley also reminded the board members that VSC will be leaving its Chidsey Building home later this year. "Because of signage and other issues," she said, "we've seen [the number of people stopping at the facility] in the last year slowly plummet every month."

In a May 12 letter she sent to the county's Facilities Services Office, Haley wrote that her organization would be terminating its sublease of the Chidsey Center on Dec. 12. "We have struggled with the City of Sarasota for proper signage at the location since August of 2009 and can no longer continue to operate a visitor information center in a location that is not only difficult to access, in desperate need of upgrades to sidewalks and facilities; but



*Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, addresses the County Commission on July 9.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

with no proper signage other than [Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)] signposts, visitors simply cannot find us.”

Haley told the commissioners she hoped to be able to make an announcement this week about the new downtown Sarasota location for VSC. (That information was not available prior to deadline for this article.)

The county’s tourism office also will have a presence in the Mall at University Town Center, which is set to open in October, Haley reported. The expectation is that the organization will be able to reach 12 million to 15 million people a year at that site, she said, giving it the opportunity to encourage many of those people to drive through the

Revenue Comparison of Fiscal Years 2012, 2013 and 2014
Collections through 6/30/2014

| | FY 2012 | FY 2013 | FY 2014 | FY 2013/2014 Difference |
|---------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| October | 666,496.56 | 705,969.12 | 757,135.74 | 51,166.62 |
| November | 727,993.86 | 766,952.00 | 815,486.57 | 48,534.57 |
| December | 858,296.99 | 1,011,569.37 | 1,217,730.86 | 206,161.49 |
| January | 1,539,320.96 | 1,635,767.14 | 1,866,752.14 | 230,985.00 |
| February | 1,883,554.17 | 1,958,464.61 | 2,209,499.48 | 251,034.87 |
| March | 2,552,245.73 | 2,721,636.32 | 2,940,098.63 | 218,462.31 |
| April | 1,393,505.86 | 1,300,411.29 | 1,724,529.43 | 424,118.14 |
| May | 903,989.87 | 984,943.16 | 1,121,009.87 | 136,066.71 |
| June | 1,070,213.57 | 1,166,417.13 | | |
| July | 1,086,257.02 | 1,201,244.88 | | |
| August | 741,868.75 | 836,331.37 | | |
| September | 565,197.07 | 586,618.89 | | |
| Totals | 13,988,940.41 | 14,876,325.28 | 12,652,242.72 | 1,566,529.71 |

All figures are subject to change following audit and enforcement actions.

Sarasota County Tax Collector
Barbara Ford-Coates

A chart compares Tourist Development Tax revenue collections over the past three fiscal years. Image courtesy Tax Collector’s Office

county instead of stopping only at the shopping center.

When Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson asked specifically where Visit Sarasota County's mall location will be, Haley explained that staff members and volunteers will work at "a large kiosk area" inside the main entrance. Maps will be built into the countertop, she said, and "beautiful photos of the county" will be highly visible above the counter.

When Robinson then asked whether any signage will direct travelers to the kiosk inside the mall, Haley replied that she and her staff are negotiating with FDOT for signage on both the northbound and southbound lanes of Interstate 75 near the University Parkway interchange, as well as a sign on University Parkway and at the main entrance to the mall.

Noting that three of the commissioners are members of the [Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization](#) (MPO), Robinson told Haley, "If we can help with that ... keep us in the loop." Robinson pointed out that FDOT District One Secretary Billy Hattaway regularly attends the MPO meetings.

"We [had] the initial conversation last week [with FDOT staff]," Haley replied.

Finally, Haley told the commissioners that 20 percent of her 2015 fiscal year budget would be allocated to professional services, "which is far below the industry average." That average is 38.8 percent for tourism organizations with budgets of similar size, according to data Haley provided the board.

VSC has 19 staff members and 40 volunteers, a slide in her presentation noted. 



Visit Sarasota County will be relocating from the historic Chidsey Building on the bayfront to a space near the heart of downtown Sarasota. Photo courtesy Sarasota County



Siesta Seen

A TRIAL DATE IS SET IN THE CRAIG SIEGEL CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER BATTERY CASE; COUNTY STAFF IS CONTINUING TO WORK WITH GULF AND BAY MANAGEMENT OVER ISSUES RELATED TO THE STORMWATER PROJECT; AND SIESTA KEY REMAINS AT THE TOP IN TOURIST TAX REVENUE COLLECTIONS



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

A trial date has been set in the Code Enforcement officer battery case involving Siesta resident Craig Siegel, I learned this week.

Sarasota County Clerk of Court records show a jury trial has been scheduled for 9 a.m. on Oct. 27 before 12th Judicial Circuit Court Judge Frederick P. Mercurio. Siegel pleaded “not guilty” on May 6 to a [charge of throwing a bucket of urine](#) on county Code Enforcement Officer James S. Holderby on April 28.

Holderby had stopped at Siegel’s Sandy Cove Avenue property to check on Siegel’s progress in cleaning up debris around the house, according to county records.

On June 3, a related Criminal Mischief charge against Siegel, a misdemeanor, was dropped. Dan Yuter, the assistant state attorney assigned to the case, told me on July 15 that the charge was dismissed primarily because it would be harder to prove that Holderby’s shirt was damaged beyond any further use. The Sheriff’s Office deputy who arrested



Craig Siegel listens to Code Enforcement Special Magistrate proceedings on May 23 in Sarasota. File photo

Siesta Seen

Siegel reported that the shirt was soaked in the incident.

The charge essentially did not fit the crime, Yuter explained. Criminal Mischief counts usually are related more to the breaking of items, such as a cellphone, for example, he pointed out. However, the matter of restitution for the shirt can be addressed during the battery case, he said.

Yuter, by the way, handles the white-collar crime cases for the State Attorney's Office. Therefore, he also is dealing with the larger case against Siegel, in which no action has taken place since Siegel's May 23 arraignment.

In that case, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office charged Siegel — also on April 28 — with 19 counts of Fraud Swindle-Obtain Property Over \$5,000 in connection with rental deals involving his 6537 Sabal Drive house on Siesta Key. Victims across the country say Siegel owes them a total of more than \$53,000 for representing that the house had 12 bedrooms when it has only five. The reduced number resulted from his efforts last year to bring the property into compliance with county and Federal Emergency Management Agency codes.

As for the liens related to the illegal construction, I learned from the Office of the County



Liens reportedly remain unpaid in Code Enforcement cases regarding the Siegel house at 6537 Sabal Drive on south Siesta Key. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

Attorney this week that Siegel still has made no effort to schedule a hearing to reduce the amount, which was \$39,400.09 in one case and \$4,823.93 in the other, according to county staff in early February. If Siegel made no attempt to pay the balances before Feb. 21, spokesman Curt Preisser told me at the time, interest would be added to the amounts.

In settling a lawsuit the county filed against Siegel last year over the Sabal Drive house, County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh told the county commissioners on Feb. 11 that Siegel would be permitted to seek a reduction of the liens, “but it will be up to [Siegel] to

demonstrate the financial hardship required by Sarasota County Code.”

GULF AND BAY ISSUES

When work began anew last year on the Siesta stormwater project next to the public beach, Commissioner Nora Patterson heard [numerous complaints](#) about deleterious effects on the Gulf and Bay Club condominiums in the same vicinity. Among them was that runoff from the project site had led to an area of sand in front of the complex taking on a brown tint.



The contrast between brown sand (right) in front of the Gulf and Bay condominium complex and the usual white quartz sand of Siesta Public Beach was evident in October 2013. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

That stormwater project finally was completed this spring, but concerns remain, Patterson said during the commission's June 25 budget workshop.

"I have heard again ... the brown [sand] hasn't gone away," she pointed out, reminding her colleagues of the "loud complaints" in the past.

Gulf and Bay Club management also has argued that vegetation is growing in an area where it is unwanted, attributing that to project actions as well. However, Patterson noted that vegetation can be a good thing, because it holds the sand in place.

Still, she asked staff to investigate whether the complaints had merit. "I'd like somebody to go take a look, maybe get in touch with the manager ... see if there is some real unusual effect that we don't think is going to go away." She added, "Let us all know what's going on," noting of the Gulf and Bay property, "That's quite a complex, quite a piece of tax base."

"Most definitely, we will have staff look at that," Parks and Recreation Department Director Carolyn Brown replied.

On July 7, Brown emailed the commissioners the following:



The Gulf and Bay Club complex stands in the background of the flooded stormwater project site in early October 2013. File photo

Siesta Seen

“Staff met on site with the representative from Gulf and Bay. There were two items that were of concern: the increase in grassy beach vegetation, and the ditch adjacent to the Gulf and Bay property and the public beach.

“The ... increase in beach vegetation along the Gulf and Bay Club property is something that has occurred naturally. After pioneer vegetation ... becomes established, other native vegetation will recruit, which will provide numerous benefits, such as dune stabilization and wildlife habitat. However, if Gulf and Bay

wishes to maintain an open beach setting, routine beach grooming can limit the growth of pioneering dune vegetation and will maintain a uniform sandy beach.”

She continued, “Beach cleaning permits are issued by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and field permits for local beach cleaning are issued by Steve West [of FDEP’s Office of Beaches and Coastal Systems]. The Gulf and Bay Club is encouraged to contact Steve West for further information about obtaining the proper

SARASOTA COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX

COLLECTIONS BY LOCATION

Collections through 6/30/2014

| | CONSOLIDATED | LONGBOAT KEY | NORTH PORT | SARASOTA | SARASOTA COUNTY | SIESTA KEY | VENICE | TOTAL |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|------------|---------------|
| October 2013 | 17,308.97 | 85,693.27 | 3,037.25 | 295,618.79 | 117,341.25 | 197,679.97 | 40,456.24 | 757,135.74 |
| November 2013 | 22,434.20 | 91,971.41 | 3,131.14 | 307,802.69 | 134,094.62 | 208,020.31 | 48,032.20 | 815,486.57 |
| December 2013 | 48,456.76 | 153,558.06 | 6,719.93 | 384,440.81 | 222,240.38 | 326,081.05 | 76,233.87 | 1,217,730.86 |
| January 2014 | 141,844.36 | 188,055.53 | 7,512.07 | 426,477.66 | 361,272.70 | 511,079.27 | 230,510.55 | 1,866,752.14 |
| February 2014 | 80,759.46 | 219,168.89 | 8,690.76 | 569,830.94 | 393,210.78 | 763,116.02 | 174,722.63 | 2,209,499.48 |
| March 2014 | 67,294.73 | 321,677.63 | 15,694.44 | 753,536.49 | 565,139.86 | 1,013,373.92 | 203,381.56 | 2,940,098.63 |
| April 2014 | 41,555.68 | 194,964.26 | 4,927.69 | 518,420.19 | 246,131.73 | 632,190.70 | 86,339.18 | 1,724,529.43 |
| May 2014 | 15,507.52 | 123,740.04 | 4,779.43 | 399,807.45 | 171,868.09 | 354,932.63 | 50,374.71 | 1,121,009.87 |
| June 2014 | | | | | | | | |
| July 2014 | | | | | | | | |
| August 2014 | | | | | | | | |
| September 2014 | | | | | | | | |
| Grand Totals | 435,161.68 | 1,378,829.09 | 54,492.71 | 3,655,935.02 | 2,211,299.41 | 4,006,473.87 | 910,050.94 | 12,652,242.72 |
| Percentage of Total (%) | 3.44% | 10.90% | 0.43% | 28.90% | 17.48% | 31.67% | 7.19% | 100.00% |

Note: All figures are subject to change following audit and enforcement actions.

Sarasota County Tax Collector
Barbara Ford-Coates

Through the end of June, Siesta Key remained in top place for the amount of county Tourist Development Tax revenue collected. Image courtesy Sarasota County Tax Collector’s Office

Siesta Seen

permitting to clean [its] portion of the beach within the parameters of a current FDEP beach cleaning permit.”

Brown further noted that county staff is working on a management plan for the ditch between the Gulf and Bay property and the public beach. That plan will include some vegetation removal and opening up the area to sunlight, she wrote.

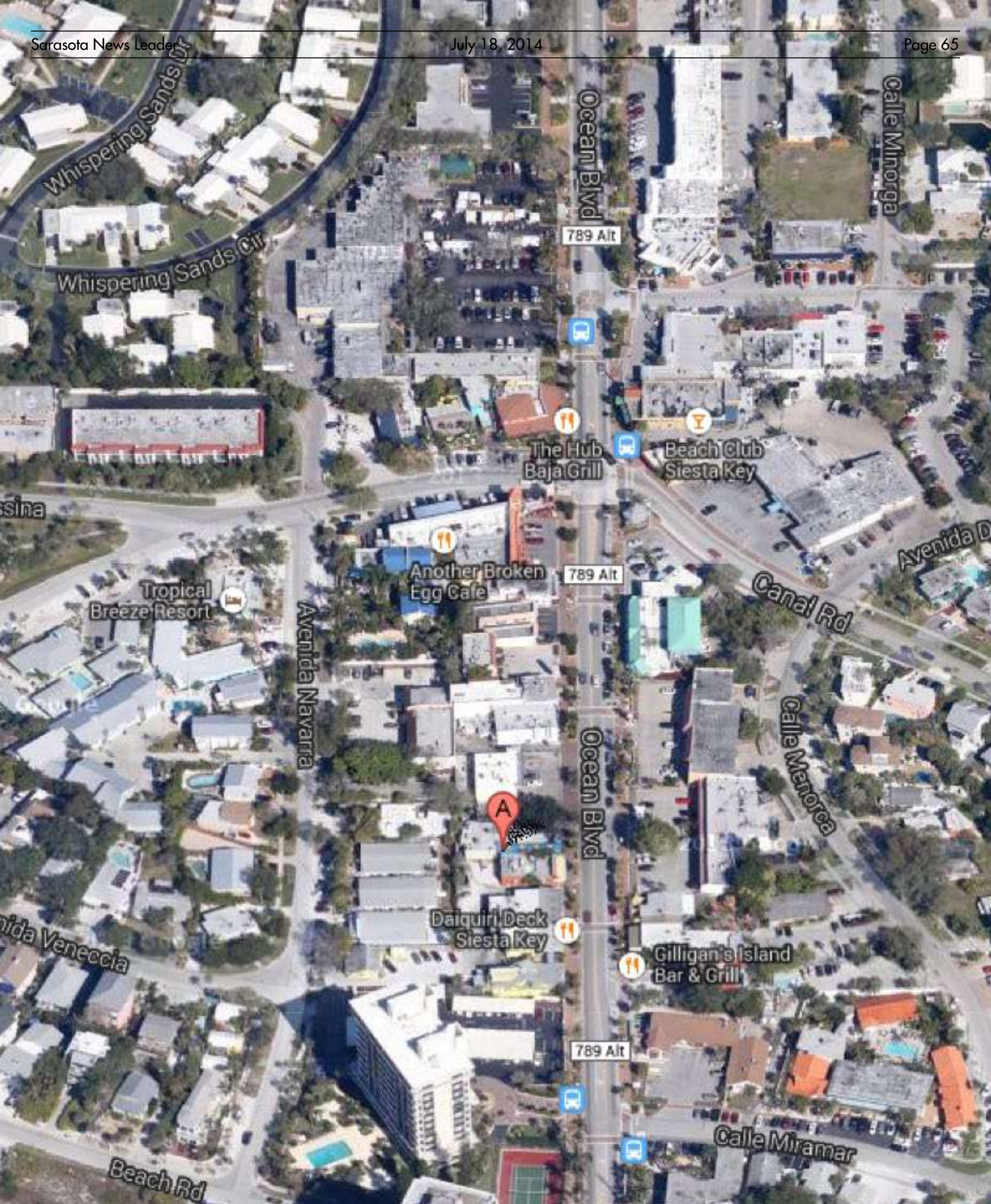
A letter will be sent to the Gulf and Bay Club “explaining the information above in further detail,” she added.

KEEPING THE TOP RANKING

Siesta Key remains in the lead among all county locations for the amount of Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue collected, according to the latest chart produced by the Sarasota County Tax Collector’s Office.



The gazebo in Siesta Village is on the southeast corner of Ocean Boulevard and Canal Road, next to the Beach Bazaar parking lot. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Within Siesta Village, Ocean Boulevard intersects several side streets. Image from Google Maps

Siesta Seen

With collections reported through June 30, Siesta accounted for 31.67 percent of the total, which equaled \$4,006,473.87. As it has for the past few months, the City of Sarasota remained in second place, with 28.9 percent, or \$3,655,935.02. Sarasota County was in third place, with 17.48 percent, or \$2,211,299.41.

A SPEED LIMIT ISSUE

In a July 2 email from County Commissioner Patterson to the county's chief engineer, James K. Harriott Jr., Patterson reported that she had had a visit from a Siesta resident "who finds it unfair and perhaps in violation of state rules" that drivers entering Ocean Boulevard from side streets may not be aware that the speed limit on Ocean is 20 mph.

The man said he felt that a sign should be erected on each side street just before its intersection with Ocean, she continued, so drivers will be aware of the situation. She added that she expressed to him her concern that such signs would imply the speed limit on each of those side streets also was 20 mph.

Further, Patterson wrote, while 20 mph signs could be put up on Ocean near its intersections with side streets, "you would need a lot of them" because of the number of streets connecting with Ocean.


Her visitor, she pointed out, had told her that deputies sometimes ticket people for driving faster than the posted speed on Ocean, even though the driver might not have gone past a 20 mph sign before the deputy signaled for him to stop.

Patterson told Harriott she would like to discuss the matter with him and wondered how other jurisdictions handle such a situation.

SPEAKING OF VILLAGE TRAFFIC ISSUES ...

Ever since the county put up the four-way stop signs years ago at Ocean Boulevard's intersection with Avenida Messina and Canal Road, drivers regularly fail to come to a halt. According to discussion at the July 1 Siesta Key Village Association meeting, tourists also evidently are confused about the traffic pattern at that spot.

Kay Kouvatsos, co-owner of Village Café, pointed out that "people ... still try to make a circle around that four-way stop," which is adjacent to the gazebo.

Although one can pull in and out of the parking area for Beach Bazaar on the south side of the gazebo, the road does not make a loop there. 

SHARE





Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent is reminding citizens about the need to register by July 28 if they wish to vote in the Aug. 26 primary. Image from morguefile.com

VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE NEARS FOR AUG. 26 PRIMARY

Sarasota County residents must be registered to vote by Monday, July 28, to be eligible to cast a ballot in the primary election on Aug. 26, Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent has announced.

To register, one must complete a Florida Voter Registration Application, a news release explains. Applications are available at Supervisor of Elections' offices, city halls, county libraries, county offices and social service agencies, the release notes. They also may be downloaded from the Supervisor of Elections (SOE) [website](http://www.soe.org).

Further, Dent recommends that voters visit the SOE website to verify their registration and precinct information prior to going to the polls. "Just click on 'Voter Information' in the main menu and then select 'Voter Lookup' or 'Precinct Finder' and follow the easy instructions," the release points out.

A voter who has moved, had a name change or needs to update his or her signature since the last election may do so by completing a Florida Voter Registration Application, the release says. Voters may call the Supervisor of Elections at 861-8600 for assistance or for more information.

SMH NAMED U.S. NEWS' 'BEST HOSPITAL' IN SOUTH FLORIDA

Once again, Sarasota Memorial Hospital is the only hospital in the region to make the grade on *U.S. News & World Report's* annual *Best Hospitals* list, the hospital has announced.

Not only was Sarasota Memorial “ranked among the very best hospitals in the nation” for gynecological care in 2014-15, *U.S. News* also ranked it among the top five hospitals in Florida and No. 1 in southern Florida for overall care, a news release points out.

The *Best Hospitals* rankings, now in their 25th year, “recognize hospitals that excel in treating the most challenging patients,” the release adds. Sarasota Memorial’s chief medical operations officer, Dr. Steve Taylor, “attributed the

hospital’s consistently high rankings to the exceptional expertise and dedication of its entire team — from physicians and nurses to leaders, staff and volunteers throughout the health system,” the release continues.

“We are honored to be recognized among the nation’s best hospitals. It means as much to us today as the first time we made the list 10 years ago,” said Taylor in the release.

In *U.S. News's* 2014-15 *Best Hospitals* rankings, Sarasota Memorial rose to No. 30 in gynecological care (up from No. 48 last year). The hospital also was recognized nationally as a “high performing” facility in eight specialties, an increase from six last year: cancer (new



An aerial view shows the Sarasota Memorial Hospital complex in late 2013. Photo courtesy Sarasota Memorial Hospital

this year), diabetes and endocrinology, gastroenterology and gastrointestinal surgery, geriatrics, nephrology, orthopedics, pulmonology, and urology (also new this year).

On a state and metropolitan level, *U.S. News* ranked Sarasota Memorial No. 1 in the Sarasota-Venice-North Port-Bradenton region and No. 5 (up from No. 6 in 2013) among all 265 Florida hospitals for overall care, the release notes.

U.S. News evaluated hospitals in 16 adult specialties and ranked the top 50 in most of them, the release explains. Just 3 percent of the nearly 5,000 hospitals that were analyzed for *Best Hospitals 2014-15* earned national ranking in even one specialty, the release adds. The rankings are available at health.usnews.com/best-hospitals and will appear in the *U.S. News Best Hospitals 2015* guidebook, available in August.

SELBY LIBRARY TO HOST ITS SECOND PLATO'S CLOSET FASHION DASH

On Saturday, July 26, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Youth Department at Selby Public Library in downtown Sarasota will host its second annual Plato's Closet *Fashion Dash*, the library has announced.

The event will feature clothing exchanges along with a fashion show at 1 p.m. and live music. The exchanges, which are for young men and women, will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and again from 2 to 4 p.m., organizers say.

At its 6513 S. Tamiami Trail location in Sarasota, Plato's Closet invites people to bring in gently used brand-name clothing and accessories. Buyers assess the items and then make offers "based on style, condition, brand and the store's current stock levels," the store's [website](#) notes. People can use the payments they receive for items in the store or just leave with their cash, it adds.

All ages are welcome at the July 26 event, organizers point out.

Last year, library staff tells *The Sarasota News Leader*, dozens of teens left with free outfits perfect for the school year.

The library is located at 1331 First St., across from Five Points Park.



Among the sponsors of the *Fashion Dash* are Sarasota County, ALSO Youth and the Woman's Exchange.

PUBLIC INVITED TO RETAIL MARKET ANALYSIS PRESENTATIONS

The public will have three opportunities on Monday, July 21, to attend a presentation detailing the results of a recent retail market analysis commissioned by the City of Sarasota, the city has announced.

Robert Gibbs, an internationally renowned retail market expert who conducted the analysis, will present his findings and recommendations at the following times and locations, a news release says:

- 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., SRQ Media Studio, City Hall Annex, 1565 First St. Sarasota.
- 2 to 2:30 p.m., St. Armands Key Lutheran Church, 40 N. Adams Drive, Sarasota.

- 6 p.m., Commission Chambers, City Hall, 1565 First St., Sarasota.

The 6 p.m. presentation will be part of a regularly scheduled City Commission meeting, the news release points out.

Gibbs was contracted to study the optimal business mix in four locations: downtown, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way corridor, St. Armands Circle and the Rosemary District, the release notes. "The analysis was conducted with the upcoming opening of The Mall at University Town Center in mind and possible actions needed to maintain healthy, vibrant retail districts within the city limits," the release adds.

Gibbs Planning Group Urban Economic and Planning Consultants

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GPG is considered one of the foremost urban retail planning consultancies in America. For more than two decades, GPG's expertise in commercial development and sustainable town planning has been sought by some of the most respected mayors, highly regarded architects, and successful real-estate developers in the country.

A recognized leader in the real estate industry, GPG has pioneered development of the sustainable and community-oriented principles of Traditional Town Planning and Smart Growth. Responsible planning, however, is more than assembling coherent urban villages or walkable neighborhoods. GPG believes that sustainable development and vibrant community life are only possible with a vital commercial life, and that new and old towns alike need intelligent strategies for their survival. Since its inception, GPG has been active in developing innovative yet practical methods for applying modern trends in commercial development to more than 500 town centers and historic districts here and abroad.

GPG's retail planning excellence lies in advising public and private sector clients on the psychology of commerce - the practical science of analyzing and adjusting all elements known to affect a shopper's mood in the marketplace. GPG is renowned for

TEMPLE-TO-TEMPLE EXCHANGE A STORY OF SHARING AND SUPPORT

Twenty-three years ago, Temple Sinai received a Torah on loan when it organized as a brand new congregation in Sarasota. This summer, as the Kehillah of Lakewood Ranch begins its own schedule of Shabbat services and Torah study, Temple Sinai is lending it one of the congregation's Torahs to help the Kehillah congregation get started.

"In a moving ceremony in front of Temple Sinai's ark, Rabbi Geoff Huntting explained the stories behind each of the temple's Torahs and, in particular, the one being lent to the Kehillah," a news release says. "When Jews want to study Torah," said Huntting, "it is imperative we do everything we can to make that possible. The Temple Sinai board was

unanimous in its support of helping a new congregation get started."

The assembled group sang the *Shehechyanu* blessing together before the Torah was passed to representatives of Kehillah.

"For Temple Sinai to so graciously lend us their Torah represents the true meaning of *kehillah*, 'community,'" remarked Brenda Schimmel, president of the Kehillah. Added Anne Schimberg, Kehillah secretary, "This is a true *mitzvah* for which we are so appreciative."

Though Temple Sinai is affiliated with Judaism's Reform movement and the Kehillah is a Jewish Conservative congregation, the



Temple Sinai, a local Reform congregation, is loaning a Torah to the newly founded Kehillah of Lakewood Ranch, a Conservative congregation: (from left) Chazzan Cliff Abramson; Marvin Glusman, Temple Sinai vice president of ritual; Rabbi Geoff Huntting; Herb Schimmel; Ellen Honig; Marty Honig; Anne Schimberg, Kehillah secretary; and Sandy Gladstone. Contributed photo

release notes, both are in a small Jewish community, which means the personal relationships between the clergy and laypeople in the two congregations helped facilitate the exchange.

The Kehillah of Lakewood Ranch meets at The Windsor, an assisted living facility, on the

second and fourth Friday nights of the month and on the first and third Saturday mornings of the month. For more information write KehillahOfLakewoodRanch@gmail.com.

[Temple Sinai](#) is located at 4631 S. Lockwood Ridge Road, off Proctor Road.

YOUTH LEADERS ORGANIZE JULY 25 FUNDRAISER TO ADDRESS HUNGER

[Community Youth Development's](#) SRQVolunteer program participants are inviting members of the community to a spaghetti dinner and bake sale fundraiser on Friday, July 25, from 6 to 8 pm at Bayside Community Church, located at 8200 Bee Ridge Road in Sarasota.

Admission is \$5 or five cans of food, and all proceeds will benefit All Faiths Food Bank, a news release says.

The SRQVolunteer class members decided to focus on addressing hunger for their community service project, the release explains. After volunteering at a variety of area nonprofits, the teens selected All Faiths Food Bank as the beneficiary of their project, it adds.

In addition to obtaining support from Bayside Community Church, "the teens secured a generous donation from Whole Foods Market," which will be supplying pasta, sauce and drinks for the event, the release points out.

SRQVolunteer is a six-session training program during which students create and design their own service/learning project in partnership with a community organization, the release notes. By the program's completion, each participant will have earned 20 hours of community service and developed leadership, problem-solving and group work skills, it continues.

COUNTY HAS ADDITIONAL A SCHOOLS AND REMAINS AN A DISTRICT

Eighteen Sarasota County schools retained their A grades from last year and five schools rose from B to A, according to the grades released July 11 by the Florida Department of Education.

The Sarasota District maintained its overall A grade, one of only 10 of the 67 countywide school districts in the state to achieve the highest grade possible, a news release points out. Sarasota also is one of only five Florida school districts that have received an A every year since 2004, the release notes.

The five Sarasota District schools that climbed to an A grade for the 2013-14 academic year

were Cranberry Elementary in North Port, Garden Elementary in Venice, Gulf Gate Elementary in Sarasota, Imagine School at North Port and Venice Middle School, the release says.

Twenty-three of the district's 40 graded schools received A's, six were B schools and 11 were C schools, the release continues. There were no D or F schools, it adds. Grades for high schools and some schools that combine more than one level (such as middle and high school grade levels) are expected later this year, the release notes.

| School Number | School Name | | 2014 | 2013 | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 | 2004 | 2003 | 2002 |
|------------------------|--|-------|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 0021 | Pine View | COMBO | Pending | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 0293 | Oak Park School | COMBO | NG | NG | F | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 1211 | Laurel Nokomis School | COMBO | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 1311 | Oak Park South | COMBO | NG | NG | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 0012 | Alta Vista Elementary | E | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | B | C |
| 0301 | Ashton Elementary | E | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 1241 | Atwater Elementary | E | C | B | A | A | C | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 0071 | Bay Haven Basics Plus | E | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 0101 | Brentwood Elementary | E | B | B | A | B | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 1271 | Cranberry Elementary | E | A | B | A | A | A | A | A | A | B | A | A | NA | NA |
| 0501 | Emma E. Booker Elementary | E | C | C | C | C | C | B | C | B | B | C | B | B | C |
| 0121 | Englewood Elementary | E | A | A | A | B | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 0131 | Fruitville Elementary | E | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | B |
| 0381 | Garden Elementary | E | A | B | A | B | B | A | A | A | B | A | A | A | A |
| 0461 | Glenallen Elementary | E | C | B | A | A | B | A | A | A | B | B | B | A | A |
| 0261 | Gocio Elementary | E | C | C | B | A | A | A | A | A | B | B | B | C | C |
| 0271 | Gulf Gate Elementary | E | A | B | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 0471 | Lakeview Elementary | E | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 1341 | Lamarque Elementary | E | C | B | A | B | A | A | A | A | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 0171 | Phillippi Shores Elementary | E | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | B |
| 0191 | Southside Elementary | E | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | B | A |
| 1282 | Tatum Ridge Elementary | E | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 0491 | Taylor Ranch Elementary | E | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 1231 | Toledo Blade Elementary | E | B | B | A | A | B | A | A | A | A | B | A | A | A |
| 0201 | Tuttle Elementary | E | A | A | A* | A | A | A | A | A | B | B | A | A | A |
| 0211 | Venice Elementary | E | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 0291 | Wilkinson Elementary | E | C | B | A | A | A | A | A | A | B | A | A | A | A |
| 0085 | Booker High | H | Pending | B | B | B | A | D | C | D | C | C | C | C | C |
| 1251 | North Port High School | H | Pending | B | A | B | B | C | B | C | C | C | C | C | NA |
| 0181 | Riverview High | H | Pending | B | A | B | B | B | A | B | A | B | A | A | A |
| 1391 | Suncoast Polytechnical | H | Pending | A | A | A | B | A | | | | | | | |
| 0051 | Sarasota High | H | Pending | B | A | B | B | C | C | B | B | B | C | B | B |
| 0221 | Venice High | H | Pending | B | B | B | A | C | A | B | A | C | B | B | A |
| 0084 | Booker Middle | M | C | C | C | B | C | C | C | C | B | C | C | C | B |
| 0111 | Brookside Middle | M | B | A | B | A | A | A | A | A | A | C | A | A | A |
| 1261 | Heron Creek Middle | M | C | B | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | C | B | NA | NA |
| 0141 | McIntosh Middle | M | B | B | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | B | B | A | A |
| 0031 | Sarasota Middle | M | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 0451 | Venice Middle | M | A | B | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | B | A | A | A |
| 1291 | Woodland Middle | M | B | A | A | A | A | A | | | | | | | |
| Charter Schools | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 0074 | Sarasota Military Academy | H | Pending | A | A | B | A | C | B | B | B | B | C | NA | NA |
| 0110 | Sky Academy | M | C | B | A | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 0081 | Suncoast School for Innovative Studies | COMBO | C | C | B | A | C | A | B | B | C | B | C | NA | NA |
| 0083 | Sarasota School for Arts and Sciences | M | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | B | B | A | A |
| 0090 | Island Village Montessori | COMBO | A | A | A | A | A | B | A | A | A | A | NA | NA | NA |
| 0100 | Sarasota Suncoast Academy | E | B | A | A | A | A | A | A | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 0102 | Student Leadership Academy | M | A | A | A | A | A | B | A | A | A | C | NA | NA | NA |
| 0103 | Imagine at North Port | COMBO | A | B | A | A | A | C | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 0106 | Imagine at Palmer Ranch | COMBO | A | A | A | B | B | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 0113 | Sarasota Academy of the Arts | | C | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |

2014 School Grades for High Schools and Combination Schools with 9 and 10th grades are based 50% on FCAT and 50% on the new high school accountability

A chart shows Sarasota County school grades from 2002 through 2014. Image courtesy Sarasota County School District

NEW COLLEGE NAMED A *BEST BUY* IN FISKE GUIDEBOOK

New College of Florida continued a year of prominent accolades with its selection as a *Best Buy* college — one of just 44 in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom — in the respected Fiske Guide to Colleges for 2015, the college has announced.

New College has appeared on the Fiske list since 2003, a news release points out. Other noted institutions that made this year's *Best Buy* list are the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Indiana University and Trinity College of Dublin, the release adds.

The Fiske *Best Buy* colleges must meet the guide's criteria for a top four- or five-star

academic rating, and they must be in its moderate or low-price groupings, the release explains. The guide, founded by former *New York Times* education editor Edward B. Fiske, is in its 31st year.

Fiske's review called New College a "fast-rising star," the release says. The review, which draws on both data and interviews with students, said the college's academic program is "rigorous and challenging" and "proves to students that learning can be a self-directed, fun and productive experience," the release notes.



New College of Florida has won another significant accolade. Photo courtesy New College

COMMUNITY LEADERS BREAK GROUND ON BEE RIDGE PROJECT

On the morning of July 11, Sarasota County commissioners and staff joined Bee Ridge neighborhood representatives at Sarasota County Fire Station No. 8, located at 6750 Bee Ridge Road, to break ground for a \$22 million project residents of the area long have sought.

From Mauna Loa Boulevard to east of Bent Tree Boulevard, Bee Ridge will be widened to four lanes. From Bent Tree to Iona Road, the two lanes will be reconstructed. The County Commission approved the work during votes in late May.

The total project covers 2.61 miles. It is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2016, according to a county news release. The contractor is Westra Construction Corp. of Palmetto.

The roadway segment from Mauna Loa to Bent Tree, a distance of 1.68 miles, will be



County Commission Chairman Charles Hines (left), Commissioner Joe Barbetta (second from right) and County Administrator Tom Harmer (right) join Bee Ridge Neighborhood Committee representatives in the groundbreaking. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

reconstructed to a four-lane divided urban roadway with a landscaped median, a 10-foot sidewalk on the south side, bicycle lanes, three roundabouts, landscaping and LED street lighting, the release explains. The Mauna Loa Boulevard intersection will remain signalized, it notes.

The segment from Bent Tree to Iona, a distance of 0.93 miles, will be milled and resurfaced with the addition of bike lanes, a 10-foot sidewalk on the south side, LED street lighting and reconstruction of the Iona Road/Bee Ridge Extension intersection as a one-lane roundabout, the release notes.

During the ceremony at the fire station, attendees heard remarks from Charles Hines, chairman of the County Commission, as well as Commissioner Joe Barbetta, Chief County Engineer James K. Harriott Jr. and Joe O'Hara of the Bee Ridge Neighborhood Committee.



County Chief Engineer James K. Harriott Jr. addresses the group gathered for the ceremony on July 11. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

SHERIFF'S OFFICE ONCE AGAIN PARTICIPATING IN OPERATION CHILL™

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has joined Operation Chill™ again this year, with deputies "ticketing" youngsters through the popular community service program sponsored by 7-Eleven® stores, the office has announced.

Youngsters who are caught in random acts of kindness, good deeds or positive community activities are "ticketed" with free Slurpee coupons, a news release explains. Appropriate "offenses" might include being helpful, wearing a helmet while riding a bicycle or skateboarding, or deterring crime, the release points out.

"Our deputies enjoy interacting with Sarasota County's youth," said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. "Opportunities like these help promote positive relationships and reinforce trust among law enforcement and young people."

Since the program's inception in 1995, more than 12.5 million Operation Chill coupons have been distributed to law enforcement agencies in neighborhoods where 7-Eleven operates stores, the release says. During the upcoming summer months and back-to-school season, children in more than 600 communities are expected to receive free Slurpee coupons, it adds.



Sgt. Todd Williams 'tickets' three children in Venice as part of Operation Chill™. Contributed photo

SHERIFF'S OFFICE CAPTAIN GRADUATES FROM COMMANDERS ACADEMY

Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight has announced that another member of his management staff has graduated from The Florida Sheriffs Institute Commanders Academy.

Capt. Charlie Thorpe, commander of the Investigations Bureau, completed the Academy last week at the Florida Sheriffs Association headquarters in Tallahassee. "Thorpe quickly emerged as one of the class leaders and was elected president by his peers," a news release says. "He also established what is expected to become a tradition for subsequent classes: a moment of silence at the Fallen Deputies Memorial Wall followed by the Pledge of Allegiance."

The Academy was designed by the sheriffs to ensure that members of their command staffs have the background and training to carry out their responsibilities, the release explains. The program was developed in conjunction with the Florida Criminal Justice Executive Institute.


"Participation in The Commanders Academy is beneficial to graduates, our agency and the community," said Knight in the release. "Management regularly faces complex decisions where this kind of leadership and



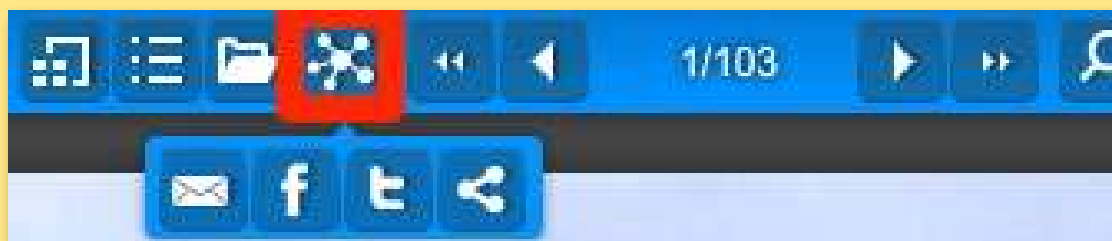
Capt. Charlie Thorpe/Contributed photo

professional development really makes a difference."

The intensive training included 64 hours of curriculum in June and July, the release notes. Topics included leadership, ethics, legislative affairs, effective discipline, labor and personnel issues, fiscal administration, the civil process, courthouse security and jail management.

Maj. Paul Richard and Capt. Jon Goetluck graduated from the inaugural class of the Academy in 2013, the release adds. 

QUICK TIP



Share stories by clicking the  icon in the menubar and choosing to share via e-mail, post to Facebook or Twitter, or many other sharing options.



A member of the Hazardous Devices Unit deals with the object found on Swift Road on July 14. Contributed photo

SUSPICIOUS OBJECTS IN ROAD FOUND TO BE BOWL AND CHICKEN HEAD

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office closed Swift Road in Sarasota near Grand Cayman Street on the afternoon of July 14 while investigating suspicious objects found in the road just before 1 p.m., the office reported.

The Hazardous Devices Unit responded to the scene and found a ceramic bowl containing a chicken head and feathers next to a cylindrical object inside a paper bag, the office reported. When an x-ray could not determine the contents of the bag other than a gel-like substance, the object was destroyed on the scene, a news release adds.

Following a 20-minute waiting period, a bomb technician approached the item and then cleared the scene, the release adds.



A close-up shows the bowl with chicken parts. Contributed photo

FUGITIVES WANTED IN HOME INVASION CASE REPORTED CAPTURED

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, working in conjunction with the U.S. Marshals Florida Regional Fugitive Task Force, has captured two suspects wanted "for the brutal home invasion robbery on Santurce Avenue in North Port last April," the office announced in a news release.

Early on April 25, "two men forced their way into the home and held the victims at gunpoint, bound their hands and demanded their wallets and keys to vehicles parked out front," the release says. When the suspects freed the hands of one of the victims so he could sign the vehicle titles over to the suspects, the victims fought back, the release adds. "There was a long, violent fight between the victims and their attackers," leaving all parties with serious injuries, it continues.

The victims described the first suspect as a tall, heavy Hispanic man with short black hair and a tattoo on his right forearm. They described the second suspect as a young man whom the first suspect called "Junior" several times, the release notes.

Forensic technicians collected evidence, including blood samples, weapons and clothing worn by the suspects. A fingerprint recovered from duct tape was a positive match to Armando Rojas Jr., 16, the release says. Detectives presented photos of Rojas and his father, Armando Rojas Sr., 37, to the victims, and they both positively identified the



Armando Rojas Sr./Contributed photo

father as the first attacker who came through the door, the release continues.

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Fugitive Apprehension Unit developed information that the suspects were living in Pharr, TX, and forwarded the lead to the Texas Gulf Coast Fugitive Task Force, the release explains. Both suspects were taken into custody on July 14. They are charged with two counts each of Home Invasion Robbery with a Weapon, Kidnapping and Grand Theft of a Motor Vehicle. They were incarcerated in the Hidalgo County Jail in Texas to await extradition to Sarasota County.

Press Releases & News Tips
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PROLIFIC OFFENDER CONNECTED TO FOUR AREA BURGLARIES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has connected a prolific offender to four burglaries in which thousands of dollars worth of jewelry and lawn equipment was stolen, the office has announced.

In June, detectives determined Hobert Roberts, 38, of 5186 Indian Mound St., Sarasota, and another man had pawned jewelry stolen from several units at Express Storage on Claxtrauss Drive, a news release says. The two suspects were charged with Dealing in Stolen Property and False Pawn while the investigation continued, the release says.

On July 9, detectives executed a search warrant at Roberts' home as part of their burglary investigation, the release adds.



Hobert Roberts/Contributed photo



Sheriff's Office detectives photographed recovered lawn care equipment discovered on July 9 at a suspect's Sarasota home. Contributed photo



While searching the property, detectives noticed a large white utility trailer in Roberts' backyard with the rear door open, the release notes. In it were two riding lawn mowers reported stolen from a locked storage lot on Palmer Boulevard, the release says. In a nearby shed, detectives found several weed eaters, leaf blowers and tree-trimming equipment, as well as additional property reported stolen from the victim in the June case, the release adds. Further, detectives recovered a

four-wheeler allegedly stolen from a secure, fenced-in Sarasota County government lot, the release notes.

Roberts is charged with four counts of Burglary, and one count each of Grand Theft, Grand Theft Auto and Theft. Roberts has a dozen prior arrests in Sarasota County for crimes including burglary, grand theft, domestic battery and aggravated assault, the release points out.

(Above) This four-wheel vehicle was reported stolen from the Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department. Contributed photo

POLICE WARNING OF RED LIGHT CAMERA CITATION SCAM

Officers with the Sarasota Police Department are warning drivers about a red light camera citation scam.

On Wednesday, July 9, a woman received a phone call telling her she had an outstanding red light ticket violation, a news release says.

The caller, who did not identify himself, told the woman she had to pay the fine by 5 p.m. to avoid having her driver's license suspended and paying additional fees, the release continues. The caller then told the woman to go to the nearest Walgreens, purchase a Green Dot card and load \$87.13 on it. Afterward, she was

to call back with the account numbers on the card, the release notes.

"The woman contacted the Sarasota Police Department to verify the request after she was suspicious she was being scammed," Sgt. Bryan Graham pointed out in the release. "The Sarasota Police Department will never call drivers asking for personal information or ask for a collection of funds."

Anyone with questions regarding a red light camera citation may contact Graham or Officer John Lake at 487-0022, the release says.

MAN CHARGED WITH DOWNLOADING MORE THAN 500 CHILD PORN FILES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a man who allegedly downloaded hundreds of videos and images depicting children as young as 7 engaged in sexual acts, the office has reported.

Computer Forensics Unit detectives investigating Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) determined the IP address for 4036 Crockers Lake Blvd., Apartment 926, Sarasota, was used to download 504 files that were previously identified as child pornography, a news release explains.

Detectives then determined that John Dickie, 51, was the sole resident of the home and obtained a search warrant, which was executed on the morning of July 9, the release notes. When detectives conducted a preliminary computer forensic scan, they found 63 child pornography images, the release says. Many of the file titles included the term, "PTHC" for "Pre-Teen HardCore," indicating the children shown were under the age of 13, according to the report.



John Dickie/Contributed photo

Dickie is charged with 50 counts of Possession: Sexual Performance by a Child. Because at least one of the pornographic images contains sexual battery of a child, it meets the criteria for an enhancement to a second-degree felony, the release points out.

ACCREDITATION TEAM INVITES COMMENTS ON SHERIFF'S OFFICE

A team of assessors from the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation (CFA) will arrive Tuesday, Aug. 12, to examine all aspects of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, including policies, management, operations and support services, the office has announced.

The assessment team's verification that the agency meets the Commission's approximately 260 standards is part of a voluntary process for becoming re-accredited, which occurs every three years, a news release explains. The assessors will review written materials, interview individuals and visit places where compliance can be witnessed.

As part of the on-site assessment, agency members and the general public are invited to offer comments about the ability of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office to meet CFA standards. Comments may be submitted to CFA, P.O. Box 1489, Tallahassee, FL, 32302 or emailed to info@flaccreditation.org. A copy of the standards is available through the Office of Professional Standards, located at 2071 Ringling Blvd. in Sarasota. The local contact is Lt. David Parisi, whose number is 861-4057, the release adds.

The CFA Assessment Team leader is Sgt. Jon Kinney of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office; his fellow team members will be



Photo #1 Main S.O. Administration Facility – Sarasota County Justice Center. Shared with Courts, State's Attorney offices & P.D.



Photo #2 Public Entry to the Justice Center on Ringling Blvd. Corrections (Jail) to the left.



Photo #3 Civil Counter @ Entry Lobby.



Photo #4 Front Desk Stations @ Entry Lobby.

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has numerous facilities on Ringling Boulevard in Sarasota. Photos courtesy Sarasota County

Deputy Will Stone of the Seminole County Sheriff's Office and Lt. Marie Clark of the Florida State University Police Department, the release notes.

After the Commission's assessors complete their review, they report back to the full Commission, which will then decide if the agency is to receive accredited status, the release adds.

"It is important to note that in addition to CFA accreditation of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, the Sarasota County Jail

is accredited by the Florida Corrections Accreditation Commission (FCAC), and Public Safety Communications is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement (CALEA) for law enforcement dispatch and the National Academies of Emergency Dispatch (NAED) for medical and fire communications, the release points out.

In 1996, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office was the first law enforcement agency in Florida to become fully accredited by the CFA, the release notes.

CLERK ARRESTED A SECOND TIME FOR SELLING SYNTHETIC DRUGS


The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a store clerk for the second time in a little more than a month after learning he was continuing to sell synthetic drugs, the office has announced.

Undercover detectives made two controlled buys from Tipu Ali in June and executed a search warrant on July 9 at Beneva Tobacco & Beer, located at 1295 Beneva Road in Sarasota, a news release says. Members of the Special Investigations Section found seven 10-gram bags of AK-47 in a gun box under the counter and one bag of Angry Birds hidden behind a cigarette sign, the release notes. "Both are synthetic cannabinoids, a controlled substance that is also banned in Sarasota County," it adds.

Ali, 27, of 1050 Capri Isles Blvd., Apt. P303, Venice, was arrested and charged with Possession with Intent to Distribute Synthetic Cannabinoids, Violation of County Ordinance and Possession of Cocaine. During a search of his vehicle, the release continues, detectives also found a small baggie of cocaine behind the rear built-in child seat.



Tipu Ali/Contributed photo

At the time of Ali's arrest on May 28, detectives found more than 80 packages of the synthetic cannabinoid sold as "OMG" and seized \$18,000 in cash, the release says. 

OPINION



THE 2014 RINO REVOLUTION

EDITORIAL

Among the mossback faction of the Republican Party, no sobriquet is considered more pejorative than “RINO” — an acronym for “Republican in name only.” The “true believers” of the party (i.e., right-wing zealots who make up the party’s core) hurl this epithet at any Republican they feel does not pass their ideological purity test.

But for those who are registered as Democrats or with no party affiliation (NPAs) — given the Republican stranglehold on local elected offices — the term RINO can be a badge of honor ... and a pathway to participation in our somewhat-flawed democratic process here in Sarasota County.

For whatever reason, the local Democratic Party does little or nothing to identify qualified

prospective candidates for public office or to encourage those individuals to run with both organizational and monetary support. Instead, only the occasional crank or gadfly typically files to run as a Democrat, offering a Hobson’s Choice to other Democrats who usually only can vote — or not vote — for the Republican on the ballot.

To make matters worse, the local Democratic Party earnestly urges local Democrats to vote for such unlikely, unelectable candidates *because* they are Democrats. One would hope that, in the 21st century, so-called “Yellow Dog Democrats” would be extinct, but they appear alive and well in the Democratic Party leadership in Sarasota County.

So it is up to Democrats and NPAs to be proactive in ensuring their say in the next

OPINION

round of Republicans elected to open county offices. And that can be accomplished quite simply by changing one's voter registration to Republican by July 28.

That action will allow all such RINO Democrats and NPAs to vote in the Republican primary on Aug. 26, particularly as it relates to the selection of two new county commissioners to replace Joe Barbetta and Nora Patterson, who are barred by term limits from seeking another term. (Yes, we are assuming that the general election will have no impact on these primary results.)

Democrats and NPAs in Sarasota County already are aware that almost every election affords them only the opportunity to select the lesser of evils, in the hope that the county and state can survive until the next election, at which time more painful non-choices can be made. But we must not let such defeatist thoughts deter us now. By changing our party affiliation to Republican *en masse*, we at least could minimize the impact of the more onerous choices on the primary ballot by electing the least objectionable candidate.

The political status quo has yielded several Republican candidates over the years who could be considered RINOs, as they perhaps believed taking on that mantle was the most expedient means of gaining election. Former County Commissioner Jon Thaxton could be considered a good example.

Despite serving on the County Commission as a Republican, he was a strong defender of the pristine environment in the county. Were he still on the commission, he would be fighting to block developer-led efforts to undo the county's 2050 Plan.

More important, he could have benefited from mass defections to the Republican Party prior to his primary showdown with incumbent Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent.

In a perfect world, where Republican legislators had not subverted the will of the people by hamstringing the open primaries constitutional amendment, Democrats and NPAs would have been able to cast their ballots in the Thaxton-Dent primary alongside Republicans, since no Democrat or NPA candidate had filed for the general election.

But a local Republican political operative had his daughter file a sham write-in candidacy to close the primary to Democrats and NPAs. Then the predominantly right-wing membership of the local Republican Party handed the nomination to Dent, despite a steady airing of legitimate concerns about her administration of her office.

If Democrats and NPAs, to combat this undemocratic subterfuge, had re-registered as Republicans and voted in that primary, it is likely Thaxton would have prevailed in the primary and become the next supervisor of elections.

Today, however, voters face an even

It is up to Democrats and NPAs to be proactive in ensuring their say in the next round of Republicans elected to open county offices. And that can be accomplished quite simply by changing one's voter registration to Republican by July 28.

OPINION

greater threat to the economic and environmental health of the county. The current county commissioners have been responding to their developer overlords by systematically dismantling the county's 2050 Plan.

That plan provides several key protections for new development in the eastern part of the county, but the most important provision is something called "fiscal neutrality." In a nutshell, it requires developers to pay for infrastructure costs that result from those new projects, such as roads, water and sewer capacity and schools. These costs are to be borne by those responsible for them, not by existing county taxpayers.


Developers absolutely hate this provision — and its impact on the huge profits they hope to make on their new (and often unneeded) developments — and they have done everything in their power to have that fiscal neutrality provision rescinded. If they are successful, it could result in millions of dollars in infrastructure costs being forced onto other taxpayers ... just so the developers can make more money.

In the primary coming up in August, the Republican candidates for the two open districts have made their positions clear. In each district, one candidate has supported preserving the 2050 Plan as it is, especially fiscal neutrality. The other candidate in each district has accepted tens of thousands of dollars in campaign donations from developers, and has dutifully indicated a desire to gut the 2050 Plan, giving free rein to developers ... and, one must presume, a whopping future tax bill to ordinary county taxpayers.

By changing one's Democrat or NPA affiliation to Republican by July 28, one can vote in the Aug. 26 primary for the two candidates who have made it clear they do not want to change the 2050 Plan. Otherwise, the right-wing core of the Republican Party and the big bucks developers are showering on their chosen candidates will result in certain death for the 2050 Plan and the environmental integrity of the eastern part of the county.

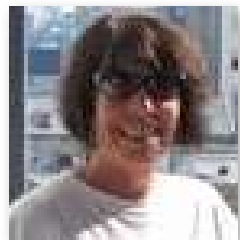
It is a simple matter to change one's party affiliation. Go to SarasotaVotes.com and download the Voter Registration Application. If your registration is otherwise up-to-date, check the box at the top for Record Update/Change, complete all of the other information on the form, including checking "Republican" for party affiliation. Then sign and date the form, and return it to the Supervisor of Elections Office by July 28. And if it bothers you to be identified as a Republican, simply go through the same process after voting on Aug. 26 to change your affiliation back to Democrat or NPA.

It is a shame that the Legislature resorted to chicanery to frustrate the will of the people, who passed the open primaries constitutional amendment almost two decades ago. However, at least this registration option remains open to voters to participate, to the greatest extent possible, in the electoral process here in Sarasota County.

So change your party affiliation to Republican. Vote on Aug. 26 for the candidates who will be more beneficial for Sarasota County. And embrace RINO as a proud symbol of your determination to preserve democracy in your county. 

OPINION

NEW TECHNOLOGY MAY BE AN AID, BUT NEVER BE A REPLACEMENT, FOR SOME WAYS OF DOING THINGS



By Harriet Cuthbert
Contributing Writer

COMMENTARY


I have a new tablet. I am using it to write the first draft of this article. It was a present from my son, and I will be forever grateful to him.

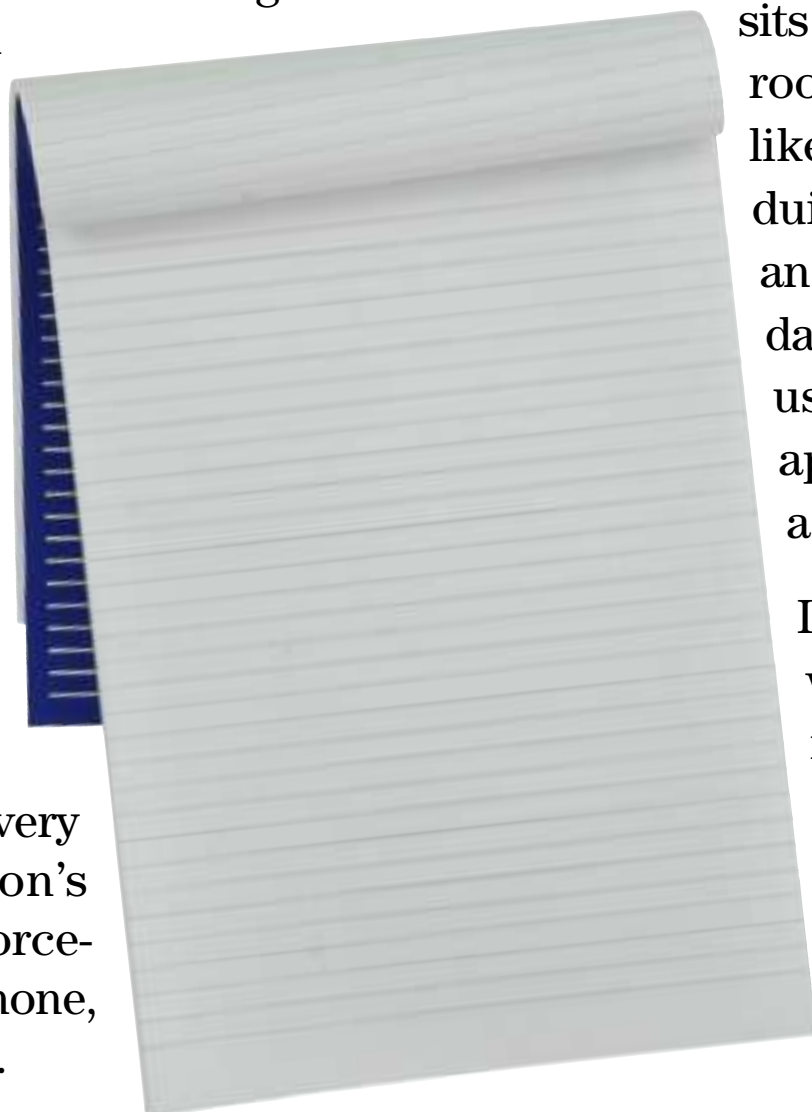
The tablet was not exactly a present in the literal sense of its being a special item I requested, nor is it the equivalent of a fantasy trip on a yacht. It was more like a donation. The company for which my son works distributed beautiful, navy blue, 8-inch by 12-inch padded writing tablets to its managers as thanks for a job well done. And I could not be happier with it. Yes, the firm's logo is embossed on the cover, but I have chosen to ignore it.

I am sure my son did not want to just dispose of this well-designed and expensive-looking product, even though he knew he would never use it. After all, this is the Cyber Age, and it seems every thought on every person's mind gets immediately forced into a PC or a smartphone, or at a minimum, a tweet.

On the other hand, I think best when I write everything down on lined paper, double-spaced, with lots of room for edits. I like the feel of the paper and I like to watch a page fill with my writing. The act of putting down my thoughts on paper is even more natural for me than hitting letters on a keyboard to compose a thought. I am used to the notebook format and I am comforted by it.

However, this very user-friendly tablet that sits silently on a chair in my bedroom has, surprisingly, become like a journal — a kind of conduit for my thoughts and also an easy way for me to record a day's events. Without question, using it is much more therapeutic than simply hitting a keyboard.

I think having a beautiful writing tablet is a wonderful way to encourage and reinforce the pleasure of writing. With all this blank paper around me waiting to be used, I just might write my memoirs. 



OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WRITER APPLAUDS BOB BOATHOUSE EDITORIAL

To the Editor:

Well done opinion on Bob's Boathouse (July 11). The writer indicates near the end that if Bob's Boathouse (BBH) continues its flagrant disregard for rules and ordinances that it will become acquainted with the personal injury side of the legal system. I contend that if the

owners of BBH were presented with one of these personal injury lawsuits, their lawyers would be able to show that they are so highly in debt that the injured would not see one penny. BBH knows how to play the system.

Joe Martinez
Sarasota

"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now." — *Chinese Proverb*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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

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

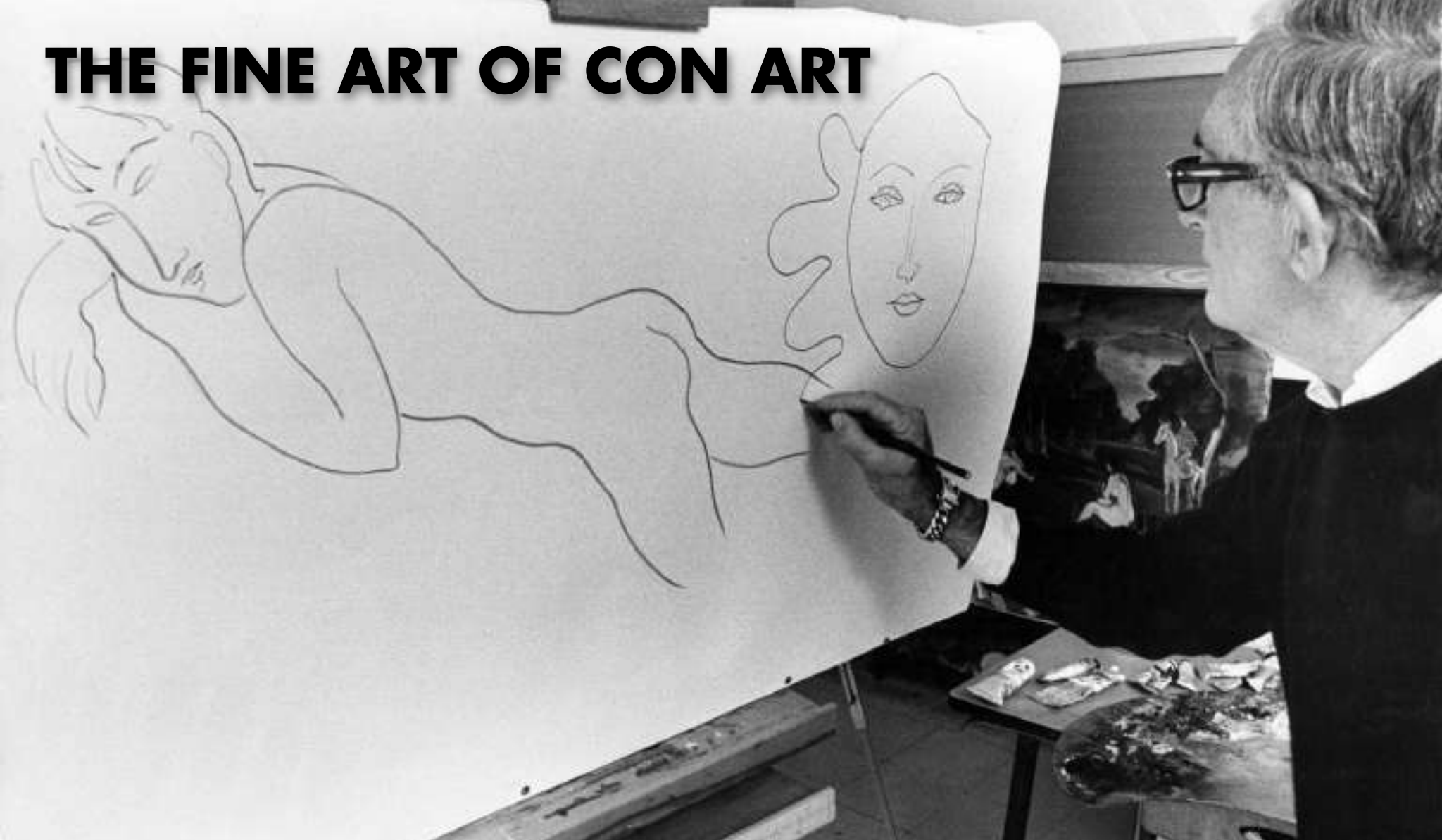
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THE FINE ART OF CON ART



*Elmyr de Hory draws a Modigliani. Hory is among the featured artists in the current Ringling Museum show, *Intent to Deceive*. Photo courtesy of The Ringling Museum*

NOT EVERYONE WHO COPIES THE MASTERS IS OUT TO DECEIVE

By Barbara Dondero

Contributing Writer

It takes skill and cunning to be a con artist. Like magicians, some artists create the illusion that their canvas reproductions are originals — and thrill to the applause, which lulls them into thinking that their brazen acts will live on.

The five con artists in the current Ringling Museum show, *Intent to Deceive: Fakes and forgeries in the Art World*, almost got away with it.

Three of them came to no good end. One committed suicide. One was found dead in an alley in 2000. (The case was never solved.) Another died of a heart attack just as he was to begin serving a prison sentence. (He made

the mistake of passing off his fraudulent Vermeer to a German art dealer, who sold it to Hermann Goring, Hitler's second-in-command; the same Goring who was responsible for plundering European art collections.)

“On the other hand, a happy ending belongs to the living British forger, John Myatt,” says Chris Jones, assistant curator of exhibitions at the Ringling. “When Scotland Yard discovered his activities, Myatt served only one year in jail.”

Jones continued, “The story of another living forger, the American, Mark Landis, is sad, perhaps stemming from a lifelong mental illness. Landis has not been prosecuted

because he only wanted to *donate* his forgeries to smaller museums, [which] were thrilled to possess important works. He relished the interactions with museum directors. Over a leisurely lunch, for instance, dressed as a Jesuit priest — one of his many disguises — Landis explained to a museum official that the painting was “in memory of my mother.”

INTENT

Not all of us who copy paintings intend to be forgers!

When I studied at the Art Students League in New York, I was encouraged to copy the “masters” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. If I could secure permission from the registrar’s

office to set up an easel and paint in the galleries, I would be well prepared to launch a portrait painting career.

Education, rather than forgery, was my intent. “You can’t go wrong imitating the best. Study pleasing color combinations along with composition,” established artists told me. “All the visual challenges have been worked through.”

For one year, on Thursday afternoons, I kept company with the following:

- **Titian** (*Filippo Archinto*, 1556). It was painted just before Archinto was to become Archbishop of Milan. Political and religious turmoil intervened, preventing the appointment.



Eric Hebborn is another artist featured in the show. Photo courtesy of The Ringling Museum

- **Anthony van Dyke** (*Lucas Van Uffele, 1622*). The sitter, a wealthy Flemish ship owner living in Venice, is surrounded by props showing his interest in art, music and celestial navigation.

I also spent time with important figures from the reigns of three French Kings:

- **Phillipe de Champagne** (*Jean-Baptiste Colbert, 1655*). Colbert was superintendent of buildings for Louis XIV. He was responsible for the manufacture of the Gobelins Tapestry and the protection of the arts, including decorative objects for the royal residences. He also developed plans for the Louvre and Versailles.



Barbara Dondero poses with her copy of The Assumption of the Virgin. Photo courtesy Barbara Dondero



John Myatt poses in his studio. Myatt's works also are in Intent to Deceive. Photo courtesy of The Ringling Museum



Barbara Dondero prepares a portrait of Marie de Verriers, copied after the painting by Francois Drouais in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo courtesy Barbara Dondero

- **Francois Drouais** (*Marie de Verriers, 1761*). After a successful career in music and theater, she established a renowned cultural salon during the reign of Louis XV. Perhaps the king's paramours, Madame du Barry and Madame de Pompadour, were discussed?
- **Jean-Baptiste Greuze** (*Compte d'Angiviller, 1763*). Director-general of buildings for Louis XVI, the *compte* advanced the noble style for all the arts in France.

And, finally, I studied the British influence, to which many of our American artists looked:

- **Sir Henry Raeburn** (*George Harley Drummond, 1808*). Drummond, a Scottish Member of Parliament, was also a reckless spendthrift and gambler. After he went bankrupt, he fled to Dublin, Ireland, where he died in 1855.

To avoid confusion about my final products, the registrar stamped the back of each canvas: "METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART **COPY.**"

Years later, I was able to put into practice what I had learned. Goya Foods, then the largest Hispanic corporation in the United States, celebrated 50 years in business by commissioning me to paint a mural. The painting would trace the firm's origins in Spain and include many portraits of the founding family and its close associates.

After the unveiling, I treated myself to a "grand tour" of European galleries and museums. I was excited to follow in the footsteps of the "masters," particularly Thomas Gainsborough, Sir Joshua Reynolds and the American, Benjamin West. Florence was at the top of my list. I met with Dr. Silvia



The finished copy of Dondero's portrait of Marie de Verriers. Photo courtesy Barbara Dondero



Barbara Dondero prepares her copy of the portrait of Lucas van Uffel by Anthony Van Dyke. Photo courtesy Barbara Dondero

Meloni, then director of artistic research at the Cultural Ministry, to ask permission to copy works in the Pitti Palace. I chose Andrea del Sarto's 1527 *Assumption of the Virgin*, displayed in the Palatina galleries near the royal Medici apartments. In the painting, del Sarto included a Medici Pope, Clement VII, as a bystander in the heavenly event.

Before starting to work, I was asked to sign the registry. The security staff members were all aflutter. "We forgot the formal procedure, because it's been such a long time," I was told.


A tapestry-bound volume was brought in and ceremoniously placed on an ornate table. They opened the gold clasp binding parchment pages that revealed signatures of leading 18th and 19th century portrait and landscape painters.

Had *their* teachers told them: *You can't go wrong imitating the best?*

Days later my goose bumps disappeared.

Where did my copies go? Some ended up in an art collector's hands, in lieu of rent. He owned a home on 18 wooded acres, which I minded until it was sold. Happily for me, he accepted these faux canvases, even though they were mere *copies*.

Intent to deceive? Or, in common with some of the artists in the Ringling Museum exhibit, a necessary financial reprieve?

Intent to Deceive: Fakes and Forgeries in the Art World continues at the Ringling Museum until Aug. 2. For more information, visit ringling.org or call 359-5700. 



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When our "Likes" on Facebook reach 1,000, we will randomly select one of our subscribers to receive a new iPad.

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The contest concludes when The Sarasota News Leader achieves 1,000 "Likes" on Facebook. One winner will be selected at random from among subscribers. Only subscribers are eligible to win the iPad, regardless of having "Liked" our page on Facebook. Contest is open only to residents of Sarasota County. Selected winners must provide a valid Sarasota County street address to receive the iPad. Contest is void where prohibited by law.



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 18+ JULY | Players Theatre presents <i>Knowing Me, Knowing You: The Hits of Abba</i> Through July 20; times vary. 838 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$18. Information: 365-2494 or theplayers.org . |
| 18+ JULY | FST presents <i>Becoming Dr. Ruth</i> Through July 27; times vary. Keating Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$34 to \$44. Information: floridastudiotheatre.org or 366-9000. |
| 18+ JULY | Allyn Gallup Gallery presents <i>A Few Great, Big Pictures</i> Through July 28; times vary. 1288 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Information: 366-2454 or AllynGallup.com . |
| 18+ JULY | Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>Clearly Invisible, Magic Up Close with Carl Seiger</i> Through Aug. 3; times vary. John C. Court Cabaret, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$32 to \$36. Information: 366-9000 or floridastudiotheatre.org . |
| 18+ JULY | Banyan Theater Company presents <i>The Styx of the Blind Pig</i> by Phillip Hayes Dean Through Aug. 3; times vary. Jane B. Cook Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$28.50 for a single performance and \$52 for two of Banyan's summer season plays. (<i>Collected Stories</i> by Donald Margulies will be presented Aug. 7-24.) Information: banyantheatercompany.com . |
| 18+ JULY | Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe presents <i>Marvin Gaye: Prince of Soul</i> Through Aug. 10; times vary. 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$29.50, adults; \$16.50, students. Information: 366-1505 or wbttstrq.org . |
| 18+ JULY | Art Center Sarasota presents <i>Florida Flavor</i> 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 . |

YOUR LIFESTYLE GUIDE TO THE SUNCOAST

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 18+ JULY | FST Improv: <i>Out of Bounds Match Up</i> 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 . |
| 18+ JULY | UUCS Presents <i>Jane Shannon: Works in Fabric</i> Through Sept. 4; times vary. Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, Lexow Wing Gallery. 3975 Fruitville Road, Sarasota. Free. Information: 371-4974 or the church website . |
| 18+ JULY | Dabbert Gallery presents <i>Summer Showcase</i> Through Sept. 29; times vary. 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Featuring works by three sculptors, one printmaker, 15 painters, one pastel artist and one photographer. Information: 955-1315 or dabbertgallery.com . |
| 19+ JULY | City of Sarasota presents <i>Vintage & Collectibles Fair</i> July 19-20; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on July 19 and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on July 20. Municipal Auditorium, 801 N. Tamiami Trail. Admission: \$3 for the two-day event; children under 12 admitted free. Forty exhibitors to feature a range of items, including antiques, books, artwork, glassware jewelry and vintage clothing. Information: 954-4165 or Sarasotagov.com . |
| 19+ JULY | Bookstore1Sarasota presents <i>Breakfast Serial Book Club</i> July 19 and each succeeding Saturday during the summer. From 10:30-11 a.m., staffers will read to 3- to 6-year-olds; from 11:15-11:45 a.m., they will read to 7- to 9-year-olds. 1359 Main St., Sarasota. Information: bookstore1sarasota.com or 365-7900. |
| 19 JULY | ALSO Youth presents <i>The Story of My Life</i> 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 . |
| 19 JULY | Venice Theatre Guild presents <i>Twinkle and Rock Soul Radio</i> 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 . |
| 23 JULY | Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>Taking Shakespeare</i> July 23 through Aug. 17; times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$32 to \$36. This will be the play's U.S. premiere. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org . |

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Tonya Herschberger & Linda Keefe

*A smile happens instantly,
its memory lasts a lifetime.*



**Awarded 20 Gold Medals
for Smile Makeovers by
the Florida Academy of
Cosmetic Dentistry.**

Tonya was the nurse who prepped Linda for surgery after she was hit by a drunk driver while walking with her husband and their dog. In spite of her pain and the anxiety that precedes any surgical procedure, Linda gazed up at the nurse and immediately felt at ease. "You have a beautiful smile," she said. That's when Tonya shared with Linda the person responsible for her beautiful smile, Dr. Christine Koval.

For over 25 years, Dr. Koval has been one of the area's most trusted experts in creating beautiful, natural smiles using the latest advances in restorative, cosmetic, laser and general dentistry. Most new patients come to her based on referrals from people who just can't stop smiling.

Linda turned to Dr. Koval to repair her smile and jaw which was so misaligned she couldn't chew her food properly. "Tonya's comforting smile and advice gave me hope and direction," she says. "I'm so grateful to her, and of course to Dr. Koval. Now I have a smile that I love to share with everyone I meet."

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