

**THE SARASOTA**

Vol. 2, No. 46 — August 1, 2014

# News Leader

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# A.K.A. HELP



# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

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# Welcome

Political mailers that have raised eyebrows, School Board construction projects, mosquito control at the height of the rainy season, the city budget, a warm-water bacterium that is frightening some beach-goers, a mangrove destruction case and Bob's Boathouse — yes, it has been another busy week with diverse news.

Add in County Editor Roger Drouin's Q&A with County Commission candidate Shannon Snyder and City Editor Stan Zimmerman's analysis about how the City Commission plans to balance its budget, and you can see there is a lot of depth in this issue, too.

Stan agreed with me last week that this is the busiest summer for news in Sarasota County that he can remember for quite some time.

Still, we have made an effort to look for fresh stories to mix in among the continuing sagas. To that end, I highly recommend Roger's story about the county's mosquito control work and Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker's reports on the political mailer as well as worries about that bacterium in Gulf waters, *Vibrio vulnificus*.

As for me: I joked earlier this week that I am now on the "Special Magistrate beat." You need to attend only one set of Code Enforcement Special Magistrate proceedings to appreciate the dedication of many county employees. During two hearings for Bob's Boathouse on July 25, I saw a lot of faces that have become very familiar over the past several months. Even other cases that are wrapped up with relative ease offer tremendous insight into matters the Code Enforcement staff has to deal with day after day.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*  
Editor and Publisher







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**Maio**  
for Sarasota County Commission

## Defending Our Pro-Life Values

### ABORTION POLITICS HIT THE MAILBOX

#### REPUBLICAN COUNTY COMMISSION CANDIDATE ALAN MAIO FOCUSES ON ABORTION IN DIRECT MAIL PIECE

By Cooper Levey-Baker  
*Associate Editor*

Republican Sarasota County Commission candidate Alan Maio this week brought up a fiercely disputed national social issue — abortion — as a way to introduce himself to GOP voters. The mailer arrives in Republican mailboxes with just a few weeks left in the primary campaign between Maio, a retired businessman, and community activist Lourdes Ramirez.

Digital scans of both sides of the one-page mailer were provided to *The Sarasota News Leader* by a Sarasota voter who asked not to be named. The front of the piece — delivered Monday, July 28 — features an image of

a smiling infant alongside Maio's campaign logo and the slogan "Defending Our Pro-Life Values."

The back of the mailer includes images of Maio and a quote from the candidate: "As the father of three grown children, I understand how precious the gift of life is. I will always stand on the side of life and defend our shared values." The card urges recipients to "Vote Pro-Life. Vote Alan Maio for Sarasota County Commission."

What does abortion, regulated at the state and national levels, have to do with the Board of

*(Above) This shows the front of the mailer. Contributed image*



County Commissioners? *News Leader* reporters who have covered the County Commission in recent years do not recall any mention of the topic at a board meeting.

When asked if the mailing is a response to any particular board action or commissioner statements, Maio tells the *News Leader* the answer is no. There are “no issues involved,” he says. “My only comment on that is that it’s my personal choice. That’s all.” Maio adds that the mailing is only the first in a series of pieces devoted to various beliefs.

Maio’s opponent, Ramirez, tells the *News Leader* she’s putting her effort elsewhere. “I’m focused on what’s happening in our backyards,” she says. “I don’t want to get involved in things that we can’t do anything about.” She doesn’t want to distract herself “from the core local issues.”

The mailing could inspire Republicans opposed to abortion to support Maio’s campaign, but it also risks alienating women. A national Gallup poll released in May found the country almost evenly split on the issue of abortion rights, but the poll identified a major gender divide: 50 percent of women identified as “pro-choice” while only 41 percent described themselves as “pro-life,” almost the exact opposite of men. And according to the U.S. Census Bureau, women make up more than 52 percent of the population in Sarasota County, more than a point higher than the state average.

The Maio flyers are hitting mailboxes as county voters who have requested absentee ballots are beginning to receive them and fill them out. Early voting begins on Aug. 16. **SNL**

**Alan Maio**  
for Sarasota County Commission

*"As the father of three grown children, I understand how precious the gift of life is. I will always stand on the side of life and defend our shared values."*  
- Alan Maio

**Pro-Life Republican Alan Maio**

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- ☒ Believes that life at all stages is precious
- ☒ Will always stand up for the Right to Life

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**Vote Alan Maio for**  
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Paid for and approved by Alan Maio,  
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*This shows the back of the mailer. The News Leader has obscured the address label to protect the privacy of the recipient. Contributed image*





# My Sunday Paper...

# ...two days early!

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

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

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

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

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# HIGH COST OF REMOVING ASBESTOS



*Paul Rudolph, known internationally as an architect whose projects were among the most iconic of those in the 'Sarasota School of Architecture,' designed Building 4 at Sarasota High School. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## WHILE THE SARASOTA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT HAS SAVED HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS ON RECENT MAJOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS, IT HAS HIT A SNAG AT SARASOTA HIGH SCHOOL

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

Although the Sarasota County School Board unanimously adopted [its tentative millage rates and 2014-15 budget](#) after a July 29 public hearing, final approval will not take place until after a second public hearing on Sept 16.

Although the Sarasota County School Board unanimously adopted [its tentative millage rates and 2014-15 budget](#) after a July 29 public hearing, final approval will not take place until after a second public hearing on Sept 16.

Included in the total spending plan is about \$128 million for

capital projects, with \$106,471,168 allocated for work in the new fiscal year.

**“I’ve never had to say to the board, ‘We have a project over budget,’ but Sarasota High will be. ... I blame the vast majority of that on asbestos abatement.**

Scott Lempe  
Deputy Superintendent  
Sarasota County Schools



During a June 17 workshop, the School Board took its last look at the construction projects before adopting the tentative budget.

With formal completion of the Booker



High, Venice High and Sarasota County Technical Institute (SCTI) rebuilds this year, focus will turn to a new classroom building at Fruitville Elementary in Sarasota (\$7 million); the replacement of the heating and air conditioning system and construction of a new classroom facility at Pine View School in Osprey (\$28 million, to be spent over several years); continuing work on the rebuilding of Sarasota High School (\$42,367,288); and the new Sarasota County Technical Institute (SCTI) in North Port (\$13,555,356 over several years, with \$9,555,356 available for the initial work).

New baseball fields on the SCTI campus in Sarasota will be turned over to Riverview High School in late fall or winter, Deputy Superintendent Scott Lempe said. That

plus some site work is all that remains for that project.

“Our expectation is that Riverview will actually play their regular season games for the 2015 baseball season on those fields,” he added.

The district has been renting a field from Sarasota County and the Baltimore Orioles for Riverview’s team to use while work was under way on the SCTI campus, he reminded the board.

## THE SOUR NOTE

Amid generally good news about the capital budget, Lempe pointed out that in his 11 years with the district, “I’ve never had to say to the board, ‘We have a project over budget,’ but



*‘Sun shades’ at Sarasota High also contained asbestos, school district staff reported. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



Sarasota High (SHS) will be. ... I blame the vast majority of that on asbestos abatement.”

The district budget set aside \$800,000 for that work in two campus buildings designed by internationally known architect [Paul Rudolph](#), Lempe said — Building 4, which has served as the administration center, and Building 5, the West Gym. As of June 17, the asbestos abatement had just been completed on Building 4, he continued, and the total expense was about \$1.6 million.

“We found asbestos in the stucco,” he told the board, “and that building has stucco on the entire exterior” as well as in its iconic “sun shades.”

Lempe added, “And [workers are] taking it off with a hammer and chisel and then having to repair the concrete and go back up with a finish that makes it look like Paul Rudolph designed it.”

With work not yet under way on the West Gym, Lempe estimated the expense for all the asbestos removal in that building would be about \$500,000.

“Those two things are going to cause us to bust that budget,” he said, referring to the \$40,356,146 then set aside for the project.

In the 2014-15 tentative budget materials Deputy Chief Financial Officer Al Weidner presented to the School Board last week, the amended budget for the rebuilding of Sarasota High was listed as \$42,367,288. The completion of the work is expected during the 2015-16 school year.

Board Chairwoman Jane Goodwin told Lempe that, based on her experience with construction projects, she always figured on a total about 20 percent higher than the original estimate because of “unplanned consequences.”

Regarding the Sarasota High project, Goodwin added, “It could have been worse.”

“You don’t think about finding [asbestos] in stucco,” Lempe replied, noting that staff thought before the work began that the \$800,000 estimate for the asbestos removal was too high. “That’s a lot of money.”

[The School Board dealt with controversy](#) in 2012 as it planned for the rebuilding of



*Faculty and staff at the rebuilt Booker High School campus in Sarasota welcomed community members for a celebration earlier this year. Photo courtesy Sarasota County Schools*

Sarasota High. Representatives of architectural groups and preservationists urged the board to save the Rudolph buildings at the school because of their historic value in the community. A compromise was reached during a 2012 charrette so the buildings could remain part of the campus.

## **SOME OTHER GOOD NEWS**

The Sarasota High project's higher cost is a direct contrast to the district's experience in rebuilding the SCTI campus. Lempe reminded the board members that when staff first asked representatives of Shenkel Schultz Architecture 10 years ago for an estimate of that expense, they came back with a range whose top was \$200 million. The final amended budget for that project is

\$76,014,736, according to the 2014-15 tentative budget. A note accompanying the figure says, "[I]t is anticipated approximately \$2 million will not be expended" and therefore made available for other capital projects.

"To be able to talk about completing [SCTI] for under \$75 million is incredible," Lempe pointed out. "We never would have thought it was possible."

The tentative capital budget for 2014-15 also shows an expected balance of \$737,763 after the Booker High rebuild is complete. That project, which began in the 2008-09 fiscal year, included \$1,272,686 to reroute Orange Avenue so it no longer split the campus. The capital budget executive summary showed



*The construction of new buildings at Sarasota County Technical Institute began in the 2005-06 school year. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



\$59,178,395 had been spent or encumbered through June 30, 2014.

The district will have \$432,591 remaining after the completion of the Venice High rebuild, the capital budget says. As of June 30, \$87,954,645 had been spent or encumbered for that project.

The City of Venice contributed \$7.5 million toward the construction of the Performing Arts Center, which will be a community facility.

Work on the center is running “a little behind,” Lempe noted on June 17. However, the Venice Symphony already has sold 1,000 tickets for its early November performance in the facility, he continued, “so we have a real hard timeline for opening that [center] up.”

Indications are that all construction workers will be off the Venice High campus by the end of December, he added.

Since the Booker High rebuild was substantially completed, he continued, he has been telling people, “It is the most beautiful campus in our district.” Now, he pointed out, “Venice is going to give [it] a run for [its] money.”

Additionally, a balance of \$47,366 remained after a new heating and air conditioning system was installed in Booker Middle School in Sarasota, Weidner said. The project cost \$9,255,340.

Referring to lower totals than the original estimates for projects, board member Shirley



*A \$9 million project is under way to provide a new cafeteria and art and music facilities at Bay Haven School for Basics Plus in north Sarasota. Construction of the cafeteria is scheduled to begin this summer. Photo by Norman Schimmel*




Brown asked, “Are we seeing that trend coming to an end now?”

Lempe replied that he had just heard from construction industry representatives on that point. “There’s more demand for raw materials,” Lempe said, so that part of the expense is rising. Further, he explained, “During the economic downturn, firms left Sarasota.” Therefore, “that lack of competition ... obviously drives up costs.”

Lempe added that industry representatives had told him to expect an increase between 3 percent and 7 percent a year in overall construction costs.

On one other positive note, Lempe said the new South County Bus Depot, which was completed this year at a cost of \$2,457,400,

should pay for itself within five to seven years because of the projected savings of \$300,000 to \$400,000 per year in fuel costs, maintenance expenses and driver time. Before that facility was completed in North Port, Lempe noted, the district was paying a lot of money for “deadhead” miles between that city and Venice. Lempe was referring to the distance buses had to travel between their first and last stops of the day and the facility where they were stored.

He also told the board that district staff is talking with representatives of Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) about storing buses at the new North Port facility and buying fuel for them from the school district. That would be an example of good local government cooperation, he added, as well as a means of saving taxpayer money. 



*The rebuilding of Sarasota County Technical Institute, including the creation of new ball fields for Riverview High School, will be complete this year. Photo by Rachel Hackney*





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## Q&A: SHANNON SNYDER

*Shannon Snyder sits at the City Commission dais as mayor in 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **A SECOND CITY COMMISSIONER IS VYING FOR THE DISTRICT 2 SEAT ON THE COUNTY COMMISSION**

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

*County Commission candidate Shannon Snyder sat down with The Sarasota News Leader at his home near Arlington Park this week to talk about his campaign. A lifelong county resident and a third-generation Sarasotan, Snyder grew up across the street from where he lives. Snyder retired after serving for 25 years with the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office. He was elected to the City Commission in 2011. In 2013, he was selected by the commission to serve as mayor.*

*The Sarasota News Leader:* What do you think will be the single biggest issue the County Commission will have to deal with after the election?

**Shannon Snyder:** It always starts with the budget. Everything starts with the budget; no matter what you want to do, it always starts with the budget. I think probably infrastructure is going to be the main thing. How are we going to pay for all the necessary improvements — to handle the growth and also to handle replacement and repair of already existing infrastructure? My experience on the



City Commission has been that poor planning can get very, very expensive, and Sarasota County should try to avoid that if they can in the long term.



**SNL:** Why do you want to move from the City Commission to the County Commission? And why now?

**SS:** Well, first of all there is an open seat. That's just an honest answer: There is an open seat. Second of all, what really motivated me was when I saw the county ethics officer [Steve Uebelacker] get fired and escorted from the building. Lack of an explanation. Nobody gets treated that way without having something going on. And I think with all the procurement problems we had and other problems we had and the reason he was brought in, to have him be summarily dismissed is problematic. And my question is: If he was that terrible, why did [North Port City Manager] Jon Lewis hire him to help Kevin Vespia [the police chief] in North Port right away?



**SNL:** There have been three county managers fired, including the ethics officer. The latest is Sarasota County Area Transit Director Glama Carter. How do you feel about these firings as part of this reorganizing?

**SS:** I think it started with [past County Administrator] Randy Reid. When you have someone summarily dismissed by the County Commissioners, who then is immediately hired by the professionals [International City/County Management Association] to represent them, that says a lot for your character. I think that is first and foremost.



*City Commissioner Shannon Snyder listens to discussion about homelessness in the community during a joint meeting of the City and County commissions in June. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

That was a moment; it was a clear example to every [county] employee all the way to the bottom: You will get with the program.

When the top guy is dismissed and then the ethics officer is removed, you're not going to get a free flow of information to the bosses, because, really, they are not the bosses.

We've had problems at the county government, it seems. We've had procurement problems. [County government] seems to be run, in many cases, for a select few, and I think that is pretty evident to most employees. And that is part of the reason why I wanted to get into this race.





**SNL:** So there is perhaps an atmosphere problem within the county?

**SS:** There is no question there is an atmosphere when you see the county administrator removed after a year when you see the ethics officer escorted from the building, when you see a very short dismissal of the SCAT executive — who, by all accounts, was doing a good job [as far as] I could determine — when you have repeated examples to the community, it is a pretty clear example to employees what your role is. It is to not say a word to anyone about anything that might be inappropriate. And I just don't think that's what Sarasota County voters want. I think they want honest, transparent government.



**SNL:** Overall, how do you think Tom Harmer has been doing since taking over as administrator?

**SS:** It doesn't take any talent to be a critic. The guy is doing his job under very difficult circumstances. He was brought in by Randy Reid, which should say something to his abilities. He was able to bring the budget in where it needed to be. But make no mistake, he is doing his job under extremely difficult circumstances.



**SNL:** You were a supporter of Reid?

**SS:** I thought Reid was doing a good job.



**SNL:** Regarding the come-as-you-are homeless shelter, you changed your position. Why?

**SS:** The City of Sarasota has taken on 90 percent of the issues in the county, whether it is

the hospital, mental health beds, counseling facilities. Most of those are inside the city. We couldn't take on the burden of another homeless facility in the city. What we found as we did more research on [homelessness consultant] Dr. [Robert] Marbut and where he said there was a great "whiz bang" homeless shelter, [we] actually [found] increased problems in the [areas] wherever [such shelters were built]. I was trying to be supportive of trying to get something done. But I can tell you more of a moment when I realized we were going down the wrong road. It was when Commissioner [Susan] Chapman — she may have been asking it in a rough way, in my opinion — was asking a legitimate question. "Here is the report you submitted; here are the places you quote. Where is your supportive data on this?" She asked, "Where is the supporting documentation?" It was an honest, straightforward question. He looked at her and said, "You need to make a public records request to Pinellas County Sheriff's Office to ask for that information." ... He basically said, "No, I'm not telling you." ... At that point, I realized what he was handing us was not what we needed, and there was no data to support that this was going to solve the problem.

The Salvation Army might be able to solve some of our problem — some of it, not all of it.

I'm in favor of a jail diversion program, a controlled facility, [not] just having a facility someone flops down at and says, "Yeah, I'll listen to your counselor so I can get out of the rain and get a place to eat." You have the right to pursue happiness, and I support that. It's not the taxpayers' obligation to pay for it,





*As mayor, Shannon Snyder addresses the audience gathered for the city's commemoration of 9/11 in 2013. Photo by Kelly French*



though. I have no problem with a facility for someone who has been in jail for 10 days and they need a place to come to sleep for a few days and get case management, much like [one] program at the jail right now. But this come-as-you-are shelter just to welcome anyone who wants to wander in off the street? No, that is not the taxpayers' obligation. A jail diversion facility would be a lot smaller.



**SNL:** The County Commission recently voted to hold its millage rate steady. Since property values have increased, that means an uptick in taxes for some residents. You voted on the City Commission to keep the city's tax rate flat, too.

**SS:** I have never voted for a millage increase at the City Commission. This year it is flat. It is exactly what it was last year.



**SNL:** Would you have voted to keep the millage rate steady on the county's budget?

**SS:** Yes. We have existing roads that we do not have the revenues yet to repave, and I also don't think our reserves are where they need to be at, according to the county's own website.



**SNL:** As you know, the city and county have not had balanced budgets in the past six years. They used revenue stabilization funds put aside in the good times to cover their deficits, but those funds are now gone or low. How will you balance the county budget over the next few years without reserves? What programs

or departments would be cut? And should reserves be brought back up to a higher level?

**SS:** Bringing the reserves back up is something that should be slow and steady. I have been an advocate about that on the City Commission level, talking about making sure we are prepared if we ever got hit by a storm or some other economic [downturn].

We need to be able to put money back into a reserve fund. The problem is politicians, especially now that we have term limits on the County Commission. They want to get something done, and they only have a few years. Sometimes, though, just being fiscally prudent is the most important thing you can do. That is something I have learned from being on the City Commission.

I point to the Utility Department at the city. There are two things the City Commission really is in agreement on. They want to take the system from a "B" system to an "A" system in the next couple of decades. And they also want to work the system to be debt-free, because we are a built-out system.

I will always be cognizant of the long-term fiscal legacy you will hand off to the next generation.



**SNL:** Nathan Benderson Park has been in the news for different reasons, including securing big tournaments. It briefly lost its ability to solicit donations while accepting significant public funding. Is the park a golden goose or a fat hen?

**SS:** There have been problems with it. At some point that rowing facility will be a good venue ...



Sometimes I think things have to grow organically. I think when you look at the [Suncoast Aquatic Nature Center Associates] [SANCA contract](#), I sort of laugh. Someone asked, "What do you think about the SANCA contract?" I said, "You know any time any commissioner sits down at the City Commission, you get to hear about what a "sweetheart deal" Marina Jack got. ... When you look at the sweet deal SANCA got, in comparison, it doesn't even hold water.

And I have concerns about traffic up there. I was at the [Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meeting this week]. It is \$72 million dollars, depending on how good the estimates are now, to do that diverging diamond [interchange]. There is

money to do the planning, but if the Legislature says, "No" next year, it is not going to happen before that rowing tournament [in 2017, when Benderson Park will host the World Championships]. You may be years with basically gridlock at that intersection.



**SNL:** Do you think the county should have contributed the amount of funding it did to Benderson Park (\$19.5 million for construction)?

**SS:** No. Once again, it goes to the eight-year term limit. People are rushing to get something done to say, "Look what I did." I think term limits are a good thing, don't get me wrong. But it is inherent of politicians to try to



*Shannon Snyder and Willie Shaw pose on May 16 after Shaw has been elected mayor. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



get something done to hang their hat on. That park probably really needed to have an opportunity to really shake out. You know, start with state and regional tournaments. When you look at what they are trying to accomplish, I think I would have walked before I tried to run, from an operational standpoint.

In the long run, the amount of rowers that are going to come into this community, the demographic and income that the average rowing family will have, is a great demographic to go after. I'm not saying don't go after it. What I am saying is what they probably should have done is gone a little slower and really ... [found] out where the problems are ... After 15 or so years of ... collegiate rowing, they could say, "Hey, here is the economic impact. Boom," not "We promise all this economic impact."



**SNL:** Do you support the diverging diamond?

**SS:** I think over time that project will be successful. I think there is one in Georgia everyone is pretty much happy with. Much like roundabouts, people will have to get used to it. People weren't wild about roundabouts, but I can't imagine anyone saying an intersection like Webber [Street] and Honore [Avenue] isn't a much more efficient intersection because of the roundabout. I just think we put the cart before the horse as far as development goes.

You are going to have such dramatic infrastructure needs with that [Mall at University Town Center] and the area around there, and with the changes from [Sarasota] 2050. You are going to see a race out Fruitville Road with subdivisions because of the changes.



**SNL:** Do you think the County Commission has handled the rewriting of [Sarasota 2050](#) well?

**SS:** They gutted it. They gutted what this community agreed to.

And I think the big issue it is going to set up is that with all of those infrastructure needs, you now end up with competition for infrastructure dollars inside Sarasota County ... If we had stayed on the current [2050] Plan, it would have given us 10 or 15 years ... to catch up on infrastructure in Venice, and you would have seen that interconnectivity around Venice and Laurel Road, and then we would have gone to Englewood and North Port.

The way 2050 was set up before, you would be moving slowly out Fruitville Road [with growth]. Now all of a sudden that has been thrown out the window and it's whoever gets to the trough first. When you have 50,000 homes going up out east of Interstate 75 on Fruitville Road, you are going to have competition for infrastructure dollars.

What I am afraid of is five or six years out, what you end up with is a battle between North County and South County. ... The northern counties — Hillsborough, Pasco, Polk — had the water wars in the '70s and '80s. We are going to end up with the same problem, with infrastructure wars over dollars for roads, sewers, parks. We are going to be politically divided between north and south.





**SNL:** Should the idea of SCAT privatization be explored further?

**SS:** Currently, SCAT is 80-percent funded by ad valorem taxes. For the most part, Sarasota County taxpayers are paying for [the bus system]. I am all in favor of mass transport in dense areas or if you are running a shuttle from point A to point B. From serving on the [MPO](#), I can understand transit issues from that standpoint. But when you see massive empty buses running all night across the county, at some point, you have to ask, “Are we doing this because we are moving people, or are we doing it because we want to feel good about it?”



**SNL:** You were opposed to the county leasing Warm Mineral Springs to a private contractor

for 50 years. What would you like to see happen at Warm Mineral Springs?

**SS:** I was the one who wanted to put in a provision in the city charter that any leases over 10 years have to go to the voters. We are going to own it forever. Why are we rushing to develop it? The rush wasn't something the community had bought into. ... It was bought with environmentally sensitive lands money, which is what the darn money was meant to be spent on. And then you are trying to sell the development rights off. The county had their agenda. North Port had enough of it, and to their credit, they stood up to the county.

Why don't we have some nice slow conversations, instead of “This is our plan and if you don't like it, you are an obstructionist.” **SNL**

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## MORE THAN SPRAYING

*Matt Smith, mosquito manager for Sarasota County, holds one of the county's sentinel chickens. All photos by Roger Drouin*

### WITH PEAK MOSQUITO SEASON UNDER WAY, THE COUNTY'S MOSQUITO MANAGER USES A VARIETY OF APPROACHES TO DEAL WITH THE REGULAR TINY BITERS AND MONITOR FOR THE POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ONES

By Roger Drouin  
County Editor

Matt Smith, mosquito manager for Sarasota County, holds a chicken named Mellow Yellow. Mellow Yellow, however, has not been living up to his name on this particular morning. He has been acting a little unruly with his fellow fowl in one of the county's 13 sentinel chicken flocks.

Finally, he settles down in Smith's arms.

Mellow Yellow really has no reason to be tense, even though he has an important job.

He and the other sentinel chickens are used to detect for mosquito-borne diseases such as West Nile Virus, St. Louis Encephalitis and Eastern Equine Encephalitis. Each county flock has five to eight chickens, and those flocks are spread out among sites near schools,

wastewater plants, swamps and parks — typical mosquito breeding grounds.

"The viruses do not hurt the chickens," Smith said. Their immune systems

**“** *We want to do what we can to make sure what we are doing [to control mosquitos] is not harming the environment.*

Matt Smith  
Mosquito Manager  
Sarasota County

**”**



generate antibodies to fight the infections. If antibodies show up in routine testing, health officials can warn residents to avoid mosquitoes, and mosquito control units can better focus their efforts on the areas near the locations of the affected birds.

The technique is not new. Sarasota County, along with other counties in Florida, has been using it for more than 30 years.

This is the middle of peak season for mosquitoes — which runs from May to October — and the sentinel chickens are just one of the approaches used to keep the insects, and the diseases they can carry, in check.

The county is also implementing cutting-edge technology to combat mosquitoes, such as a device that uses ultrasonic sound (18 to 30 KHz) to kill mosquito larvae without the use of chemicals.

The device costs around \$7,000, and it is part of Smith's effort to make Sarasota County's mosquito management "as environmentally friendly as possible."

Smith showed a *Sarasota News Leader* reporter Wednesday morning, July 30, how the device worked, turning it on and dipping it into the creek behind his office. Fish appeared to swim round it unaffected.



*The ultrasonic device costs around \$7,000, and it is part of Smith's effort to make mosquito management 'as environmentally friendly as possible.'*



Typically, after heavy rains, mosquito swarms can be detected in ditches. In the past, workers had to spray a chemical into the water every week to keep the insects at bay. But now those county employees can use this device to kill larvae before it grows to the adult stage.

In the long term, Smith also hopes using the electric device will prove more cost-efficient than the chemicals.

## MONITORING FOR CHIKUNGUNYA

This rainy season, there is concern about chikungunya, a virus that emerged in Africa. Over the past couple of years, it has spread across the Caribbean, and it is [poised to make its incursion into the continental United States](#).

Only two cases of the virus are believed to have been contracted through mosquito bites in the U.S. Both were reported in southeast Florida.

Smith said the two species of mosquito that carry chikungunya are found locally but in very small populations. The yellow fever mosquito, *aedes aegypti*, and the tiger mosquito, *aedes albopictus*, are capable of transmitting both the dengue and chikungunya viruses. These mosquitoes, which bite during the daytime, are associated with the accumulation of water in man-made containers, such as tires and buckets, which serve as breeding sites.

One Sarasota resident, who lives close to downtown, is believed to have contracted the virus while traveling out of the country. The virus can be transmitted by mosquitoes



Matt Smith points to a map showing various mosquito control areas in the county.



after they have bitten someone with the infection. Therefore, county workers set up traps near the resident's home to see if any mosquitos in that area had the virus. The tests were negative. Mosquito control technicians also walked through the neighborhood to tell residents to drain any standing water, where mosquito larvae could develop.

There have been no reports of anyone acquiring chikungunya in Sarasota County, but Smith said the county is ready to respond to the potential threat of the virus.

Health Department staff suggests residents follow [simple tips](#) to protect themselves from mosquitoes and the diseases they carry:

- Drain any standing water to stop mosquitoes from multiplying. Check around your home to rid the area of standing water,

including containers that hold water where mosquitoes can lay their eggs.

- Flush bromeliad plants with fresh water or use a larvicide (e.g., BTI granules) in the "tank" of the bromeliad to limit mosquito development.
- Cover skin with clothing or repellent. Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing. Always use repellents according to the label. Repellents with picaridin, DEET, oil of lemon eucalyptus and IR3535 are effective. Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than two months.
- Cover doors and windows with screens to keep mosquitoes out of your residence. Since mosquitoes can bite any time you are outdoors, always be cautious.



*The native mosquito fish, gambusia, is already present in most healthy ponds, lakes and canals. These fish provide excellent biological control for mosquitoes in aquatic stages.*



- When possible, stay in facilities with screened windows and doors, as well as air conditioning, to reduce risk of mosquito bites.
- When you are outdoors and mosquitoes are present, wear clothing such as shoes, socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt to cover most of your skin. Infants should be kept indoors or mosquito netting should be used over carriers when mosquitoes are present.

## BEYOND SPRAYING

Smith worked as lead supervisor for the Coachella Valley Mosquito Control District in California and as an entomologist for the Mobile County Health Department in Alabama before he came to Sarasota County in 2013. When he tells people he works for mosquito

management, people usually say, “Oh you’re the guys that spray from trucks.”

“We do that, but there is so much more to what we do,” Smith pointed out to the *News Leader*.

Mosquito control biologists and technicians engage in a lot of monitoring, along with a lot of community outreach.

If a resident calls to report a lot of the annoying biters in a location, a technician will often advise the resident about how to reduce the insect population, and then the technician will set up a trap that uses carbon dioxide to attract mosquitoes.

In-house lab technicians and biologists will count the different species of mosquitoes caught in the trap and test for viruses.



*At the county's mosquito control facility, lab technicians count the different species of mosquitoes and test for viruses.*



"We catch them in the field and test them in here," explained biologist Calvin Hancock in his county office.

Hancock showed the *News Leader* a sample of how a positive test for West Nile would be indicated in genetic imaging of the mosquitoes.

Smith is also embarking on figuratively new terrain uncommon to many mosquito management agencies. He is implementing a program to test creeks and rivers to see if the use of pesticides is having an impact on water quality.


"We want to do what we can to make sure what we are doing [to control mosquitoes] is not harming the environment," Smith said.

This week, a biologist at the county's mosquito lab was calibrating new equipment that will

be used in the field to test water quality. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGC) has agreed to partner with the county on the project and fund 49 percent of the costs, Smith noted.

Biologists are also working on an initiative to breed the native mosquito fish, *gambusia*, on-site. The fish can then be given to residents, who can put them in newly dug ponds, livestock tanks or rain barrels.

In 2012, the Sarasota County commissioners voted to increase the tax rate for mosquito control for the first time since 2003. It was a testament to the importance of the activities.

One goal for Smith is to build up a healthy reserve fund within his budget so if a hurricane strikes the area and leaves a lot of standing water, he will have the necessary money to ramp up efforts to ensure mosquitoes are monitored and controlled. 



# MONTHLY MEETING

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*5615 Midnight Pass Road, Room F*

## The Electoral Process: How It Works In Sarasota

*Please join us as we welcome guest speaker Kathy Dent  
Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections*

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# TAPPING RETIREES' BENEFITS



*In September, the City Commission will hold public hearings on the 2015 fiscal year budget. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **WITH THE LAST OF THEIR 'RAINY DAY' RESERVES NEEDED TO PLUG A HOLE IN THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR BUDGET, THE CITY COMMISSIONERS LOOK TO A DIFFERENT SOURCE TO SHORE UP THE GAP IN THEIR 2015 SPENDING PLAN**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

At the end of two long budget workshops on Wednesday, July 23, and Thursday, July 24, the Sarasota city commissioners approved a tentative overall budget of \$198.9 million for Fiscal Year 2014-15, a 3.37-percent increase over the current year's budget. The city's fiscal year (and the county's) begins on Oct. 1.

City revenues do not equal expenses for the next year. A \$3.9 million shortfall will be made up by a change in the way the city's pays for retiree benefits (see the related story in this issue).

City administration proposes hiring several new personnel in the coming period. Among them would be a civilian investigator for the Police Department's Narcotics Unit, an assistant city engineer, a grants coordinator in the Finance Department, a supervisor for the R.L. Taylor Community Complex's new athletic field, a zoning analyst, another building inspector and a parking garage supervisor/attendant.

Personnel costs will again consume about 80 percent of the city's overall expenditures.



## THE INCOME SIDE

When people think of city taxes, they often think only of the tax on property. Staff recommended, and the commission agreed, to hold the tax rate on property constant at 3.1728 mills. That will raise \$19.3 million, a 5.14-percent increase over the revenue for the current fiscal year. That is because property values — for the third straight year — went up, this time by 5.35 percent for the city overall. However, one area of the city — the downtown tax-increment financing (TIF) district — does not contribute to the general fund; instead, it is limited to paying for improvements downtown. (The city has used TIF revenue to cover costs critics say should have been paid for by the city's general fund.) Thus, the increase in

total revenue is reduced by the amount raised for the TIF district.

Other revenue streams are projected to increase, with almost \$300,000 more expected from the half-cent sales tax as the economy picks up. And the income from the excise tax on electric and water service plus fuel oil is expected to jump almost \$1 million.

The city is still struggling to claw back its property values after a nearly 40-percent drop in the 2009-2012 period. Many cities in Florida (most notably Fort Myers) increased their tax rates to compensate for the drop in property value. Sarasota's rate remained virtually the same, so tax revenues plunged from \$22.3 million in 2008 to \$16 million four years later. This was reflected in a cut of about one-third of the city workforce.



*The city's Parking Department will be seeking an attendant for the new State Street parking garage. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*





*The city's Parking Department continues to run a deficit, as it must pay for personnel to monitor city parking spaces with time limits, including those at Bayfront Park. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



Some city bonds are covered with property tax revenue, and that expense is dropping after the city refinanced the bond for the new police station, saving about 0.0212 mills on tax bills citywide.

A slide shown during the budget presentation indicated 45 percent of property tax revenue paid by city homeowners and businesses goes to the county, 29 percent goes to the School Board, 18 percent goes to the city and 7 percent goes to other taxing authorities (for example, the West Coast Inland Navigation District).

While the property tax base rose this year, other revenue sources saw plummets, especially fines associated with red-light cameras. That fund is expected to drop \$1.5 million. Electric and gas franchise fees are projected down almost \$500,000 in the next fiscal

year, and the communications service tax is expected to be down \$1.1 million.

These shortfalls for the next fiscal year are compounded by shortfalls as the city comes to the end of the current fiscal year. Similar reductions in income are leaving this year's spending plan about \$1.2 million short.

The city manager has proposed a plan to save 10 percent of the city's operational expenses between now and Oct. 1 to make up for the \$1.2 million shortfall. However, the city commissioners did not vote last week to authorize the budget change because the city auditor and clerk protested the reductions, saying, "I wasn't consulted."

The departments reporting to the city manager are cutting their spending voluntarily in



*City staff hopes to use statistics about the percentage of county residents who use the Robert L. Taylor Community Complex facilities to encourage the County Commission to continue to provide operational support for it. File photo*





*City Engineer Alex DavisShaw has been “overwhelmed” with work, necessitating the hiring of an assistant city engineer, her boss says. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



advance of action on the recommended City Commission budget amendment, Finance Director John Lege told *The Sarasota News Leader*. If they waited until the commission makes a decision when it reconvenes on Aug. 18, that would leave a scant six weeks for them to save the money.

In addition to the 10 percent savings by departments, the city will use \$1.1 million from its “revenue stabilization fund” to balance the budget. That is money put aside in better times to buffer any economic downturn. The city has used funds from that reserve to balance its budgets for the past six years in lieu of raising taxes.

However, the expenditure of \$1.1 million to plug the hole in the current year’s budget means the “revenue stabilization fund” is virtually exhausted. It will not be available to help balance next year’s spending plan or a budget for any subsequent year. This is the reason the city will turn to a retiree benefit fund to plug next year’s gap with \$3.9 million.

## EXPENSES OLD AND NEW

While the city’s overall budget is \$198.9 million, the majority of that covers so-called “enterprise funds” that pay for themselves with user fees. The biggest example is the city’s water and sewer fund.

These enterprise funds are separate from the \$59 million “general fund,” which pays for city departments that do not support themselves with fees. The largest portion goes to the Sarasota Police Department, which uses about half the general fund monies for operations and salaries.

Senior police executives appeared during one budget workshop to support the department’s request for \$29.5 million. They also came to ask for replacements for eight officers who are leaving the force. A federal grant program called COPS will pay for the replacements, with a few hitches. The civilian investigator for the Narcotics Squad is anticipated to look at local responses if the medical marijuana referendum passes in November. Police are also seeking an additional \$500,000 for overtime in the coming fiscal year.

The city’s Parking Department is again seeking a \$500,000 “subsidy” to enable its staff to patrol the time-limited parking spaces along streets and operate the city’s parking garages. There is no paid parking in the city. The department this year took over the responsibility for licensing valets and taxis. Parking Director Mark Lyons said he will be looking to raise the application and license fees in the coming year. He also is seeking an attendant to monitor the new State Street garage.

For the record, the City Commission and city manager are not requesting any increases in their budgets.

Neighborhood and Development Services is asking for an administrative specialist to handle the foreclosed property ordinance now in the works. The fees should more than pay for the position.

An assistant city engineer “is my department’s greatest need and the city’s greatest need” said Tim Litchet, head of that department. City Engineer Alex DavisShaw, he said, has been “swamped” and “overwhelmed.” And



Litchet wants to hire another “multi-license building inspector,” with the cost covered by permit fees.

The mowing and landscaping offices are looking for additional resources, too. Staffers are weighing the cost of contracting the work to outsiders or re-establishing a mowing capability in-house. The county outsourced most of its mowing and has suffered significant problems over the past couple of years.

While not an issue for the upcoming fiscal year’s budget, the following year will see a \$320,000 “hole” because Sarasota County’s agreement to help fund the R.L. Taylor Community Complex will expire. The county begrudged the funding, saying it suspected the facility was primarily for city residents. Doug Jeffcoat, director of public works, said this year there are 3,258 “pass holders” for the complex, with 35 percent from the city and 56 percent from the county. The city may argue next year to keep the county budget allotment because more than half of the users are county residents.

Excluding the new requests, the proposed expenses for the general fund budget are \$59.1 million, but the projected revenues are \$56.8 million. That is a gap of \$2.3 million. Add the \$1.3 million requested for new positions, and the budget is \$3.6 million light.

## COVERING THE GAP

Unlike previous years, the city’s reserves are shot. The last remaining reserves are being used to plug the hole in the current budget. Because the handwriting figuratively started to appear on the wall last spring, staff has

been looking for other ways to make the FY 2014-2015 budget balance.

One method used in the past will be utilized again — a transfer of \$250,000 from the solid waste enterprise fund into the general fund. And another \$500,000 could materialize through holding off on hiring new people “and other personnel adjustments.” But all that does not cover one-quarter of the need.

The city commissioners were given two realistic options. With reserves exhausted, they could raise the property millage rate or they could undo a reform they put into effect in 2006 in regard to funding the OPEB, “other post-employment benefits.”

“We need \$3.6 million to balance the budget,” Finance Director Lege said as the two-day workshop came to a close.

Vice Mayor Susan Chapman responded, “I move to reduce OPEB by \$3.9 million and work with an insurance consultant and actuary to make OPEB financially sustainable for the retirees.” The motion to use the retiree account to balance the FY 14-15 budget passed unanimously.

After the budget was balanced, Commissioner Suzanne Atwell moved to accept the staff-recommended millage rate of 3.1728, unchanged from the current year. That motion passed unanimously as well.

The commissioners will return on Aug. 18 to balance their current budget and then they will hold two public hearings on next year’s budget in September.

The entire proposed budget is viewable on the city’s [website](#). 



# SICKENING



*Photo by Tiago Fioreze, via Wikimedia Commons*

## **HEALTH DEPARTMENT ISSUES WARNING FOR WARM WATER BACTERIUM THAT HAS SICKENED 12 AND KILLED THREE IN FLORIDA**

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

News that *Vibrio vulnificus*, a bacterium lurking in the Gulf of Mexico and brackish Florida waters, has sickened two — killing one of them — in Sarasota County has locals worried about entering the water and has prompted the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County to issue guidelines for those concerned about getting sick.

With the news from Sarasota, 12 total cases have now been reported in Florida, all but three of them along the Gulf Coast; three victims have died. Last year, 41 infections and 11 deaths were reported in Florida, none of them in Sarasota County.

*Vibrio vulnificus* lives in warm, salty water and can infect humans who consume raw or undercooked shellfish from areas where it is present. It can also infect those with open wounds, such as cuts, scrapes or lesions, and is particularly dangerous to those who are “medically compromised,” in the terminology of Health Department spokesperson Dianne Shipley. That especially means “people with weakened immune systems, particularly those with chronic liver disease,” according to a fact sheet issued by the state.

The two individuals infected in Sarasota County were each “middle-age and had medical



# ***Vibrio vulnificus (Vv)***

If you have a condition that puts you at risk for Vv, talk to your doctor about how to stay healthy.



## **WHAT IS VIBRIO VULNIFICUS (Vv)?**

- Infection is rare, yet it can be a serious disease caused by bacteria commonly found in warm, brackish and salt water, and in shellfish during the summer months.

## **HOW CAN I GET IT?**

- Eating raw or undercooked shellfish, particularly oysters.
- Exposing open wounds, cuts or scratches of the skin to brackish and salt water.

## **WHO IS AT RISK?**

- People with weakened immune systems, particularly those with chronic liver disease.
- Healthy people may develop a mild infection.

## **WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?**

- Symptoms may include: vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain or fever.
- A skin infection may lead to skin breakdown and skin ulcers.
- The bacteria can invade the bloodstream, causing a severe and life-threatening illness with symptoms like fever, chills, decreased blood pressure (septic shock) and blistering skin lesions.

## **WHAT CAN I DO?**

- Keep brackish and salt water away from open wounds.
- Do not eat raw shellfish, and cook shellfish thoroughly before eating.
- Avoid cross-contaminating ready-to-eat foods with raw shellfish and its juices.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/vibrio/vibriov.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vibrio/vibriov.html)

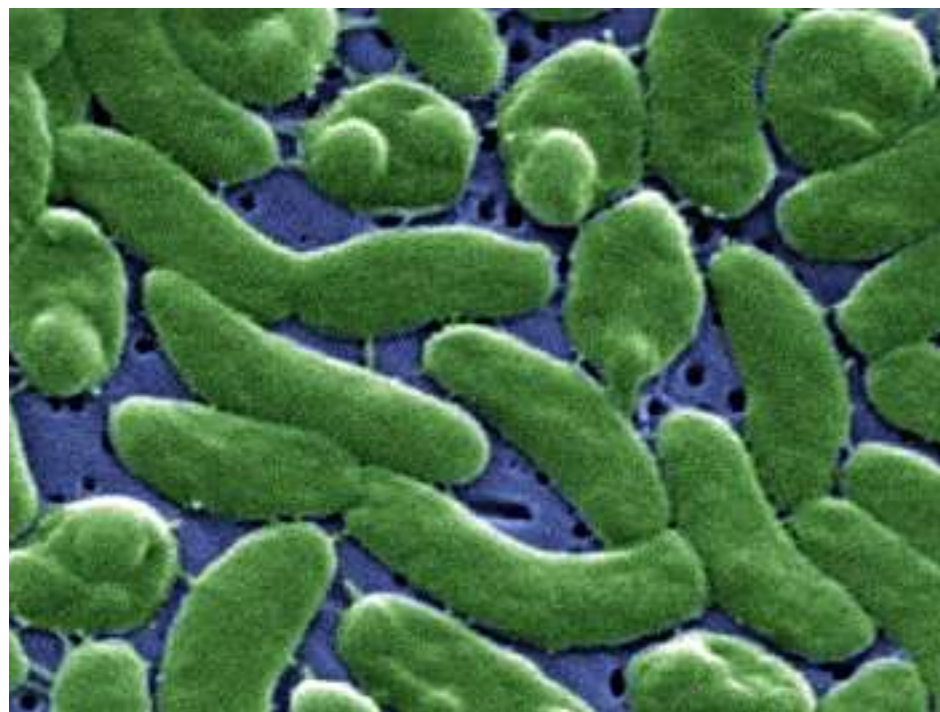


compromising conditions,” according to a statement from the local Health Department. The statement adds that those with “liver disease, including Hepatitis C and cirrhosis, are most at risk for developing serious illness,” while those with “hemochromatosis (iron overload), diabetes, cancer, stomach disorders or any illness or treatment that weakens the immune system,” in particular, should avoid raw and undercooked shellfish.

Little more is known about the two cases reported in Sarasota County. Shipley tells *The Sarasota News Leader* the department is still not exactly sure where the local victims were when they became infected, other than that one was fishing. But the precise location matters little, because Shipley says the bacterium is “everywhere.”


“It’s not limited to one beach or another,” she points out.

*Vibrio vulnificus* is found in area waters year-round, but higher concentrations develop in the warm summer months. Symptoms of infection through a wound include “swelling, pain and redness at the wound site,” according to the Health Department. Consumption of raw or undercooked shellfish, meanwhile, can lead to “nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, fever, chills, and the formation of blistering skin lesions.”



*False color scanning electron micrograph of Vibrio vulnificus bacteria. Image courtesy of Wikipedia*

If you notice any symptoms, Shipley says, “seek out medical care right away.” And if you see a cut that may have been infected, wash it thoroughly and apply antibacterial medication, she advises. The two Sarasota County cases involved infections through “open wounds,” Shipley says. Neither came from ingesting shellfish.

Sarasota County Lifeguard Manager Scott Montgomery tells the *News Leader* that lifeguards working the beach haven’t noticed anything unusual in recent weeks: no scares or concerns. And *Vibrio vulnificus* isn’t keeping tourists and locals away from the water. “Traffic is still the same,” he says. 

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# NO RESOLUTION TO THE DEVASTATION

*County staff photographed the scene after arriving at 8215 Manasota Key Road on the afternoon of Feb. 22. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

## **MONTHS AFTER THEY WERE CITED FOR DESTROYING MANGROVES AND ILLEGALLY BRINGING IN FILL, ENGLEWOOD PROPERTY OWNERS FAIL TO SHOW UP FOR A HEARING AND REMAIN OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE COUNTY**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

A case involving the illegal destruction of mangroves on Manasota Key remains unresolved five months after the incident occurred, with no representative of the property owners having shown up for a Code Enforcement Special Magistrate hearing on July 18, county staff has reported.

In an email to the Sarasota County Commission following that hearing, Matt Osterhoudt, manager of environmental protection in the county's Planning and Development Services Office, wrote

that staff had introduced photographic evidence and testimony to demonstrate that the site at 8215 Manasota Key Road in Englewood remains out of compliance with an order Special Magistrate Robert Zack issued on April 16.

Staff also informed Zack on July 18 that "[it] has received no communication from the property owner since April 21," Osterhoudt pointed out.

Therefore, staff asked Zack to impose the maximum penalty of

**“You can’t even begin to grasp [the damage] until you’re on-site looking at it.”**

Christine Robinson  
Vice Chairwoman  
Sarasota County Commission





\$250 per day as a lien on the property, “based on the nature of the violation and that no good faith efforts to achieve compliance have been taken,” Osterhoudt continued in his email. However, because the April 16 order called for a status hearing on June 20 — which was continued until July 18 — Zack did not impose a penalty, Osterhoudt added. Instead, Zack scheduled a Penalty Hearing for Aug. 15 in South County.

According to a June 20 email from Osterhoudt to the County Commission, one of the property owners, Paul S. Maurer of Cape Coral, had filed a motion asking for the continuance of the case to July 18 because he would be unable to attend the session on June 20. *The Sarasota News Leader* was unable to reach Maurer for comment. Although the April

16 Special Magistrate order listed attorney Robert Lincoln of Icard Merrill in Sarasota as Maurer’s representative, a spokeswoman for the firm told the *News Leader* on July 31 that Lincoln no longer represents Maurer.

The April 16 order identifies all the owners as Paul Maurer and his wife, Lori A. Maurer; and Edward S. Maurer and his wife, Marguerite L. Maurer.

Osterhoudt told the *News Leader* on July 30 that he had heard no update on the case since July 18. “We are on for that Penalty Hearing set in August,” he said.

The Feb. 22 incident first was reported to county commissioners in emails from Manasota Key residents. Board Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson copied staff



*The mangrove destruction is depicted in another photo taken by county staff on Feb. 22. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*



on the correspondence, which prompted Osterhoudt and Howard Berna, an environmental supervisor, to travel to the site and order the work to cease.

During the commission's March 4 regular meeting — the first after the incident occurred — Robinson told her colleagues she also visited the property on Feb. 22. She added that photos emailed to the board members "don't even remotely do [the scene] justice. ... You can't even begin to grasp [the damage] until you're on-site looking at it."

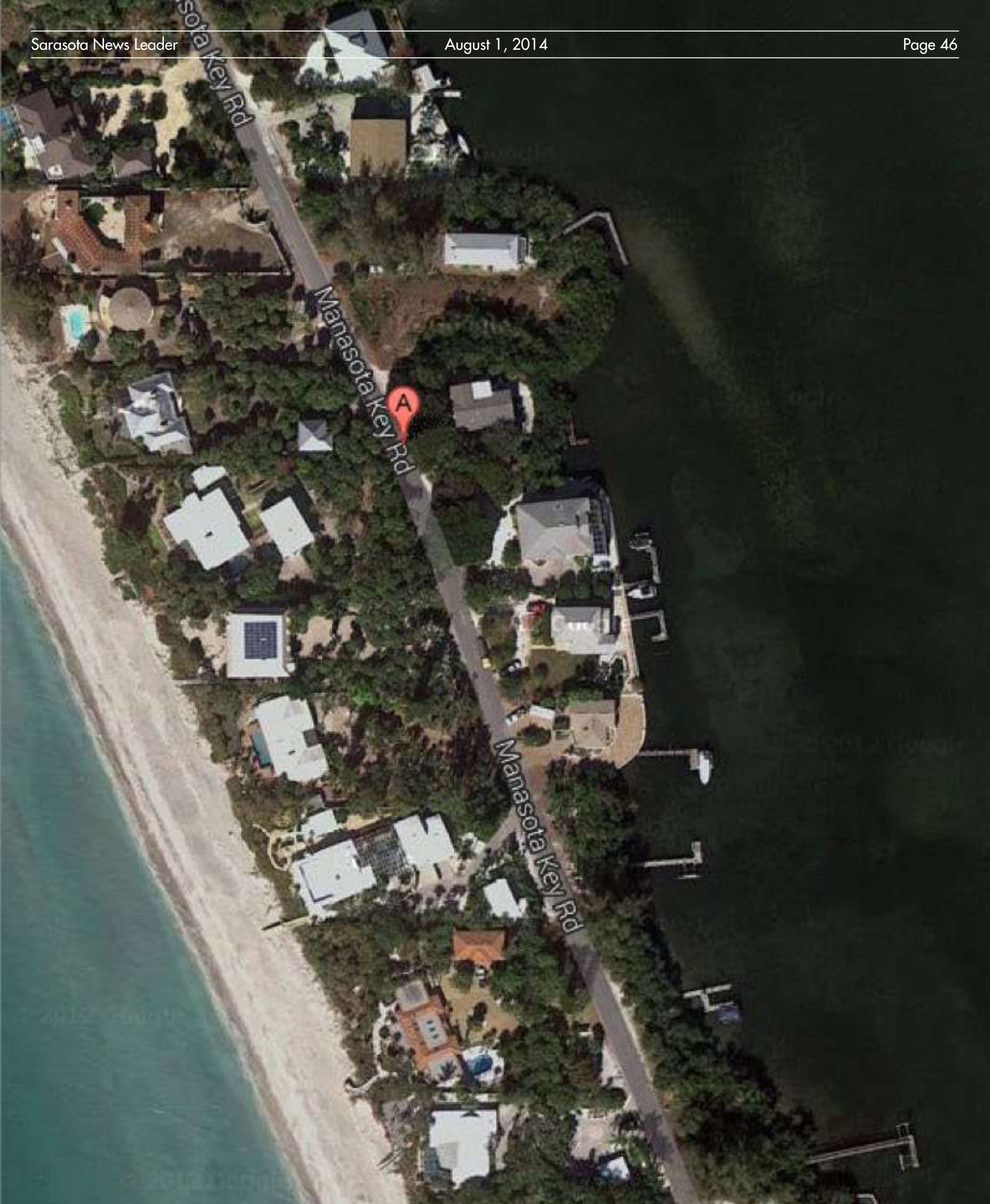
## THE BACKGROUND

David Green, president of the Manasota Key Association, emailed Robinson at 12:24 p.m. on Feb. 22, saying, "This morning at 8215 Manasota Key Road (Lot # 0489-10-0012), a team of landscapers, construction trucks, sand trucks and bulldozer came to the property and started to cut down all the vegetation," including mangroves, and then began to fill in "the wetland or small creek that runs through the property."



*A bulldozer used in the work became stuck on the Manasota Key Road site. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*





*A flag marks the location of 8215 Manasota Key Road in Englewood. Image from Google Maps*



Green added, “My understanding is that the county had previously denied the landowner [a permit] to do the above.”

Green pointed out that the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office was notified, but the officers who responded told residents that “the person in charge” had informed them that the owner had permission from Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) for the work “and that they were exempt from getting a permit from the County.”

Green added that because it was a Saturday, he knew county offices were closed. “And it looks like all the cutting and filling will occur before the [end] of today (Saturday).”

Green included photos of the activity with his email.

Robinson responded that she already had received several emails from other residents about the situation, so she had left a voice-mail for County Administrator Tom Harmer and copied numerous staff members on her reply to Green.

One of those other emails Robinson referenced, which was sent at 10:12 a.m. on Feb. 22, said, “Our neighboring lot owner is cutting and shredding huge amounts of mangroves with no visible permit. Can u help?”

In a Feb. 23 email, Robinson thanked Osterhoudt and Berna for their quick response, pointing out that Manasota Key residents “had pretty much accepted with a heavy heart that the work would continue and get finished because it was a Saturday and county staff was not in the office. Not only



*A photo taken by a Manasota Key resident on Feb. 22 shows workers adding fill to an area where mangroves have been removed. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*



did you surprise them by appearing and getting the work stopped, you went above and beyond by communicating with the neighbors and providing them with information they needed.”

During the March 4 County Commission meeting, Robinson also won consensus from her fellow board members to direct Harmer to review the county ordinance pertaining to mangroves and provide a report on his findings. That report was dated April 15, the day before the first Special Magistrate hearing in the case.

Written by Osterhoudt, it points out that work along the county’s shorelines, including dredging and filling, must be approved by the commission sitting as the Sarasota County Water and Navigation Control Authority (WNCA). That board was established in 1957 through a Special Act of the Legislature that was codified later in a county ordinance.

Osterhoudt further noted, “Earthmoving along shorelines with mangroves also requires owners to meet standards provided in the Sarasota County Earthmoving Ordinance.”

Both the Earthmoving and WNCA ordinances “require the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation of impacts to native habitats and consistency with the Sarasota County Comprehensive Plan, and specifically include the Principles for Evaluating Development Proposals in Native Habitats.”

Those principles, he continued, “indicate that mangrove swamps shall be preserved or enhanced, dredging and filling of mangrove swamps shall be strictly prohibited, and previously cleared mangrove swamps should be restored.”

The enforcement process for violations, Osterhoudt noted, generally includes, in order, a Notice of Violation, an Affidavit of



*Mangroves lie on the ground at 8215 Manasota Key Road. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*



Violation if there is no voluntary compliance, a Special Magistrate Evidentiary Hearing, a Special Magistrate Penalty Hearing and a lien on the property.

The county enables a Special Magistrate “in an ordinary situation to impose a fine up to \$250 per day for the first violation and \$500 per day for a repeat violation,” he added. However, upon the recommendation of a Code Enforcement officer, the fine can go up to \$15,000 per violation “if the Special Magistrate finds the violation to be irreparable or irreversible in nature.”

## THE APRIL 16 HEARING

During the April 16 Special Magistrate hearing, county staff presented testimony and evidence to show that the owners of the

Manasota Key property and representatives of Coastline Tree Services Inc. and Environmental Turnkey Solutions LLC had engaged in “clearing and filling activities [that] resulted in a large area of mangrove swamp being clear cut and several truckloads of new fill material [being] placed on the [property],” Special Magistrate Zack’s order reads. County staff also observed unauthorized fill material on the uplands within the WNCA jurisdictional area, “as well as a bulldozer stuck within the filled wetlands” on the property, the order adds. “No building permit, WNCA permit, earthmoving permit or earthmoving exemption was obtained for these activities,” Zack wrote.

The Maurers testified and presented evidence asserting that their activities were exempt



*A shot taken from a different angle shows the mangroves on the ground and fill that has been brought onto the property. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*



from county regulation “based on pre-emption by various state statutes,” the order says.

After reviewing all the evidence and the “Respondents’ pre-emption argument,” Zack wrote that he found the county had “proven the existence of the alleged violations by competent, substantial evidence” and that the law did not support the property owners’ position.

Therefore, Zack ordered that the Maurers should remove all the unauthorized fill from the WNCA jurisdictional area as well as from property outside that jurisdiction or pursue an “after-the-fact earthmoving permit” to keep the latter fill in place. He further ordered that the Maurers “complete the restoration planting, monitoring and maintenance plan for the altered shoreline and impacted mangrove

swamp habitat,” outlined in a county exhibit provided during the hearing.

## THE OWNERS

According to records of the Sarasota County Property Appraiser’s Office, the Maurers took title of the Manasota Key parcel on July 17, 2009. They paid \$85,000 for it. The sellers were Brian E. Scanlan and Laura J. Scanlan, acting as co-trustees of the BSL Land Trust, which was established on Sept. 29, 2005. The trust’s mailing address was in Redington Beach.

The Maurers’ mailing address was 3315 S.E. 18th Ave., Cape Coral.

The Property Appraiser’s Office valued the parcel at \$63,400 this year, down slightly from \$64,100 in 2013. In 2009, the property was assessed at \$80,500. 

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# ACCREDITATION REVIEW TO BEGIN



*The Sarasota Police Department is located on Adams Lane in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



## CITY'S INDEPENDENT POLICE ADVISORY PANEL TO HOLD A MEETING NEXT WEEK ON THE POLICE DEPARTMENT ISSUE

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

The Sarasota Independent Police Advisory Panel is gearing up to investigate the reason(s) why the city Police Department decided to terminate its accreditation. The panel has scheduled a workshop for Aug. 6.


The group normally meets quarterly, and it depends on individual members to study issues and recommend possible policy changes for the Police Department. This is the first time it has been handed an assignment.

Panel Administrator Peter Graham said the accreditation investigation must comply with Florida's public open meetings law, and the investigation may be assigned to one of the panel members — or the panel could assign it to him, added Graham.

A media dust-up ensued when a member of the department leaked a memo indicating

Chief Bernadette DiPino decided to suspend accreditation after she found some facets of the process with which the department was not in compliance. Since then decals denoting successful accreditation have been removed from city police vehicles.

When the city commissioners met on Monday, July 21, two were ready to grill DiPino over the issue, but they were forestalled by a motion to refer the issue to the police advisory group. The motion passed 3-2, with Commissioners Paul Caragiulo and Shannon Snyder in the minority.

The Independent Police Advisory Panel will meet at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 6, at the SRQ Studio in the City Hall Annex on First Street in downtown Sarasota. The public is welcome to attend the session. 



*Bernadette DiPino is chief of the Sarasota Police Department. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*The Police Department reportedly last won accreditation under previous Chief Mikel Hollaway. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota*



# A BUDGET-BALANCING ACT



*The City Commission is facing significant questions about the future funding of retired employees' benefits. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## ANALYSIS: CITY PLANS RETIREE BENEFITS REVIEW

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

Major changes are coming in regard to the way the City of Sarasota manages its retiree healthcare. One proposal received tentative approval on July 24, when the city commissioners approved a staff recommendation to shift \$3.9 million from a benefit plan to balance the proposed fiscal year 2014-2015 budget.

The other change will take into consideration the impact of the Affordable Care Act on retirees, especially those not yet eligible for Medicare. The city covers a huge percentage of the healthcare

premiums for retirees, up to 84 percent for a family of three or more.

The account used to make the budget-balancing payment is called Other Post-Employment Benefits, or OPEB. The city is responsible for paying those fees into the future, creating what is called “an unfunded liability.” Most cities in Florida use a pay-as-you-go plan to handle OPEB costs, but there was a concern

in the mid-2000’s that the expenses would balloon for medical, prescription and dental healthcare plans. A few cities — including Sarasota, in 2006

“ *We want to look at this as a one-time event and then look at recommendations for other solutions.* ”

Stacie Mason  
Human Resources Director  
City of Sarasota



—began to set aside additional money beyond the anticipated annual cost to provide a hedge against the rising premiums and claims.

The city contributed about \$2.4 million or more every year into that hedge, even as budgets fell during the recession. During a period when one-third of city workers were laid off, the OPEB payments continued. Today, the fund has about \$39 million.

Once the money goes into the OPEB trust fund, it cannot be used for any other purpose. “It’s irrevocable,” said the city Human Resources Director Stacie Mason. In effect, the trust fund is a locked box.

However, for the coming year, to balance the overall budget, the city will intercept OPEB

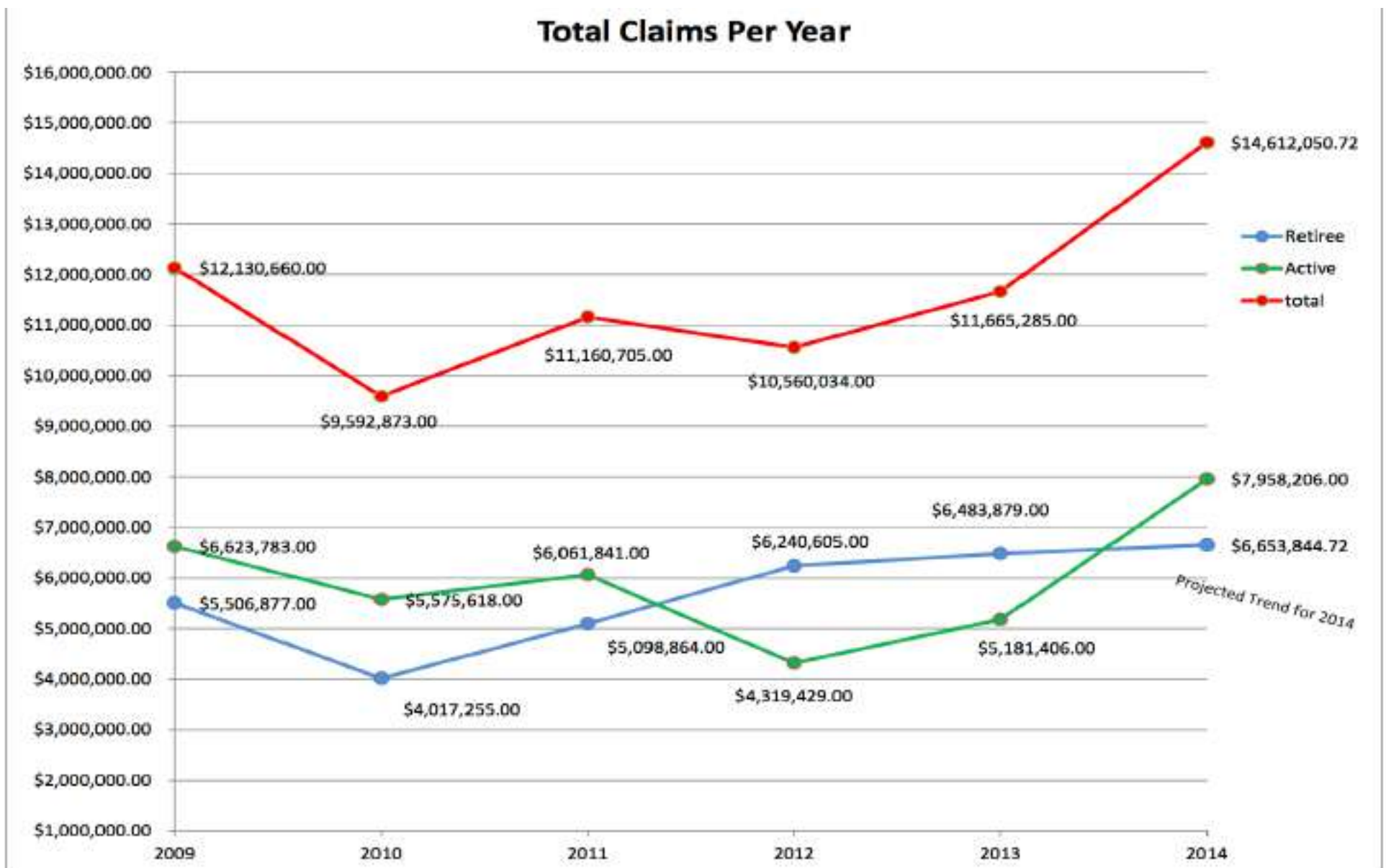
funds before they enter the locked box. Instead, the city will revert to a pay-as-you-go plan for Fiscal Year 2014-2015.

## A ONE-TIME DEAL

Both Mason and the City Finance Director John Lege hope the OPEB diversion does not become regular practice. “I hope it is a one-time deal,” said Lege. They both want to take a year to work with insurance experts and actuaries to come up with a better plan.

“This is not sustainable,” said Mason. “We want to look at this as a one-time event and then look at recommendations for other solutions.”

A new player on the stage is the federal Affordable Care Act, which demands every



*This fiscal year, the city expects to pay more than \$14.6 million in healthcare claims, a big jump from the prior year. While the retiree claims (in blue) have remained fairly constant, claims by active city employees (in green) have jumped almost 60 percent. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*



citizen have medical insurance. “What’s opened up this year are exchanges,” explained Mason to the City Commission. These “exchanges” allow citizens to shop among different plans. That opportunity extends to people with pre-existing conditions that might previously have prevented them from obtaining any health insurance.

Meanwhile, claims against the OPEB “lock box” are rising. A graph used during the budget workshop shows claims jumping nearly \$3 million between 2013 and 2014 to \$14.6 million. “A lot of these claims are coming from our active retirees,” said Mason. “OPEB can only pay for retirees.” Yet, the proposal was put forth to cut the city’s contribution to OPEB by \$3.9 million to balance the budget.

“It’s not sustainable,” Mason reiterated of the recommendation. “Not sustainable in the way the plan was created, which is why we need

to bring forth some recommendations or suggestions. And we need some feedback from the [City] Commission.”

“Part of this discussion needs to be forward-looking, at the unfunded liability,” said Mason. “We’re very unusual because we subsidize the premiums so highly. Nobody else does that.” A retiree with a family plan pays 16 percent of the total premium; a retired couple pays 24 percent.

To couple dollars with those percentages, one line in the OPEB trust account (Fund 684) shows retiree premiums of \$1.3 million. Assuming that is only one-fifth the true cost, the city is paying \$5.2 million per year in subsidies for retired employees’ premiums for health, prescription and dental care plans. “With the premiums we charge, there is no incentive to look elsewhere,” said Mason. “So we’ve never had any movement off our plan

	Advance Funding	Regular Funding	Total Employer Contributions
2007	2,389,099	3,551,625	5,940,724
2008	2,389,099	4,159,856	6,548,955
2009	3,710,941	4,470,389	8,181,330
2010	3,581,474	4,622,203	8,203,677
2011	3,590,941	7,452,698	11,043,639
2012	2,587,744	5,411,461	7,999,205
2013	2,811,727	5,806,023	8,617,750
2014 (Estimated)	2,532,784	6,068,501	8,601,285

*The city has contributed \$26 million in ‘advance funding’ to help bring down the ‘unfunded liability’ of the OPEB account since 2007. This year it proposes to use the ‘advance funding’ to balance the Fiscal Year 2015 budget. The heading for the right-hand column says ‘Employer,’ which refers to the City of Sarasota. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*



because we are extremely affordable. With our subsidies, why should they look elsewhere?”

“We are pulling back from the contribution on top of the pay-as-you-go approach,” continued Mason. “The dedication to this fund is there, maintaining a good plan. It’s a great plan. But we have to take a look at the costs it takes to run this plan.”

“There are a lot of pieces to this,” said Mason. “And one of the biggest pieces we need to focus on is the huge portion of retirees that are Medicare A- and B-eligible. They are on Medicare, and our plan is secondary to them. Their claims are less costly, but they are a huge portion of the OPEB’s liability. We have a lot more people on Medicare than we had in the past.”


Perhaps, more than any other element of municipal finance, OPEB funding is a machine with many interconnected parts. Most cities use a pay-as-you-go plan and ignore the unfunded liability. And perhaps with the increasing use of Medicare and healthcare exchanges, the unfunded liability is eroding away.

Over the next several months, actuaries will look at the long-term implications of city policy variations, and insurance experts will look at the increasing multiplicity of available

plans to determine if any new or even radical changes are showing up on the marketplace.

Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown estimated it could be as late as January before any recommendations emerge from the experts trying to synthesize the city’s desires with the public and private marketplace of health plans. At that time, a City Commission workshop could be scheduled for the board members to study the findings and give guidance to staff for possible changes in direction.

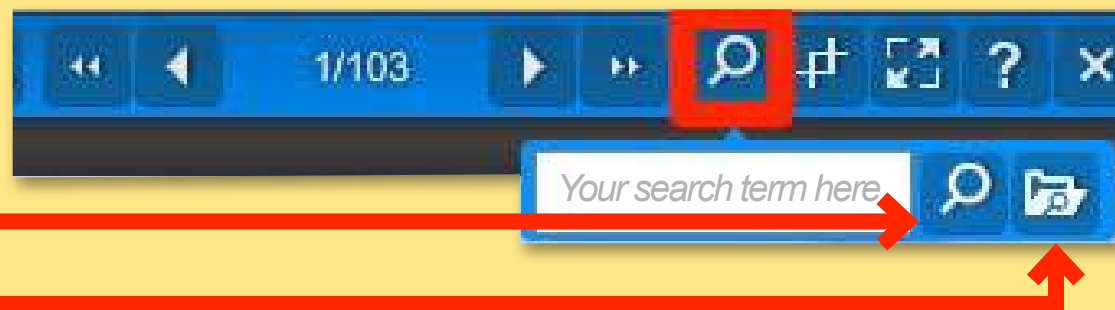
Whether the commissioners realized it or not last week, taking \$3.9 million from the OPEB contribution started a chain reaction with multiple consequences. One is the need to find a way to balance the city budget without resorting to raids on trust fund payments. Another consequence is the need, again, to evaluate long-term consequences in retiree healthcare.

Mason would like to see some form of educational program for the nearly 1,000 city retirees and their dependents who may be asked again to make decisions about their healthcare. “Maybe we should look at an advocate or someone to help the retirees sort through this process and choose, if we get direction to go that way. We need them to have some support. It can be overwhelming looking at all this,” she added. 

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## PENALTIES IMPOSED

*Michael Seery (left) and attorney James Aker confer during the July 25 proceedings. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

### **A SPECIAL MAGISTRATE ORDERS BOB'S BOATHOUSE TO PAY ABOUT \$4,100 FOR FAILING TO MEET HER DEADLINES FOR COMPLETING ITEMS NECESSARY TO OBTAIN ITS CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Pointing out that she could have closed down Bob's Boathouse months ago but elected instead to give it an opportunity to thrive, Sarasota County Code Enforcement Special Magistrate Meg Wittmer on July 25 ordered that the business pay almost \$4,100 in penalties for not completing a "punch list" of items necessary to obtain its Certificate of Occupancy according to a timeline she established on [March 21](#).

"I do have the right to issue a Cease and Desist order," she told Sarasota attorney James E. Aker, who has been representing Bob's Boathouse in the case. "But we decided not to do that. We decided ... let's all of us work

together so Sarasota County can benefit from a successful business, a restaurant."

However, she continued after a two-and-a-half-hour hearing, "There was lots of competent

**“** *I distinctly remember us all sitting at this table and discussing each and every deadline. ... And I said to everyone that day that I was going to hold firm on those dates.*

Meg Wittmer  
Special Magistrate  
Sarasota County





substantial evidence that suggests that the deadlines could have been met, where they weren't."

The March 21 hearing was the first of three regarding a number of actions required under county code for the restaurant to be granted a Certificate of Occupancy (CO).

Two punch list items remained incomplete as of July 25: the recording of the final engineering schematics for Bob's Boathouse and the installation of the county-approved lighting plan. The former was to have been completed 60 days after the March hearing; the latter, within 120 days of the hearing.

The schematics cannot be submitted for recording until after all the punch list items have been finished, according to testimony.

While the lighting plan has been approved, Aker pointed out that the poles and fixtures had to be custom-manufactured, and the owners still are awaiting the arrival of the poles.

When Wittmer asked Aker when the poles were expected on-site, he replied, "I cannot give you a date, your honor. ... I'm not privy to how long it takes to do that work."

After county Zoning Administrator Brad Bailey estimated the lighting should be installed within 60 days, based on his experience, Wittmer scheduled a status hearing for 9 a.m. on Oct. 10 to ensure that all the punch list items have been completed.

In her July 25 order, she fined Bob's Boathouse \$250 for the first day it was out of compliance with her March 21 order and added in a fine of



*County staff signed off on the completion of the watercourse buffer plantings on July 24, an environmental supervisor testified. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



\$20 per day for each item that was not finished by the time she had specified. *The Sarasota News Leader* calculated the total as \$4,090, based on her ruling. The Office of the County Attorney had not released the amount by our deadline this week.

Assistant County Attorney Scott Bossard, who handled the case for the county on July 25, told the *News Leader* on July 28 that standard procedure in Code Enforcement cases calls for the total of a fine to be tallied from

the day after compliance was ordered through the day before the work was finished. For example, the first item on the punch list under the purview of the county's Public Utilities Department was the installation of a fence at the sewage lift station at the rear of the business, which is located at 5515 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. The fence was to be finished by May 20, but it was not installed until June 6. Therefore, the fine would be assessed as \$20 per day from May 21 through June 5, for a total of \$320, according to Bossard's explanation.



*Special Magistrate Meg Wittmer has presided over the case since March 21. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



Asked how long the business owners would have to pay the total, Bossard replied that he had not checked the appropriate statute yet. On July 25, he and Wittmer said they felt the period was 30 days from the date the order is entered into the legal record.

Kevin Burns, the county Code Enforcement officer who handled the case, asked Wittmer to impose a one-time fine of \$250 and a subsequent fine of \$150 per day from May 21 until the date of compliance for each item on the punch list that was not completed within the time frame she set on March 21.

However, Wittmer told Burns and Bossard that she had envisioned a customized penalty because of the different target dates.

Bossard responded that the overarching consideration was that the business still was operating without a Certificate of Occupancy, but Burns conceded, "It's an unorthodox case. ... We want to motivate an end to the situation ..."

"We were encouraged that they've taken some steps to get this done," Bossard added.

"I'm very pleased with the progress everyone has made," Wittmer said.

At various points during testimony provided by county employees and also Sarasota realtor Mike Seery, who described himself as acting on behalf of the business as a friend of the owner, Aker worked to show that misleading comments and insufficient information from



*Howard Berna, environmental supervisor for Sarasota County (left), talks with Assistant County Attorney Scott Bossard on July 25. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



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

**Public Utility Department:**

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

**Natural Resources:**

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

**Land Development:**

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

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

**Zoning Administration:**

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

**Building:**

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

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



county staff had contributed to the delays in the completion of some items. (According to his [website](#), Seery is the founder of Michael Seery & Associates Inc., a real estate firm in Sarasota.)

“I don’t want to make excuses,” Seery told Wittmer, “but this is the domino effect,” adding that he had talked with one staff member in the hallway immediately after the March 21 hearing to start the process rolling to achieve completion of the punch list.

However, Wittmer told Aker later, “There’s nothing that I heard today that was so compelling that would suggest that [Bob’s Boathouse] should be allowed an extension” of time, without penalty, to complete items on the list.

## MAKING THEIR POINTS

At the outset, Wittmer cautioned Aker and Bossard, “This is a penalty hearing. We are not opening up the case ... again.” She added that she would accept only a limited amount of argument regarding whether penalties should be imposed.

With the first witness, Aker sought to show that county staff had thwarted the business from completing some work in a timely manner. Aker asked Mike Mehan, regulatory manager of the county’s Public Utilities Department, whether he had told Seery that the business needed to submit an application for a right of way permit necessary to abandon the existing water service to the site. In spite of repeated questioning, Mehan maintained, “No, the contractor is the applicant,”



*A new fence has been installed around the lift station area at the rear of the 5515 S. Tamiami Trail property. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



adding at one point, “It’s always been the contractor [under county regulations].”

In follow-up questions about what Mehan had explained to Seery regarding one subcontractor’s qualifications for a project, Mehan replied at one point, “We’ve been through so many contractors on this project.”

On another line of questioning, Aker sought to show that county staff had indicated to Seery that the capping of the existing water service should be completed before a fence was

installed around the lift station or crushed concrete was laid down with a weed barrier in the lift station area. Mehan testified, “Capping the water service had nothing to do with installing the fence or the crushed concrete.”

Aker pointed out the fence might have had to be taken down for the capping if the fence had been erected beforehand, making the capping more difficult.

“It was doable,” Mehan said of the capping with the fence in place.



*Michael K. Lewis, president of Royal Oldsmobile-GMC Trucks Co., the owner of the property where Bob’s Boathouse operates, also was in the audience at the July 25 hearing. Bob’s Boathouse pays the firm \$330,000 per year to lease the site, according to a copy of the contract provided to Sarasota County. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



Later, Aker indicated that Jim Dierolf, environmental supervisor in the Conservation & Environmental Permitting Office, had not clearly delineated all the invasive and exotic species that had to be removed from the watercourse buffer or adequately provided details about the number of plants that needed to be added to the buffer landscaping. County records shows the plans for the landscaping received staff approval on Aug. 10, 2010.

The installation of all the watercourse buffer plantings was to have been completed by June 19, but Dierolf testified that it was not finished until July 24.

“We put 1,000 plants in that watercourse buffer,” Seery said. “We had to add 70 more” at Dierolf’s request.

“It’s possible there was a misunderstanding,” Dierolf told Wittmer, referring to a June 8 meeting he had with Seery and the landscape architect for Bob’s Boathouse.

The punch list item given the longest period for completion after March 21 — 120 days — was the installation of the lighting according to the county-approved plan. At one point, Wittmer asked Bailey whether he believed the county was at fault for the delay, as Aker had indicated. Bailey said Bob’s Boathouse “should have been able to meet [the July 19 deadline].”

When Aker asked Bailey whether he had any idea how much the poles and fixtures cost, Wittmer told Aker, “You knew this going forward. Let’s not go down the road of the finances.”

“We did not know that, your honor,” Aker responded, “not until the lighting plan was submitted,” which was provided to the county on May 20, testimony indicated.


## IN CONCLUSION

After Aker completed his closing remarks, Wittmer reminded everyone that Bob’s Boathouse has been operating without a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy since the end of January. She continued, “I distinctly remember us all sitting at this table and discussing each and every deadline” at the conclusion of the March 21 hearing. She reminded Aker that Seery agreed then that he felt the business could comply with them. “And I said to everyone that day that I was going to hold firm on those dates.” When Aker started to interrupt her, Wittmer told him, “I’m not asking for your comment. Now it’s my turn to talk.”

When Aker asked whether she would rule on “whether there was a good faith effort to bring the property into compliance,” she replied, “I am ruling that a penalty has occurred and a fine is in order at this time,” adding that violations are “still occurring on the property.”

Then Wittmer proceeded to impose the \$250 fine and individual penalties.

She said Aker would have the opportunity on Oct. 10 to explain any further delays regarding the installation of the lighting and the submission of the engineering schematics.

“The ultimate goal here is to achieve a Certificate of [Occupancy],” she pointed out. 





# PROCEDURAL PROBLEMS

*The outdoor deck is easily visible to guests walking up to Bob's Boathouse from the parking area closest to Tamiami Trail. All photos by Rachel Hackney*

## A SPECIAL MAGISTRATE DISMISSES A CASE INVOLVING OUTDOOR DINING VIOLATIONS AT BOB'S BOATHOUSE BECAUSE OF THE LONG PERIOD BETWEEN OLD AND NEW INCIDENTS

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

During a July 25 hearing, a Code Enforcement Special Magistrate dismissed a case involving outdoor dining violations at Bob's Boathouse, saying county staff handled the matter inappropriately.

County Code Enforcement Officer James S. Holderby had sought an evidentiary hearing against Bob's Boathouse on the basis of a Nov. 20, 2013, Notice of Violation for serving

food and beverages in an outdoor area of the restaurant after 10 p.m., which is illegal on weeknights under county code. However, Holderby testified that county staff members had presumed the restaurant was in

compliance from late 2013 until they began receiving emails in April alleging otherwise. April 23 was the first time since Dec. 16, 2013, that a Code Enforcement officer had returned to the

*This is crazy. Based upon the testimony I've heard, I'm going to dismiss this and if you choose to re-file, then go ahead and re-file, and we'll take up appropriate notice.*

Meg Wittmer  
Special Magistrate  
Sarasota County





South Tamiami Trail restaurant to investigate the situation, he testified.

Based on his statements, Wittmer told Holderby, “You assume they are in compliance and all of a sudden they are not. That’s where the drop-off just occurred. You just won Mr. Aker’s case by your testimony,” she continued, referring to James E. Aker, the Sarasota attorney representing Bob’s Boathouse.

## THE TIMELINE

During his testimony, Holder explained that he observed the initial violation of the county’s outdoor dining ordinance when he inspected

Bob’s Boathouse, located at 5515 S. Tamiami Trail, on Nov. 13, 2013.

When he arrived at 10:05 p.m., Holderby said, he was seated on the outside deck, where a waitress told him he could order anything he liked. At the time, he continued, he saw customers being served at the outdoor bar. On Nov. 20, 2013, he continued, he issued the Notice of Violation, which gave the business until Dec. 1 to comply with the county ordinance. Holderby then testified that he revisited the restaurant on Dec. 16, 2013, April 23, 2014, and July 22, 2014, when he again found violations.



*Bob’s Boathouse manager Mariah Bogert and the business’s attorney, James E. Aker, await the start of the July 25 proceeding.*



Aker argued that the business had had no communication from county staff about the violations on Dec. 16, 2013, and July 22, just the one on April 23. "We weren't served till ... over a month after April 23," Aker added. Therefore, he was not prepared to defend against the alleged December and July violations, he told Wittmer.

Assistant County Attorney Scott Bossard said that the county would stipulate that Holderby focus only on the April 23 and July 22 incidents, with the latter serving as a follow-up inspection for the former.

Holderby then described his April 23 visit to Bob's Boathouse, which began about 10:15 p.m. When the manager on duty asked him where he and a friend wanted to sit, he testified, he requested the outdoor seating area.

The manager complied with that request, he continued. When he and his friend departed at 11:20, Holderby added, "There were still people drinking at the outside bar."

On July 22, he told the Special Magistrate, he arrived about 10:15 and sat on the outdoor deck once more. Not only was he served a Diet Coke and French fries, he said, but he also saw customers coming outside onto the deck with drinks. Servers continued to bring drinks to people sitting in that area, he added. Holderby said he left about 10:35 or 10:40 p.m.

At Wittmer's direction, Holderby explained that county code calls for weekday outdoor dining and beverage service to cease at 10 p.m. unless a customer has placed an order prior to that hour. The deadline is 11 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays.



*Special Magistrate Meg Wittmer waits for an answer to a question.*



His inspection visits, Holderby said, were on weeknights.

When Aker asked Holderby whether he asked to be seated outside, “knowing that that would be a violation,” Holderby said, “I did.”

“Is that customary for you to knowingly put yourself in a position to create a violation?” Aker asked.

“Mr. Aker,” Holderby responded, “How am I supposed to know if the ordinance is being violated if I don’t test it?”

“By observation, Mr. Holderby,” Aker replied.

Holderby reiterated that people were served well after 10 p.m. on the nights he visited the restaurant.

At one point, Aker questioned him, “How do you know they didn’t put their order in before 10 o’clock?”

If he arrived at 10:15 p.m. and left at 11 p.m. and people still were being served outside, “wouldn’t that constitute a violation?” Holderby asked Aker.

“Well, I don’t know,” Aker said. “Perhaps not.”

“Mr. Aker, I saw people being served, handed drinks, when I left from outside, OK? You don’t sit at a bar — most people — and sip a drink for an hour and a half,” Holderby replied.

“Well, that is an assumption on your part, isn’t it?” Aker retorted.



*At the table during the hearing are (from left) Bob's Boathouse manager Mariah Bogert, James E. Aker, Code Enforcement Officer James Holderby and Assistant County Attorney Scott Bossard.*



“Me seeing people being served a new fresh drink upon my departure is not an assumption, no,” Holderby told him.

## FOLLOWING THE ORDINANCE

A dispute then ensued over whether Holderby should have notified Bob’s Boathouse that he was making follow-up visits related to the Nov. 20, 2013, Notice of Violation. “We don’t serve notices on continuing cases,” Holderby explained. “I do not have to serve you again, sir,” he added to Aker.

“So we don’t have to get any notice of the April 23 incident?” Aker asked.

“No, sir,” Holderby told him.

“How are we supposed to go back and check what happened — who did it, what time it happened, etc.?” Aker responded.

“[The violation] should not have continued,” Holderby said before reminding Aker of a meeting of county staff members and Aker after the Nov. 20, 2013, Notice of Violation was served. “We specifically went over what does and does not constitute a violation,” Holderby continued. “It was understood by all.”

“I recall that meeting,” Aker replied. “It was back in 2013.” However, he told Holderby, if violations had continued, it would have seemed appropriate for Holderby to notify Bob’s Boathouse.



*The front entrance of Bob’s Boathouse is near the rear of the property.*



“I feel that there have been continuing violations,” Holderby responded. “I feel that Bob’s knows that they’re violating the outdoor dining ordinance ... and until we get in front of a magistrate and get a Finding of Fact, it’s not going to stop.”

## PROCEDURAL CONCERNS

Wittmer told Aker that once he received a Notice of Violation, “you have time to correct it, and it’s assumed that you will continue to stay in compliance. The idea of a new notice every time isn’t the case.”

Aker persisted in maintaining that the county should notify Bob’s Boathouse of any incident in which the restaurant had been found in violation of the outdoor dining ordinance. “It would be totally unfair to run this out on their theory that they could go night by night by night by night and then come in and say —”

Wittmer interrupted him. “You were notified of a violation and given time to [correct it]. If you choose to re-violate that same ordinance, it is not [county staff’s] obligation to re-notify you every time you choose to re-violate.”

Wittmer added, “It would be an incredible burden on the county to go back and re-inspect and re-notify every time somebody decided not to follow the rules after they were given notice.”

Aker told her, “With all due respect, your honor, I disagree with your interpretation of that.”

## BACK TO THE TIMELINE

Bossard, the assistant county attorney, explained, “This is your classic recurrence [of

a violation]. ... Procedurally, there’s no deficiency here in terms of when notice was required and to whom notice was supposed to be given.” Aker countered that the presumption on the part of county staff of continuing violations after early December “is a *real stretch*.”

In response to a question from Wittmer, Holderby clarified that the Nov. 20, 2013, Notice of Violation gave the business until Dec. 1, 2013 to correct the situation.


“What happened after that?” she asked. “Why wasn’t this brought to hearing [earlier]?” Holderby explained that a follow-up inspection on Dec. 16 found the business was still in violation, but further inspections found no problems. Then in April, he said, Code Enforcement staff began receiving emails indicating violations were occurring once more, so he re-inspected the restaurant on April 23.

“I guess what I’m struggling with is ... between November and April,” Wittmer told him.

“There was basically an assumption that they were in compliance,” Holderby replied.

“This is crazy,” Wittmer said. “Based upon the testimony I’ve heard, I’m going to dismiss this and if you choose to re-file, then go ahead and re-file, and we’ll take up appropriate notice.”

She added to Holderby, “You can’t say [the restaurant is] in compliance and yet not follow the appropriate paperwork and then say [it is] not in compliance over six months.”

“Understand, your honor,” Holderby replied. 





## THE SIESTA KEY ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT GETS ANSWERS TO CODE ENFORCEMENT QUESTIONS ABOUT CHANGES AT BLASÉ CAFÉ; AND CONSTRUCTION OF TURTLE BEACH IMPROVEMENTS IS SET TO BEGIN LATER THIS YEAR



By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

A June 22 Siesta Key Association (SKA) query to county staff about whether Blasé Café was violating provisions of the Siesta Key Overlay District (SKOD) finally was answered in full on July 25, after SKA President Michael Shay sought help from County Commissioner Nora Patterson, who then turned to County Administrator Tom Harmer.

On June 22, Shay wrote to county Code Enforcement and Zoning Administration staff, “I noticed Saturday morning [June 21] that Blasé Café is using additional space in [the] plaza/parking lot and I am curious to know if [the owner] has a TUP [Temporary



*A June 21 photo shows bar seats next to a counter at Blasé Café. Photo courtesy Michael Shay*

Use Permit],” though Shay added he believed TUPs were available just during certain holiday periods.

Shay included with his email one photo taken outside what used to be a pizza restaurant perpendicular to Blasé. It showed bar stools standing next to a counter. Did Blasé have a permit for that use, he also asked.

A second photo accompanying the email was taken in the parking lot, Shay added, noting that Blasé owner Rami Nehme “has commandeered additional parking spots for this ‘tent.’ Is there a permit for this?”



*The canopy and carpet were back in place on July 20 at Blasé Café. Photo courtesy Michael Shay*



# Siesta Seen

Shay continued, “While we are on this subject of Blasé Café, I have always wondered HOW he is able to have an outside deck area in the parking lot, using parking spaces. Can someone explain how this is possible when parking is at such a premium in the Village.”

Finally, Shay included a photo of a handmade sign in front of Bonjour French Café, which directed people to the parking lot behind the building.

“I know that for the last year [Siesta] Village has been the *Wild Wild West*, i.e., we ignore a lot of the outdoor display issues and of course some of the merchants are taking advantage of that,” Shay wrote. “But [this] is NOT fair to those who follow the rules and IT has gone on way too long!”

Shay was referring to an effort by officers of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) in May 2013 to educate business owners about what the SKOD does and does not allow.



*On June 21, Blasé Café had a red carpet laid out in its parking lot adjacent to Ocean Boulevard and a canopy over the space. Photo courtesy Michael Shay*



*At the height of season in 2013, the band at Blasé Café played on the deck outside the restaurant. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

Some business owners complained later after a Code Enforcement officer told them no outdoor displays are allowed under the SKOD, which applies to the entire island. After working on a proposal over the past months, a group of business owners won support from the SKVA this spring for a proposed revision of the SKOD to permit displays under specific guidelines. That matter will be heard by the Sarasota County Planning Commission on Aug. 7 before it comes to the County Commission for a final decision.

On June 28, county Code Enforcement Officer John Lally responded to Shay's email, noting he had just met with Zoning Administrator Brad Bailey regarding Shay's concerns.

The parking sign at Bonjour French Café is allowable, Lally wrote in an email, “but the current sign is too large and will have to be replaced ...” Sarasota County Sheriff's deputies told representatives of the restaurant they cannot use a portable sign, Lally added, and no one at the café was aware of the size requirements for such signage.



# *Siesta Seen*

Lally continued that Blasé Café has had outdoor entertainment for more than three years, which is allowable under the SKOD but has to stop at 10 p.m. “The fact they have a canopy to keep the sun off does not warrant the need for a TUP,” he added.

Shay responded that the canopy is not over the existing outdoor deck of the restaurant, which is in a corner of the parking area. “The canopy is NEXT to the outdoor deck and takes up 2 additional parking spots,” he pointed out. “This canopy is new and now adds additional outdoor space at the expense of parking spots. With parking at such a premium in the Village, I can’t believe that this is allowed. Please review this.”

Lally also explained in his email that the plaza has more parking spaces in a lot behind the building next to Gilligan’s Island Bar and Grill.

He continued, “I will do some calculations for the square footage requirements for the bar stool area but I believe they have enough parking to cover it.” The code requires one parking space per 50 square feet of patron area, he noted.

On July 7, Lally sent another email to Shay, saying, “The deck area and a handicap ramp were permitted in 1994 ... and met all the requirements at that time.”

He then pointed out that Blasé Café has expanded its business into the space previously occupied by the pizza restaurant and had made further plans to take over the unit that an internet café occupied for a number of months. That expansion, including the outdoor counter, will necessitate a new parking plan to ensure Blasé has enough spaces, Lally



*A pizza place and then The Village Gourmet previously occupied some of the space into which Blasé Cafe is expanding. Photo by Rachel Hackney*





*The type of sign Bonjour French Café was using to alert customers to parking in the rear is not allowed under county code. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



## ***Siesta Seen***

pointed out. “They have an architect working on the plan and hope to submit [it] next week.”

As for the carpet and canopy: Lally wrote that the red carpet had been removed, “and I told them to move the canopy and band area back to where it was originally (on the west side of the deck) until their parking plan is approved. That area is going to be restriped and made into 4 motorcycle spaces.”

On July 20, Shay sent another email to Code Enforcement and Zoning staff, pointing out, “OK, so it’s Sunday night at [6:30] and I get a call from a business owner in the Village that it is ‘business as usual’ at the Blasé Café ...”

He rode his bicycle into the Village, where he saw “the red carpet that was moved is now back [and] the canopy that was taken down is now back. ... I am going to ‘assume’ and justify this by saying that the parking plan has been approved and that all this is legal. Am I right?”

At least the A-frame sign had been removed at Bonjour French Café, he added.

After receiving no response from staff, he finally sent an email to Patterson on July 24, apologizing for not continuing to try to work through county employees to resolve the issues. Shay provided Patterson with a copy of his email chain, and he pointed out that Code Enforcement staff had not been enforcing the current outdoor display regulations while the group of business owners was working on the revised SKOD ordinance.

He continued that the “total lack of enforcement has created havoc and a serious morale issue among core business owners in [Siesta] Village that has lasted for 16 months with NO end in sight. But for some reason that lack of enforcement has migrated from outdoor display issues to other more critical issues here in the Village.”

He added, “The current issue with Blasé Café revolves around zoning, alcohol and beverage laws, parking, just to name a few and ... the perception is that nothing is being done. ALL of the Village businesses see what is going on and unfortunately, for the few who don’t have respect for the ordinances, it instills in them a sense of ‘power.’ The County needs to set the proper example and enforce what is on the books. And if you are NOT going to enforce [the rules], then take them OFF the books so ALL the businesses get the advantage!”

He also reiterated the SKA’s opposition to the proposed SKOD revision, noting that Patterson had mentioned during an SKA meeting this spring that she was in favor of the changes and felt the businesses would police themselves. “They have proven time and time again over the last year that they can’t/won’t,” Shay wrote.

As a result of Shay’s communication with Patterson, County Administrator Harmer asked Tom Polk, director of Planning and Development Services, to meet with his staff — including those from Code Enforcement — and then talk with Shay about his concerns. That meeting took place on July 25.



## ***Siesta Seen***

After it ended, Polk called Shay and sent him an email. The latter noted that staff had agreed the following items will be addressed:

- “Code Enforcement will be monitoring the [Blasé] parking lot situation to ... ensure the parking space/s in question will be utilized by vehicles (as intended), not the band and accessories; and
- “Mr. Brad Bailey, Zoning Administrator, will go [on-site] next week to review the parking lot in relation to the number of spaces and the ongoing activities at that location. It is my understanding ... that the owners of the facility are preparing a design of the new parking plan. Although the County looks forward to receipt of this plan for review, Mr. Bailey will be looking at the current situation with regard to consistency with the applicable regulations.”

Polk added, “I anticipate these actions will provide a better assessment, and moreover, monitoring of the situation.”

Following Polk’s phone conversation with him, Shay sent a thank-you email to Polk that also expressed his appreciation to county staff “for the quick response in getting the [Blasé Café] parking spot put back to its original configuration. Too bad this couldn’t have been done sooner and with less angst.”

In a brief interview on July 29, Shay told me, “I am very grateful that [county staff members] responded ... and I am grateful that they are working on [the issues].”

He added that he was looking forward to learning what Bailey discovered when he visited the plaza where Blasé Café is located.

Shay reiterated his concern about what then-SKVA Vice President Kay Kouvatsos pointed to last year after the SKVA-sponsored meeting on the SKOD: the need for “a level playing field.” It is not fair to those who abide by the county code “that you have a couple of rogue businesses that thumb their noses at it,” he said.

### **TURTLE BEACH**

More email chatter among Commissioner Patterson and county staff has focused on the plans for improvements at Turtle Beach. Construction is set to begin late this year and take about four to six months.

Among them will be a new parking lot with 35 additional spaces, a new playground, a new boardwalk with a dune walkover that will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, a couple more two-pole picnic shelters, a gazebo, a kayak launch and a rain garden.

In response to a question from Patterson, Parks and Recreation Department Director Carolyn Brown wrote on July 7, “The project does not include reconfiguring the boat ramp parking lot” because the necessary funding is not available. “The primary focus of the current scope was to increase beach parking and provide safe beach access via sidewalks and pedestrian crossings,” Brown added. “What would be the approximate cost to





A Sarasota County conceptual plan for Turtle Beach, dated October 2008, shows new parking areas and facilities for the south Siesta beach park. Image courtesy Sarasota County



# Siesta Seen

reorder the boat trailer parking?” Patterson emailed back. “Also how many spots could it actually add and how many are there now?”

Brown asked county Project Manager Brad W. Gaubatz to respond with details. He wrote that the original concept plan prepared for the park shows 38 trailer parking spaces. While the number “could physically fit,” he continued, he doubted they would be user-friendly. “As a frequent user of the Ken Thompson boat ramps and shell lot,” he added, “I don’t think parallel parking works for boat trailers” unless the spaces are designed for pull-through use and have a long run-up “to

straighten out the trailer,” so drivers do not have to turn on a tight radius.

Furthermore, Gaubatz wrote, drivers using half of the spaces would need to pull out onto Blind Pass Road. “We have reviewed this with the Site and Development staff and have been told this is not likely to be allowed (despite the current on-street perpendicular parking). The new diagonal layout at Blackburn Point Park’s east node is a much better model.” Gaubatz pointed out that if they were angled, the number of pull-through spaces that could be provided at Turtle Beach would be closer to 20. If back-to-back spaces could fit in an angled layout, he noted, “the number



*An aerial view shows the section of Turtle Beach where improvements will be undertaken. Image courtesy Sarasota County*



# ***Siesta Seen***

would be almost double that but people would still need to back out onto the road.” Gaubatz added that “engineering for the funded portion of the project is almost complete. We will be sending it out for bids within the next couple of months once all coastal permitting is complete. This does not include any portions of the ... boat trailer parking modifications, which the [County Commission] removed from the funded project. The construction budget for funded portions is

about \$530,000. To answer your question on cost: assuming the new boat trailer parking lot is pervious concrete so no new storm-water ponds are required (we would need to verify this assumption), the total cost of the lot for engineering, project management and construction may be up to \$575,000.” He wrote that some contingency money remains for design work, “[if] you would like us to give you a more educated estimate,



*Turtle Beach is popular with people who prefer its relatively quiet atmosphere compared to all the activity on Siesta Public Beach. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



# ***Siesta Seen***


that could be accommodated within this contingency.”

Patterson responded with thanks. “This has never been presented to the [County Commission] in the way that you just did. While I assume that you are correct I certainly do not want to spend a half a million dollars to reduce the boat trailer parking that is presently there. The thought had always been to increase the capacity. If that is not possible then I am happy to leave well enough alone. On the other hand the present condition may actually be less in capacity than assumed given your description.”

She added, “In any case I was not intending to push for a part of the project that was not included in the estimate — and certainly not ... if nothing positive [can be] accomplished.”

## **NETWORKING LUNCHEON**

The Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce will hold a Networking Luncheon at Captain Curt’s Crab & Oyster Bar on Friday, Aug. 1, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The cost is \$12 per person, and checks are payable to the Chamber. The business is located at 1200 Old Stickney Point Road.

The Chamber asks that those planning to attend the event RSVP by calling 349-3800 or by emailing [info@siestakeychamber.com](mailto:info@siestakeychamber.com). 



# **MONTHLY MEETING**

**AUGUST 7, 2014 • 4:30 PM**

**St. Boniface Church**

*5615 Midnight Pass Road, Room F*

## **The Electoral Process: How It Works In Sarasota**

*Please join us as we welcome guest speaker Kathy Dent  
Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections*

**PUBLIC IS ALWAYS WELCOME WITH QUESTIONS FOR OUR GUEST**





*The City Commission has approved the process through which it will fill the vacancies created by the County Commission candidacies of City Commissioners Paul Caragiulo and Shannon Snyder. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## APPLICATION PROCESS EXPLAINED FOR CITY COMMISSION VACANCIES

The Sarasota City Commission has approved the process to fill the unexpired terms created by the resignations of City Commissioners Paul Caragiulo (District 2) and Shannon Snyder (District 3) to run for seats on the Sarasota County Commission, the city has announced.

The resignations become effective Nov. 18, the date new county commissioners will take office as required by state statute, a news release points out.

Candidates residing in Districts 2 and 3 who seek appointment to the seats may submit an application the City Commission approved and the questionnaire, along with the Oath of Candidate and State Financial Disclosure Form, no earlier than noon on Tuesday, Sept. 2, and no later than noon on Friday, Sept. 12, the release says. Applicants may also submit other written materials or information, with a limit of 25 pages, the release notes.

Completed applications and other documents are to be submitted in person to the

Office of the City Auditor and Clerk, located in Room 110 of City Hall at 1565 First St. in Sarasota.

The City Commission will consider the applications of qualified individuals and will then hold a special meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 19, to make appointments to fill the vacant seats, the release continues. The unexpired terms end on May 15, 2015.

The forms, including the [application](#), [questionnaire](#), the [Oath of Candidate](#) and [Financial Disclosure Form](#), as well as the [timeline](#) and [city voting district map](#), are available [online](#) or from the Office of the City Auditor and Clerk, the release adds. Any interested person should schedule an appointment with the Office of the City Auditor and Clerk to receive a complete City Commission Applicant Information Packet.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, contact City Auditor and Clerk Pamela Nadalini at 954-4160.



## COUNTY SEEKING PUBLIC COMMENTS ABOUT PADDLEBOARD RENTALS

Sarasota County Parks and Recreation staff members once again are seeking community comments on a proposal to allow the rental and use of stand-up paddleboards at county-owned beaches, the county has announced.

Residents and visitors are encouraged to attend one of two open house-style meetings to ask county staff questions and provide thoughts on what they would like to see at county beaches, a news release says. The meetings will be on Tuesday, Aug. 5, at St. Boniface Episcopal Church, located at 5615 Midnight Pass Road in Sarasota; and Tuesday, Aug. 12, at Nokomis Community Center, located at 234 E. Nippino Trail, Nokomis. Both meetings will be held from 4 to 6:30 p.m., the release says.

“Stand-up paddleboarding (SUP), an offshoot of surfing, is a sport that originated in Hawaii,” the release explains. It enables surfers to paddle while either standing or sitting and using the paddleboard like a kayak, the release adds. “Users range from the casual recreational participant to serious athletic competitors,” it notes.

“The proposal to offer stand-up paddleboard rentals at county beaches was initiated by local vendors who are experiencing an increased demand for them,” said Tricia Wisner, business development coordinator for Sarasota County Parks and Recreation, in the release. “Currently, we only allow swimming-related activities at the beaches, so we want to know



*County staff will hold two public meetings in August to obtain comments on a proposal for stand-up paddleboard rentals at county-owned beaches. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*



what the community thinks about the idea of expanding recreation opportunities.”

After the Sarasota County Commission heard a proposal on March 5 that involved paddleboard rentals at Siesta Public Beach, it directed staff to bring back a report on public safety, regulation and the feasibility of offering stand-up paddleboard rentals through a third-party vendor on Siesta Key. During the meeting, commissioners talked about reducing the size of the public swim zone to create a corridor where watercraft could be launched and maneuvered out into the Gulf of Mexico beyond the swim zone, the release points out.

Sarasota County has 35 miles of coastline with only six miles of county-owned beaches that are patrolled by lifeguards, the release adds.

“Right now anyone can launch a kayak or stand-up paddleboard in hundreds of places around Sarasota County,” said Wisner in the release. “We just want to know what people think about reducing a small portion of designated swim zones for this use.”

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

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## DONATION DRIVE PLANNED TO PREVENT SUMMER LEARNING LOSS

**Goodwill Manasota** is partnering with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota County (BGCSC) for a donation drive through Aug. 2 to benefit Great Futures Academy, a program that works to prevent summer learning loss, the nonprofit has announced.

A Goodwill Manasota truck will be in the Lee Wetherington Boys & Girls Club parking lot at 3100 Fruitville Road from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. today and Saturday to accept clothing, shoes, books and small household items, a news release says.

“Goodwill Manasota will make a cash contribution to BGCSC for every pound of donations received,” it adds.

“We are proud to partner with Goodwill Manasota, where the proceeds from this collaborative donation drive will greatly help our Great Futures Academy students stay on track academically during the summer break,” said Bill Sadlo, president & CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota County. “Improving the lives

of our kids and their families is strategically beneficial to the entire Sarasota Community.”

The Great Futures Academy program has enrolled 60 children, up to the third-grade level, the release explains. “The students are taught in a controlled educational environment every morning for three hours during the summer months,” it continues. The program also employs social workers to assist parents of the children in furthering their education as well, along with helping those adults enhance their job and parenting skills, the release points out.

Other partners for the donation drive are the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, United Way Suncoast, the Rotary Club of Sarasota and CTQ 106.5.

“Education is a central focus for Goodwill,” said Bob Rosinsky, president & CEO of Goodwill Manasota, in the release. “In fact, Goodwill invested 15,000 hours into education for team members and partners last year because we know it’s that important.”



## YOUTH GROUP MARKS SUCCESS IN FUNDRAISER FOR FOOD BANK

SRQVolunteen students raised \$310 and collected 157 pounds of food for [All Faiths Food Bank](#) at the spaghetti dinner they held Friday, July 25, at Bayside Community Church in Sarasota, [Community Youth Development](#) has announced.

Seventy-five people attended the event, which featured food and drinks donated by Whole Foods Market and baked goods provided by SRQVolunteen members and volunteers, a news release notes.

The SRQVolunteen class chose addressing hunger in Sarasota for its community service project. As part of their research on the issue, students volunteered at All Faiths Food Bank, “where they sorted produce and learned more about the summer meals program for Sarasota County students,” the release continues.

“We are so proud to have been selected by the SRQVolunteen students,” said All Faiths CEO

Sandra Frank in the release. “Their hard work and generosity not only helps us feed families, but they get to experience how wonderful it feels to make a difference in our community.”

Suriya Khong, CYD’s coordinator for volunteer programs, added in the release, “Hunger is a big problem in our community. Sometimes people get overwhelmed by a problem so big, but the kids got excited about doing something to help. The success of their project will encourage them to tackle problems in the community in the future.”

SRQVolunteen 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 explains. By the program’s completion, each participant will have earned 20 hours of community service and developed leadership, problem-solving and group working skills, the release notes.



*A community youth group raised funds and collected food for All Faiths Food Bank during a July 25 event. Image from the All Faiths Food Bank website*



## NEW COLLEGE OF FLORIDA NAMED TO *FORBES*' 'BEST VALUE' LIST

New College of Florida ranked No. 12 in *Forbes* magazine's list of the country's "Best Value Colleges" for 2014, the college has announced.

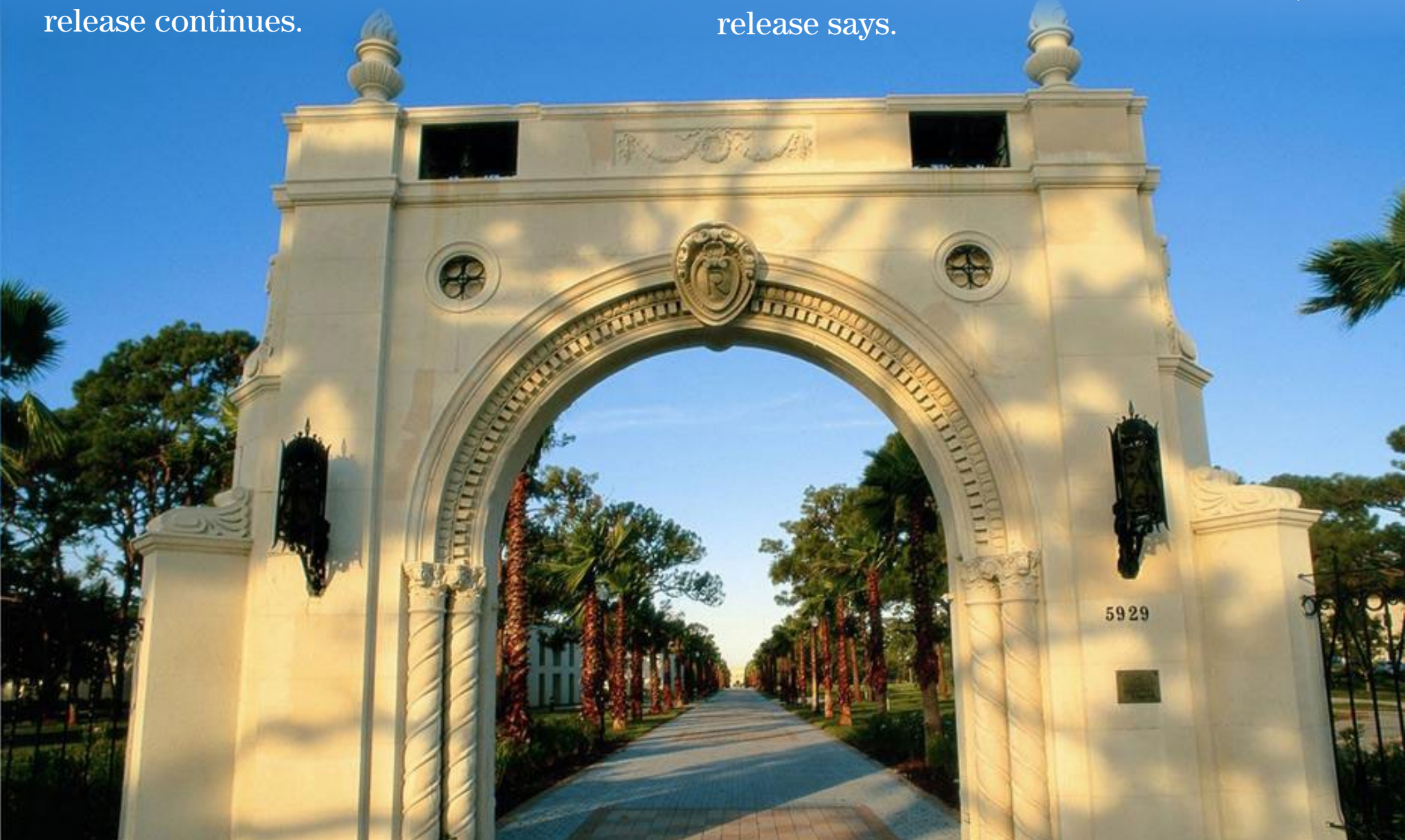
"The ranking puts New College in good company among tough competition," a news release points out. The nation's military service academies (Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine), which charge no tuition, occupy the first five positions in the rankings, the release notes. New College's fellow state institutions the University of Florida (No. 9) and Florida State University (No. 13) also made the list.

"*Forbes* joins several other publications and college guides that have recognized New College's value in the past year," the release continues.

The Princeton Review and *USA Today* ranked New College the No. 2 "Best Value Public College in America," the release points out. *U.S. News and World Report* ranked New College the No. 5 public liberal arts college in the United States.

The *Fiske Guide to Colleges* named New College one of 44 "Best Buy" institutions in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, the release notes, while *Washington Monthly* named New College the No. 1 public liberal arts college in the United States and No. 8 among all liberal arts colleges.

The *Forbes* rankings focus on colleges' outcomes, including post-graduate success, academic success, graduation rate, student satisfaction and student loan debt, the release says.



*New College of Florida has been ranked high in a number of lists this year. Photo courtesy New College*



With tuition of less than \$6,800 a year, about 60 percent of New College students have no debt at graduation, and the average debt of \$18,000 is among the lowest in the country, the release adds.

New College's Class of 2014 included a Truman Scholar, two Frost Scholars, two Goldwater Scholars and five Fulbright Scholarship winners.

To view the Forbes list, visit the website.

## CRIME STOPPERS HONORS FUGITIVE APPREHENSION UNIT

On July 29, Crime Stoppers of Sarasota County honored the members of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Fugitive Apprehension Unit "for their hard work and dedication to catch wanted criminals in our community," the office announced.

"Over the past year, Crime Stoppers received more than 560 fugitive-related tips from the public, and the Fugitive Apprehension Unit fielded the majority of them," a news release notes. The Unit consists of eight people, including a sergeant, deputies and civilian technicians "who spend a significant amount

of time verifying whether the person reported is actually wanted," and confirming addresses and other pertinent information, the release points out. "The resulting arrests amounted to more than \$34,000 in rewards approved by the Crime Stoppers board," it adds.

Crime Stoppers of Sarasota is a 501(c)(3) organization that relies on fundraising and private donations for support, the release adds. No tax dollars are used for the program. Visit [sarasotacrimestoppers.com](http://sarasotacrimestoppers.com) for more information.



*(From left) Sheriff Tom Knight, Sara Doster, Lucy Nicandri, Sgt. Bob Kiefer, Deputy Tony Egoville, Deputy David Doyle, Richard Kagy, Howard Phipps, Detective Dan Valentino and Tom Roadley. Contributed photo*



## 25 GRADUATE FROM GULF COAST LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Twenty-five community leaders from across the region recently completed the 2014 Gulf Coast Leadership Institute, the Gulf Coast Community Foundation has announced.

The members of the group finished their final training session and celebrated graduation from the three-month leadership-development program in June, a news release says.

“The aspiring and veteran leaders were guided through seven sessions of comprehensive leadership training by faculty from the University of Georgia’s nationally recognized J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development, the release adds. The diverse group of participants was selected earlier this year “from a large pool of applicants,” the release notes. The Leadership Institute

was developed and is funded by Gulf Coast Community Foundation.

“Engaged leadership is the foundation of community,” said Teri A. Hansen, president and CEO of the Foundation, in the release. “Our graduates will take their new leadership skills and make our communities better places to live and work.”

The graduates of the 2014 Leadership Institute are as follows:

Claudia Cardillo, former Vice President, Johnson & Johnson; Christina de Guia, psychiatrist; Tomas Dinverno, principal of Tuttle Elementary School in Sarasota; Elizabeth Fisher, president and CEO of Selah Freedom; Kristen Fisher, preschool director at Englewood United Methodist Church; Leslie Gnaegy, brand marketing manager for



*Graduates of the 2014 Gulf Coast Leadership Institute mark completion of the program. Contributed photo*



the Observer Media Group; Douglas Grosso, broker associate at Premier Sotheby's International Realty; Gregory Hall, president of Hall Architects; Dean Harloff, owner of Dean R. Harloff CPA/PA; Michael Harshman, attorney with Betras, Kopp & Harshman; Dave Herbert, chief engineer with Sun Hydraulics; Austin Jambor, financial advisor with Morgan Stanley; Perry Korszen, financial advisor with Raymond James; Christine Lange, special assistant to the president for media and community relations at the Ringling College of Art and Design; Nicole Lee, individual gifts manager for the Sarasota Orchestra; Lisl Liang, president and CEO of SRQ Media Group; Jeff Maultsby, director of business and economic development for Sarasota County; Anand Pallegar, founder

and CEO of atLarge Inc.; Stacy Prouty, chief operating officer of the Institute for the Ages; Jamie Ruetz, client manager/sales manager for Silexx Financial Systems; Jennifer Rust, vice president/relationship manager for PNC Wealth Management; Mimi Steger, owner/program director of North Port Taekwondo; Tony Stopperan, special projects assistant to the president at the Ringling College of Art and Design; Sarah Wertheimer, associate executive director of Embracing Our Differences; and Michael Williams, owner of KlikWiz.

This was the seventh class of the Gulf Coast Leadership Institute, the release points out. Through this program and its predecessor, the North Port Leadership Institute, the Gulf Coast Community Foundation has trained 225 community leaders since 2006, the release adds. 



## BAYFRONT PARK PLAYGROUND REOPENS

*The playground at Bayfront Park, located adjacent to the Steigerwaldt-Jockey Children's Fountain, is open to the public once again, the City of Sarasota has announced. The playground was closed in March for public safety reasons after a regular inspection revealed corrosion on the equipment, a news release notes. Because the equipment is 15 years old, the repairs required specialty parts to be manufactured and installed, the release adds. Photo by Norman Schimmel*





*Suspects entered through the rear door of the home at the 2400 block of Booker Avenue in north Sarasota. Image courtesy of [freeimages.com](https://www.freeimages.com)*

## **SUSPECTS SOUGHT IN HOME INVASION ROBBERY IN SARASOTA**

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is seeking the public's help in locating three suspects who allegedly broke into a north Sarasota home late on the night of July 26 and robbed the occupants, the office has reported.

Deputies responded to a report of a home invasion robbery at 11:10 p.m. on July 26 in the 2400 block of Booker Avenue, a news release says. Two victims were inside when the suspects entered through the rear door, the release notes. They were Tannis T.

Phillips, 62, and Demetria L. Dunbar, 41, the release adds.

One suspect, reportedly armed with a pistol, ordered the male victim to the floor, the release continues. The suspects then allegedly robbed Phillips and Dunbar. No injuries were reported.

The suspects fled in an older model charcoal gray Lexus SUV, which last was seen headed eastbound on 25th Street toward Tuttle Avenue, the release adds.



The victims described the suspects as follows:

- A black male with a slight build; he was wearing a clown mask and black gloves with a yellow lining.
- A heavyset black male about 5 feet 10 inches tall with a low fade haircut. He allegedly was armed with a silver semi-automatic pistol.
- A black female of medium build who was about 5 feet 6 inches tall. She was wearing blue slacks, a black sweater, tennis shoes and a white shirt over her head.

Detectives are investigating the incident, the release points out. Anyone with information is encouraged to call the Criminal Investigations Section at 861-4900, leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 366-TIPS (8477) or going online at [sarasotacrimestoppers.com](http://sarasotacrimestoppers.com).




*An aerial view shows the 2400 block of Booker Avenue in north Sarasota. Image from Google Maps*

## INVESTIGATION CONTINUING IN SHOOTING OF 19-YEAR-OLD

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is continuing to investigate the July 26 shooting death of 19-year-old Justin J. Ates during an incident in the 4800 block of Baccus Avenue in Sarasota, the office has reported.

Upon arrival at the residence where the shooting occurred about 4 a.m., deputies found Ates lying in the driveway, a news release says. He

suffered a fatal gunshot wound to the chest, it adds.

Anyone with information about the incident is encouraged to call the Criminal Investigations Section at 861-4260, leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 366-TIPS (8477) or going online at [sarasotacrimestoppers.com](http://sarasotacrimestoppers.com). 



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

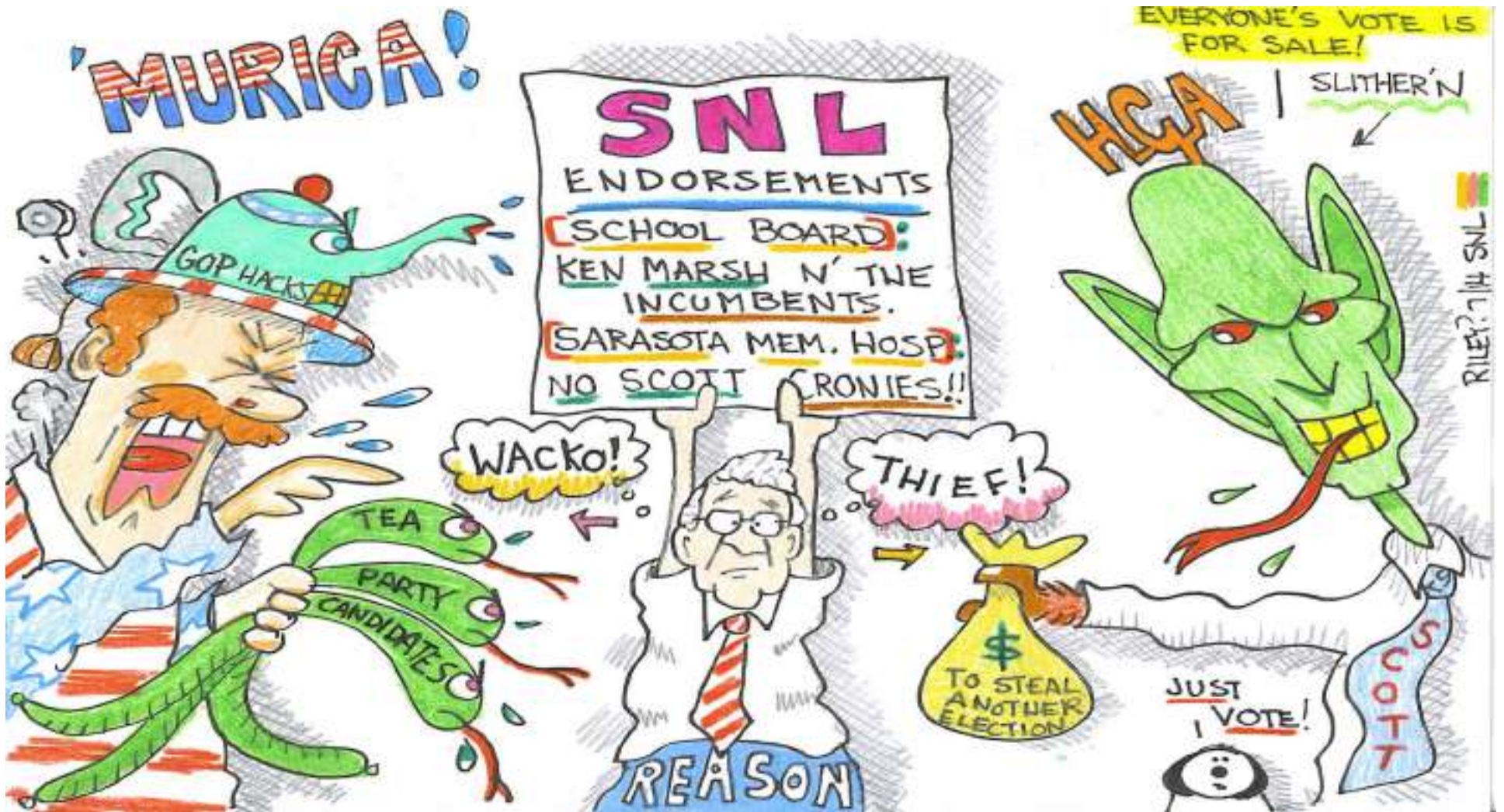
**Call:** (941) 366-TIPS (8477)

**Click:** [SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com](http://SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com)

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



# OPINION



## ELECT KEN MARSH AND SCHOOL BOARD INCUMBENTS

### EDITORIAL

By any rational measure, the Sarasota County School District is a source of pride for the people of Sarasota County. It consistently ranks among the top districts in the state in testing scores. The superintendent, Lori White, is admired and well liked by school employees and almost everybody in the county. Her leadership has been a dramatic improvement over what we have seen in some previous administrations. And the School Board has provided thoughtful, prudent governance.

There was a temporary disruption in that sea of equanimity when board member Carol Todd suddenly announced her resignation a few months ago. However, with her seat being one of three up for election in August, it was not viewed as an issue of real importance. The board even asked Gov. Rick Scott not to

appoint a successor for Todd, so the electoral process of replacing her could be as impartial as possible.

Sadly, the machinations of a local Republican Party bigwig proved the undoing of that reasonable course anticipated by the School Board. Christian Ziegler, a former executive director of the Sarasota County Republican Party, wanted a job for his young wife, Bridget ... and something like serving on the School Board would be the perfect complement to his own political aspirations.

After apparently calling in some political IOUs, he and his allies prevailed upon the governor to appoint his wife to fill out Todd's unexpired term.

If Bridget Ziegler was an experienced educator or even a parent of school-age children, that might have been reasonable. But her



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child is barely a toddler, and Bridget works as an insurance agent. Her experience in education is limited to her own years as a student.

Contrast that with the record of another candidate, Ken Marsh. He has spent the bulk of his career in public education. For two decades, he helped guide the School Board with long-term planning, as well as quality assurance and teacher evaluations. Recently retired from the school system, he saw Todd's resignation as an opportunity to continue serving the Sarasota County schools. Unfortunately, he has no connections in the Republican "crony network," no political IOUs to call in. He only has decades of experience that make him ideal for service on the School Board. Perhaps that is why the governor ignored him and appointed the inexperienced wife of a political hack to the post.

**We urge voters to elect Ken Marsh to the District 1 School Board seat** formerly represented so capably by Carol Todd. His experience, his acumen and his humanity and concern for all students will be an asset for the school district in the years to come, especially with the pending retirement of Lori White in 2017.

Far more troubling than the machinations that propelled a barely qualified Bridget Ziegler onto the School Board is an attempt by Tea Party extremists to seize control of that board.

Although the Tea Party — which has been shown to be little more than a modern-day incarnation of

the John Birch Society, with the same racist, xenophobic and anti-government dogma — has faded from political prominence in recent years, there remain pockets of zealots who spout their exclusionist propaganda. Regrettably, some are in Sarasota County.

Randy McLendon, the ringleader of the Sarasota County Tea Party faction, is one of the candidates for the School Board, seeking to unseat incumbent Jane Goodwin, the current chairwoman of the board. He is joined by Helen Wolff, who is opposing incumbent Shirley Brown. He also had recruited another Tea Party candidate to run for Todd's seat, but Geoffrey Fisher apparently had more important obligations during the week set aside for candidates to file with the Supervisor of Elections (SOE). Fisher straggled into the SOE office one minute after the deadline for filing, so his candidacy was denied ... and McLendon was deprived of having three extremist candidates running for the three open seats.

The citizens of Sarasota County will not be served by having their excellent public school system become the province of misguided radical political beliefs. Tea Party extremists deal only in bizarre conspiracy theories, and one of those is that the Common Core education standards are somehow a socialist plot. Never mind that the local board has

to follow the requirements of the state in this matter, or that no less a Republican dignitary than former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush is a major proponent of the Common Core

*Ken Marsh's experience, his acumen and his humanity and concern for all students will be an asset for the school district in the years to come, especially with the pending retirement of Lori White in 2017.*



# OPINION

curriculum. It is all about perpetuating their paranoid narrative that the country is on the brink of a socialist takeover and the enslavement of the populace.

The School Board is no place for such wild-eyed fringe views. **Voters should reelect Jane Goodwin to her District 5 seat, and reelect Shirley Brown to her District 4 seat.** 

## REELECT INCUMBENTS TO THE SARASOTA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL BOARD

### EDITORIAL

There are five elected seats on the Sarasota Memorial Hospital board that are open this year, but all five Republican incumbents — Robert Strasser, Darryl Henry, Richard Merritt, Gregory Carter and Joseph DeVirgilio — are running for reelection.

Surprisingly, another Republican is opposing each of them. Such unusual internecine tension was made even more sinister when one of those Republican challengers — Jack Brill — claimed that it was part of a plot by Hospital Corporation of America (HCA) to have SMH become a for-profit hospital so HCA could acquire it (HCA owns Doctors Hospital in Sarasota).

Brill, of course, is well known for having his daughter file for a sham write-in candidacy to keep Democrats and unaffiliated voters from participating in the Jon Thaxton-Kathy Dent primary for Supervisor of Elections in 2012.


Brill claims he was approached by a representative of HCA to enlist his participation in the plan to assume a majority of the SMH board, and the hospital's eventual privatization, but that he refused to be part of it.

His revelation sparked a vigorous denial by HCA representatives that they had any such intentions. It also led three of the other Republican challengers to claim they would

sign pledges to maintain SMH as a public institution.

The denial by HCA is of little consequence, given that this is the same organization once headed by Rick Scott, which paid a record \$2 billion penalty to the federal government to settle all criminal and civil charges arising out of a massive fraud investigation in the 1990s. The protestations, therefore, have too much of a Nixonian “I am not a crook” mien to resolve any public apprehension about the intentions, and the HCA refutation of the rumor should not be trusted as credible.

The so-called pledges made by the other challengers also mean little. Anyone can make a pledge and just as easily break that pledge once given the opportunity to do so.

The most important fact is that the five incumbent board members all voted in 2013 to keep SMH a public hospital. They demonstrated their commitment to the future of a public hospital by their actions, not their promises. None of the challengers can make that same claim, and voters would be wise not to give them the chance to do otherwise. **We urge voters to reelect the five incumbents — Robert Strasser, Darryl Henry, Richard Merritt, Gregory Carter and Joseph DeVirgilio — to the Sarasota Memorial Hospital board on Aug. 26.** 





# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>01+</b> <b>AUGUST</b>	<b>Friends of Selby Library present Books, Baubles &amp; Bling Sale</b> Aug. 1-2, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Selby Public Library, 1331 First St., Sarasota. Event will feature books — including rare and collectible editions — jewelry, bric-a-brac, accessories, handbags, art, antiques and curios. Donations welcome. Information: 861-1140.
<b>01+</b> <b>AUGUST</b>	<b>Allyn Gallup Gallery presents <i>Drawn From Nature</i></b> Aug. 1 through Oct. 25; times vary. 1288 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Show features works by noted landscape artists. Information: 366-2454 or <a href="http://AllynGallup.com">AllynGallup.com</a> .
<b>01+</b> <b>AUGUST</b>	<b>Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>Clearly Invisible, Magic Up Close</i> with Carl Seiger</b> Through Aug. 3; times vary. John C. Court Cabaret, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$32 to \$36. Information: 366-9000 or <a href="http://floridastudiotheatre.org">floridastudiotheatre.org</a> .
<b>01+</b> <b>AUGUST</b>	<b>Banyan Theater Company presents <i>The Styx of the Blind Pig</i> by Phillip Hayes Dean</b> 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: <a href="http://banyantheatercompany.com">banyantheatercompany.com</a> .
<b>01+</b> <b>AUGUST</b>	<b>Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe presents <i>Marvin Gaye: Prince of Soul</i></b> Through Aug. 10; times vary. 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$29.50, adults; \$16.50, students. Information: 366-1505 or <a href="http://wbtsrq.org">wbtsrq.org</a> .
<b>01+</b> <b>AUGUST</b>	<b>Venice Theatre presents <i>Cabaret</i></b> Through Aug. 10; times vary. 140 W. Tampa Ave., Venice. Tickets: \$13 to \$25. Information: 488-1115 or <a href="http://venicestage.com">venicestage.com</a> .
<b>01+</b> <b>AUGUST</b>	<b>Art Center Sarasota presents <i>Florida Flavor</i></b> 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 <a href="http://artsarasota.org">artsarasota.org</a> .



# THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>01+</b> AUGUST	<b>Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>Taking Shakespeare</i></b> Through Aug. 17; times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$32 to \$36. This is the play's U.S. premiere. Information: 366-9000 or <a href="http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org">FloridaStudioTheatre.org</a> .
<b>01+</b> AUGUST	<b>FST Improv: <i>Out of Bounds Match Up</i></b> Through Aug. 23, 7:30 p.m. Browne's Lab Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$15. Information: 366-9000 or <a href="http://www.FloridaStudioTheatre.org">www.FloridaStudioTheatre.org</a> .
<b>01+</b> AUGUST	<b>UUCS Presents <i>Jane Shannon: Works in Fabric</i></b> Through Sept. 4; times vary. Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, Lexow Wing Gallery, 3975 Fruitville Road, Sarasota. Free. Information: 371-4974 or the church <a href="#">website</a> .
<b>01+</b> AUGUST	<b>Dabbert Gallery presents <i>Summer Showcase</i></b> 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 <a href="http://dabbertgallery.com">dabbertgallery.com</a> .
<b>02+</b> AUGUST	<b>Bookstore1Sarasota presents <i>Breakfast Serial Book Club</i></b> Aug. 2 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: <a href="http://bookstore1sarasota.com">bookstore1sarasota.com</a> or 365-7900.
<b>02+</b> AUGUST	<b>Fuñoz Dance Artists presents <i>In the Round Interactive Dance Performance</i></b> Aug. 2-3; times vary. The Black Box Theater, <a href="#">Hamilton Center</a> , New College of Florida, Gen. Spaatz Blvd., Sarasota. Tickets: \$20; for students, \$10. Limited seating. Information: <a href="mailto:ad.fuziondance@gmail.com">ad.fuziondance@gmail.com</a> or 345-5755.
<b>05+</b> AUGUST	<b>FST presents <i>Somewhere Over the Rose: The Songs and Stories of Judy Garland and Bette Midler</i></b> Aug. 5-31; times vary. Court Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$32. Information: <a href="http://floridastudiotheatre.org">floridastudiotheatre.org</a> or 366-9000.
<b>07</b> AUGUST	<b>Historic Spanish Point presents <i>Lisa Ridings and Vertigo in concert</i></b> Aug. 7, 7-10 p.m. 337 N. Tamiami Trail, Osprey. Tickets: \$5 at the door. Audience members should bring lawn chairs or blankets. Food and drinks available for purchase. Information: 966-5214 or <a href="http://historicspanishpoint.org">historicspanishpoint.org</a> .
<b>07+</b> AUGUST	<b>Players Theatre presents <i>Talking With</i></b> Aug. 7-17; times vary. 838 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$18. Jane Martin's series of monologues won an American Theatre Critics Association Award. Information: 365-2494 or <a href="http://theplayers.org">theplayers.org</a> .

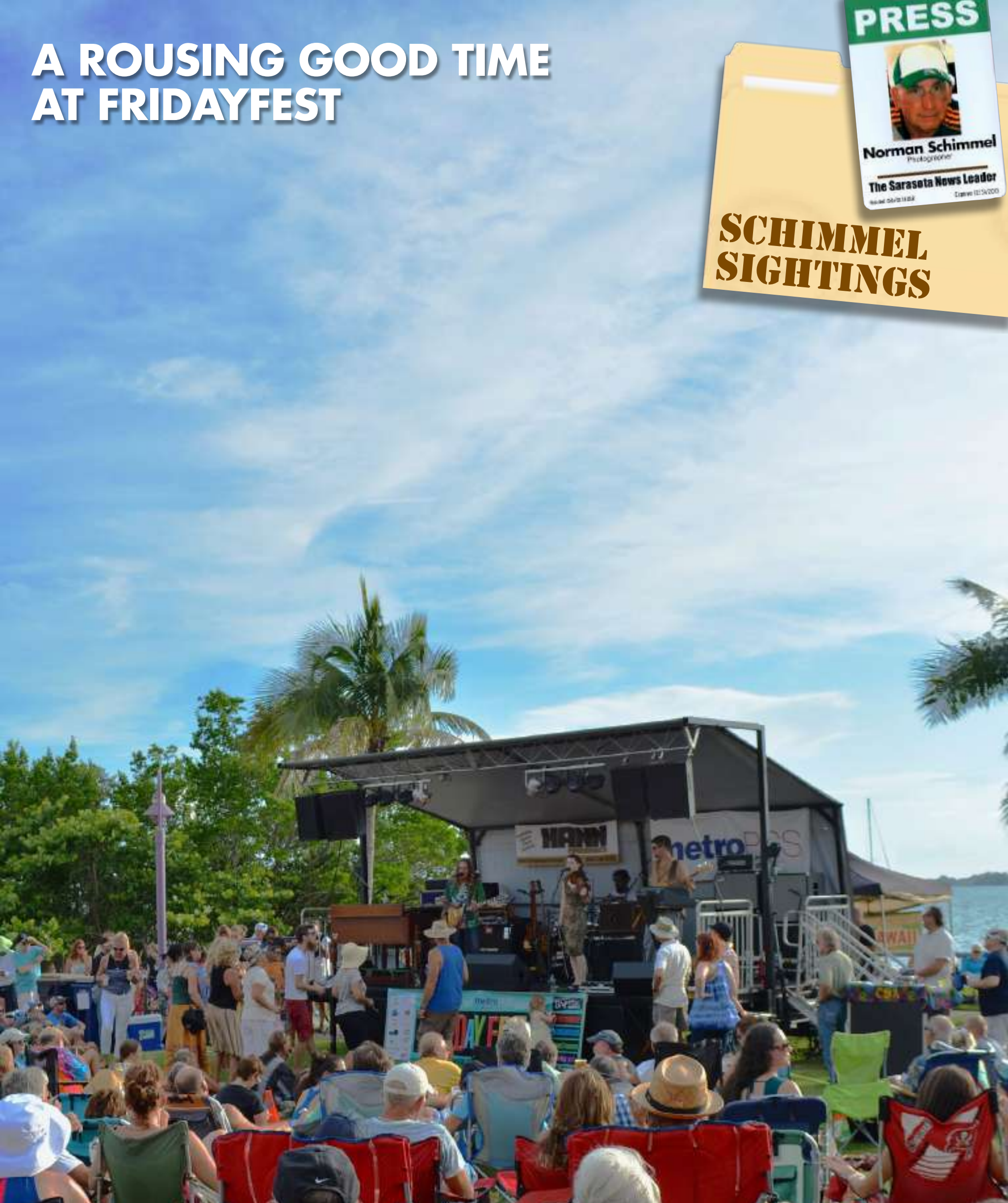
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[News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)



# A ROUSING GOOD TIME AT FRIDAYFEST



## SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS



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





Barbara Lee

## *A Second Chance on My Smile.*



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

A smile is the first thing I notice about someone. However, that was the part of me I wanted to hide from everyone, including myself. In 2007, my family dentist of 30 years told me he could help. He then crowned all of my teeth. They looked better, but they immediately started to crack, one by one. He kept promising me he could correct them by re-making them. He was frustrated, but I was devastated. I then realized that I never received a stable, comfortable position to chew. My bite was totally off.

After four consultations with different dentists and lots of research, I chose Dr. Christine Koval for her warmth, reassurance, confidence, and experience in correcting bites and making teeth beautiful! Dr. Koval's team is very caring and professional, and her skill level is second to none. I am so incredibly pleased, not only with my beautiful smile but also with my comfortable and natural bite.

I feel so thankful and blessed for this second chance on my smile!

For a complimentary consultation call **941.923.5406**  
To view our extensive smile gallery, visit **[askdrkoval.com](http://askdrkoval.com)**

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