

**THE SARASOTA**

March 8, 2013

# News Leader

*The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida*

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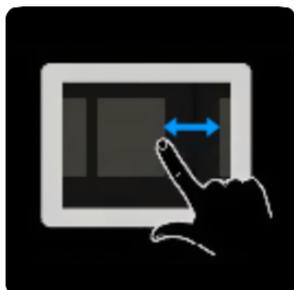
**THE 'SOUND MERRY-GO-ROUND'**

**QUESTIONING INTERNAL CHARGES**

*Inside*

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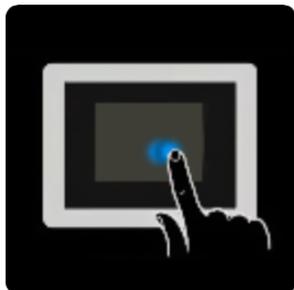
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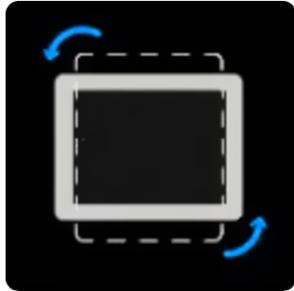
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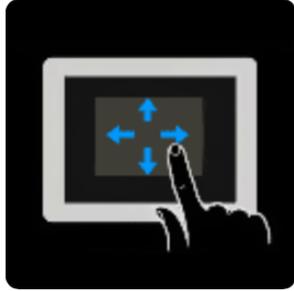
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# A.K.A. HELP

# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

*The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida*

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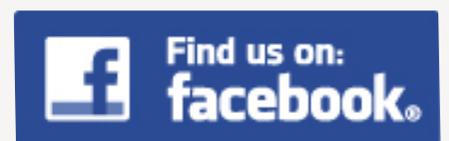
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# Welcome

Each week, two of my primary responsibilities are making a final recommendation on the order of stories in the publication and compiling the News Briefs.

Fortunately, since we have “progressive” in our tagline, some stories easily lend themselves to a front-of-the-book spot. For example, no other publications around town seem to be taking an interest in the domestic partnership registry matter at the county level. Putting a story we write about that near the front of the *News Leader* is a logical decision.

Likewise, while the Walmart proposal for the Ringling shopping center remained in the spotlight, we felt readers were eager to find out City Editor Stan Zimmerman’s take on the latest action in the saga.

Of course, when we scoop the other news media, we automatically put those articles at or near the top of the list.

One beauty of our digital format, however, is that you do not have to turn page after page after page to reach a story that interests you. All you need to do is scan our Table of Contents each week and click on the headlines that grab your attention; that click takes you right to the article. The others, you can save for later.

The News Briefs, as they say in Oz, is a horse of a different color. We try very hard to include news about street or facility closings, for example, to save you time and trouble. This weekly compilation also is a good place for shorter staff-written pieces about matters we feel are noteworthy.

The rest of the articles come from a wide variety of news releases. This time of year, especially, there is no dearth of them. We try to provide you a smorgasbord from which to choose — non-profit news; arrests; upcoming events that need a fuller explanation than our Community Calendar can provide.

As always, we welcome any comments about whether you would like to see more or less of a particular type of item in the News Briefs — or elsewhere in the *News Leader*.

***Rachel Brown Hackney***

Editor and Publisher



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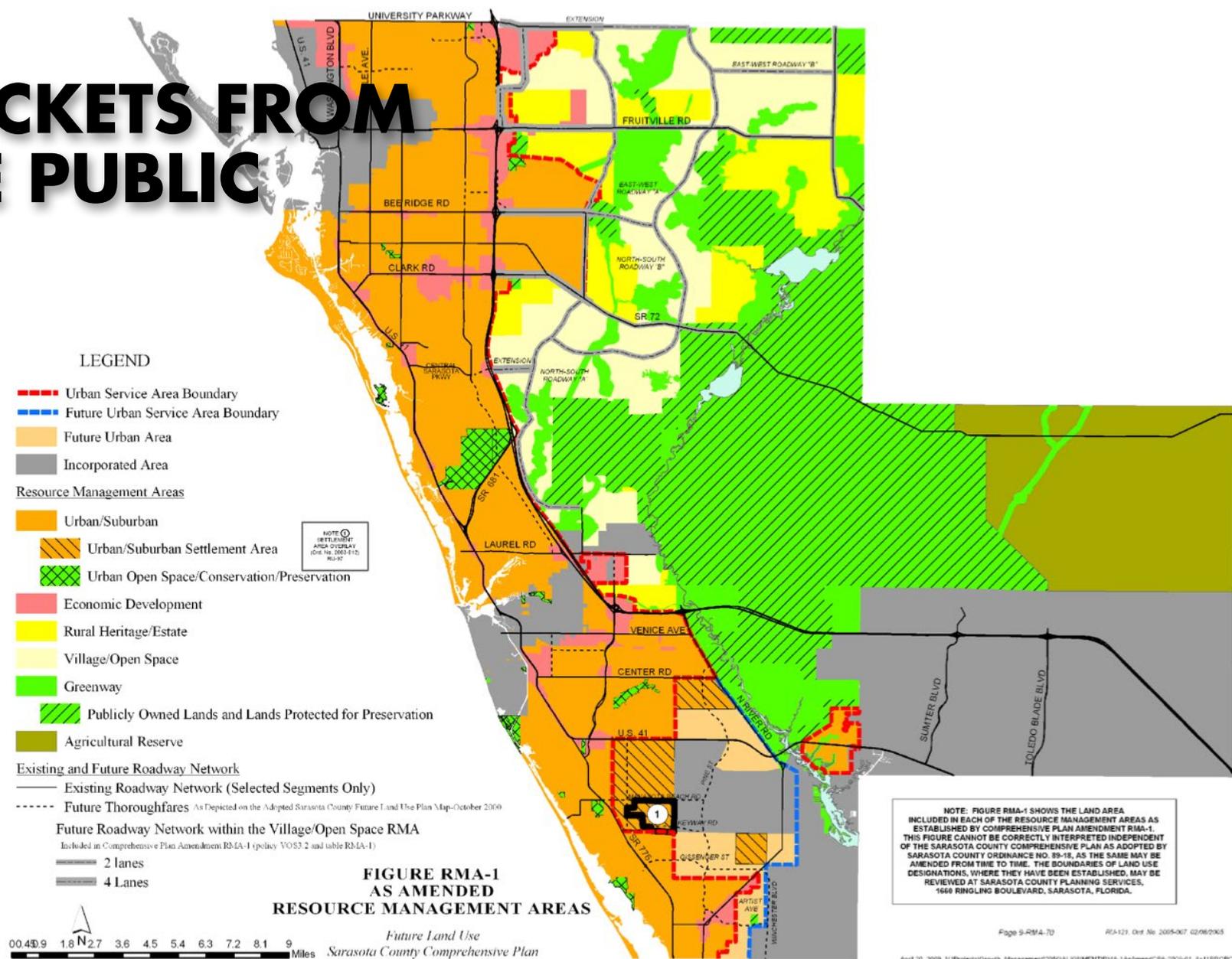
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# CRICKETS FROM THE PUBLIC



*A Sarasota County map shows details of how the 2050 plan would be applied to future development. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

## IN DEBATE OVER SARASOTA 2050, COUNTY RESIDENTS WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO VOICE THEIR OWN VIEWS ABOUT FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

By Cooper Levey-Baker  
*Associate Editor*

Now it is your turn.

Starting next Wednesday evening, March 13, Sarasota County residents will have the chance to sound off about the fate of [Sarasota 2050](#), the detailed land-use plan approved 11 years ago to preserve open space and to encourage the construction of walkable, mixed-use communities.

The plan requires builders to follow a set of specific rules crafted to encourage the construction of village-style neighborhoods rather

than traditional suburbs — regulations that come in exchange for the ability to increase density. The creation of the plan was an attempt to strike a bargain between developers hoping to construct housing in new areas, primarily east of I-75, and communities that were concerned about unchecked urban sprawl.

But now that bargain might be headed for the scrap heap. Last September, the Sarasota County Commission voted to have Planning and Development Services staffers begin re-

evaluating 2050, specifically tasking them with meeting with developers who have worked with the plan to solicit recommendations on how to alter it. Meet they did, and the department returned with a list of 38 “issues” developers said they encountered when dealing with 2050.

One example: fiscal neutrality monitoring rules, which require periodic reports to guarantee that a project will not cost the county money. Developers want those check-ups, delivered at “every phase of a development or on an annual or bi-annual basis,” eliminated.

Another example: stipulations that new neighborhoods have a mix of different housing types to serve different communities. Developers want those regulations “amended” to provide more latitude.

A third example: a requirement that the commercial portion of a neighborhood be “located internally within a project.” Developers want that portion of the plan struck.

Critics of 2050 point to the fact that only one new development, Neal Communities’ Grand Palm, has gotten off the ground through 2050 as evidence the regulations are too restrictive. In addition to Grand Palm, Schroeder-Manatee has received the go-ahead for Villages of Lakewood Ranch South, a 5,500-acre, 5,144-unit development that brings the total number of units approved under 2050 to more than 7,000.

Having heard the developers’ side of things, the County Commission voted in January to schedule a series of public meetings to solicit comment from the public — meetings that kick off at 5:30 p.m. next Wednesday at Twin Lakes Park.

Long-Range Planning Manager Allen Parsons says the meetings will be run in an “open house” style, complete with table displays on the relevant issues. There will not be any formal presentation. “Staff there will be available to answer questions and take in-

**“ There are a handful of people that have heard what this is about and don’t really understand the parameters of 2050, and the majority of those are people who own land that’s affected, and then maybe five or six people that I’ve heard from that have taken part in creating the plan that are concerned.**

Nora Patterson  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



put,” he adds.

So far, Parsons has not heard much from county residents who are opposed to the changes. “Not a whole lot of input,” he says. But he does note a high level of interest in the public meetings. An announcement email sent to interested parties this week went out to 283 email addresses, including those of real estate investor Bob Waechter, City Commissioner Terry Turner and Pat Neal, president of Neal Communities.

After Wednesday’s meeting, and one like it the following week, Parsons’ department will organize whatever feedback it receives and present it to the County Commission. Parsons is shooting for a spot on the board’s May 8 agenda.

The debate over 2050 has so far proven to be relatively low-key, with only a handful of residents speaking out against the proposed changes — a marked difference from the in-

tense controversy over the Ringling Plaza Walmart, for example.

One tireless critic of the proposed 2050 overhaul has been attorney Dan Lobeck, the president of Control Growth Now. He calls the developer recommendations “an incredible assault on the trade-off between density on one hand and the public interest.”

Lobeck, who helped craft some aspects of the plan, says none of the 38 recommendations are “benign.” He penned and distributed a 3,600-word critique that tackles the issues in turn, concluding: “Each would significantly undermine or destroy an important protection of the public interest at the heart of the Sarasota 2050 Plan.”

One example he brings up is the one mentioned above, the request that developers be allowed to build the commercial portions of their projects outside the villages themselves.

Picture a new neighborhood with its commercial sector on its edge, bordering a major thoroughfare. “It totally trashes the walkability for the village in the way that it was intended,” he tells *The Sarasota News Leader*.

Lobeck is not optimistic the upcoming public meetings will lead to much outrage. “I hope I’m proven wrong, but I strongly suspect it’s just window dressing,” he says.

County Commissioner Nora Patterson, for one, is eager to hear what residents have to say. During the January meeting at which the commission approved the open houses, she was the only board member who seemed skeptical of the developers’ requests. As she noted, she also was the only one sitting on the dais who actually voted in favor of the plan in the first place. She said she still believes in 2050’s principles.



*The Sarasota County Commission sits in session earlier this year. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Commissioner Christine Robinson took issue with Patterson's analysis. "You were inferring that we were agreeing to accept all of these [proposed changes]," she said. "No way am I suggesting by any means that we end up looking like Miami."

Commissioners Charles Hines and Carolyn Mason chimed in to say they agreed.

The strongest criticism of the 2050 plan has repeatedly come from County Commissioner Joe Barbetta, who said in January he would "like to scrap" the whole thing. "It'll never work," he said during a meeting last September.

Patterson tells the *News Leader* she has not heard from many constituents on the issue. "There are a handful of people that have heard what this is about and don't really understand the parameters of 2050, and the majority of those are people who own land that's affected," she says, "and then maybe five or six people that I've heard from that have taken part in creating the plan that are concerned."

She says she "can't imagine" the commission will accept all 38 developer recommendations, but she is not comfortable going public yet with the ones that trouble her.

"If you gut the regulations, you've approved development that's pretty massive without getting back the advantage to the public of 2050," she says. "It's a really complicated plan and it all fits together."

But the fight to preserve the fundamentals of 2050 may depend on whether county residents become engaged.

"If enough people rise up against this push for urban sprawl, it's possible it could be defeated," Lobeck points out, stressing how



*Commissioner Nora Patterson/Photo by Norman Schimmel*

far-reaching the changes might be and arguing that 2050 is a much more important fight than the Walmart battle. Think of the potential increase in traffic along the major east-west thoroughfares, he says. It is already at a standstill during rush hour. "It would be a shame if people don't get aroused until it's too late."

"I spent a number of years working on it and I think we should keep the essence of 2050," Patterson says. She cites the Neal project as a success story. "It has really only been nine years since the plan was put on the table," she notes. "At least four, maybe five, of those have been in a deep recession with no housing market whatsoever, and it's supposed to be a 50-year plan."

*Upcoming Sarasota 2050 public meetings: 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 13, and Wednesday, March 20; Green Building Conference Room, Twin Lakes Park, 6700 Clark Road, Sarasota.*

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“ *The goose laying the golden egg is the resident and the condo owner. The condo owner provides a huge amount of revenue and doesn't demand a lot of services. If they leave, the city's in deep trouble.* ”

Terry Turner  
Commissioner  
City of Sarasota

## THE 'SOUND MERRY-GO-ROUND'

*Downtown condominium owners continue to protest a relaxation of city standards for noise. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **ANALYSIS: AD HOC CITY PANEL TO KICK AROUND THE NOISE ORDINANCE**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

It is a game with a lot of players, most of whom view the game as zero-sum, win or lose. The game is called “The Noise Ordinance,” and it has been played before between residents and business people in downtown Sarasota.

It pits bar owners attracting crowds against lovers of peace and quiet. So far the peace-and-quiet faction is up 2-0. Right on schedule comes a third round.

“I went through this in 1986 when I had three bars and three bands going every night,” said Ernie Ritz. A quarter-century later, he is still in the business, running the Gator Bar at Lemon and Main. And he is the chairman of the Downtown Improvement District.

In the late 1990s, a downtown bar at Lemon and State called the Lemon Coast became the catalyst for today’s regulations. The Lemon Coast occupied an empty corner lot. A tiki hut and truckloads of sand turned the vacant lot into a downtown beach bar with everything but the ocean.

The owners liked music, so they set up a stage against an adjacent three-story wall. The music was aimed directly at the emerging high-rise condos then being sold for serious money. The condo newcomers raised Cain, but the Lemon Coast refused any proposal of compromise.

When the dust cleared, the Lemon Coast was out of business and the current Noise Ordinance had become the law of the land. Right on schedule 14 years later, the dust is rising

again as a new generation wants more life downtown after dark.

### **PREMATURE VICTORY**

Not one but two sets of regulations about noise exist in the city. One is a freestanding regulation, the Noise Ordinance. It stipulates the times music can be played outdoors and the volume. It is enforced by police armed with decibel meters.

The other regulation is a portion of the city’s zoning code; it bans amplified music of any sort outside. It is enforced by the city’s Code Compliance Division of the Department of Neighborhood and Development Services. On Feb. 19, a representative of the Sarasota chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union suggested the city reconsider the amplification ban. “We believe that is unconstitutional on its face,” said Michael Barfield.

City Attorney Bob Fournier replied, “The [City] Commission could suspend it right now and take the safe road.”

The commissioners did — with alacrity — and staff was informed not to cite infractions of the zoning code.

Barfield’s comments came after a senior staffer had written a Feb. 8 letter to downtown restaurants and bars, saying the city was about to begin a push to cite amplified music violations. After the suspension, musicians in the audience at the City Commission meeting cheered the move.

However, opponents of the Noise Ordinance misconstrued the action as renunciation of the standalone ordinance, not just the one little provision in the zoning code. So the music downtown got a little louder and went on a little longer the following two weekends. Thus, downtown residents were primed and ready when the city commissioners sat down Monday, March 4, to discuss the real Noise Ordinance.

## CARAGULIO'S SYMPOSIUM

City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo late last year led two community workshops to explore the background, impact and implications of the city's Noise Ordinance. Between the two, more than 100 people attended. On March 4, Caragiulo brought the show to City

Hall, and at the outset he noted the zero-sum nature of the discussion.

"No matter where you start the conversation, you're going to upset somebody," he said. "If we go forward, it's going to be complicated."

He suggested three different approaches. One would be pursuit of a staff-only study, involving planners and police and possibly consultants. A second would be the formation of an *ad hoc* committee, and the third would be a mix of the first two.

Caragiulo then invited Planning Board Member Mort Siegel to speak. Siegel is a lawyer with 40 years of national experience in entertainment law, representing nightclubs such as The Hard Rock Café and the Playboy Club chain.



*City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo compares readings with a Sarasota police officer checking decibel levels on St. Armands late last year. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

“On one side you have the neighborhoods, with an interest in preserving their quality of life,” he said. “On the other are people who rightfully support the idea of entertainment.”

Siegel gave an air of urgency to the discussion. “If we don’t get it right, we’ll lose control of this city. You cannot let this go without proper enforcement,” he said. “We have to get a hold on it and act on it immediately.”

City Commissioner Terry Turner interrupted: “We suspended enforcement of the zoning code portion relating to amplified music because it was highly likely we would be sued on First Amendment grounds,” he said. “You indicate a balance [is possible] and we can regulate sound with respect to time and place.”

“The cardinal rule is, don’t prohibit,” said Siegel. “Regulate.”

## **LET THE GAMES BEGIN!**

Caragiulo then opened the floor to public comment.

“It has been proposed the city be made more vibrant. If so, the walls and windows downtown will vibrate,” said retired New York Judge Frank Brenner. “Sarasota does not need to be more vibrant. It needs to be more habitable.”

In fact public expectations are framed partially on when people first experienced downtown. A Gillespie Park resident said, “In 1985, downtown was really busy. Then it died. I don’t know why people buy property downtown and don’t consider the noise.”

Charter boat Capt. Wayne Genter told the commission, “My clients are astounded the city goes pretty quiet at night.” He added,

“We’re a growing town and an urbanizing town, and we need to offer urbanism, a little entertainment and a little extra entertainment.”

But a majority of the speakers did not see it that way. “This is out of control; it’s too loud,” said condo dweller and former Sarasota County Commissioner David Mills. “Right now it’s totally out of control.”

David Eschell lives in one of the condos around Five Points Park. “We are very concerned about after-hours noise and rowdiness,” he said. “We’re at a crossroads. We really have to control what’s happening.”

Bars and restaurants from O’Leary’s on the bayfront to establishments up and down Main Street to Burns Court were singled out by name as problems. Judge Brenner even fingered a dress shop with an outdoor speaker. Their refrain became a mantra: “It’s not right to affect the local people who are paying taxes.”

Musicians and music lovers were badly outnumbered Monday. Downtown resident Christian Ziegler tried to elevate the conversation. “We are the arts capital of the Southeast. Part of that is our music and our musicians. We need to keep that reputation. Music is one of the biggest draws for the city,” he said. “Make Sarasota a destination.”

## **MEANWHILE, 20 BLOCKS NORTH**

Downtown is not the only part of town with a sound problem. Earlier in the evening, the city commissioners held a public hearing on an ordinance to stop cars from blasting music into neighborhoods in the middle of the night. Some car stereo systems are so loud the noise

can be heard almost a mile away, one police officer said.

“I pray each and every one of you don’t have to live with this. I have to put up with it every night. I work two jobs,” said Vernell Coleman. “When I get to sleep, here it comes, ‘Boom, boom, boom, boom.’”

She offered a partial solution. “Maybe we need to borrow some of these cars and go out on Bird Key and see if we can get some progress on this ordinance.”

An earlier city’s anti-boom-car ordinance — which allowed impoundment and seizure of vehicles found in violation — was held to be

unconstitutional by the Second District Court of Appeal. The new ordinance removes the impoundment language and falls in line with higher court guidelines.

“This has nothing to do with entertainment,” said City Attorney Fournier. “This is about vehicles.”

A violation would be a second-degree misdemeanor punishable by 60 days in the county jail and a \$500 fine. Police would issue an order to stop the noise immediately, or offenders would face the judicial music.

“I’d hate to see an 18-year-old busted. I don’t want to see the courts clogged with loud ste-



*The Rivo at Ringling condominium complex is also in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

reo stuff,” said City Commissioner Shannon Snyder. “And then [the offender] can’t enlist in the military because he has a misdemeanor violation on his record.”

Vice Mayor Willie Shaw requested the new ordinance, but he backed off after hearing Snyder’s comments. “The intent is to remove the noise from the street. I want corrective action not punitive action,” Shaw said. “This is a real issue that needs addressing, but I don’t want a record that creates a life-threatening situation when it comes to getting a job.”

The ordinance standard says if someone can hear the car from 50 feet away, the vehicle is in violation. The ordinance sets time limits, too — between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. on the weekdays and 10 p.m. and 10 a.m. on the weekends. The commissioners approved the proposed ordinance unanimously. However, Fournier was ordered to tweak the enforcement section. After a second reading, the ordinance could go into effect in early April.

## CHASING THE GOOSE

The downtown noise problem defies easy solution, in part because the stakes are much higher than late-night blues music.

“What is Sarasota’s business model?” asked Commissioner Terry Turner. “It’s residential development, downtown shopping and dining and regulated entertainment.”

He noted residents pay 73 percent of the city’s income, with 30 percent coming from downtown condominium dwellers.

“The goose laying the golden egg is the resident and the condo owner. The condo own-

er provides a huge amount of revenue and doesn’t demand a lot of services. If they leave, the city’s in deep trouble,” Turner said. “We do have a vibrant downtown. It’s just not Ybor City. I’m up for looking at the sound ordinances, but what business model are we evolving towards?”

“I don’t know anyone close to this who sees Ybor City. I don’t know anyone who wants a totally deregulated New Orleans thing,” said Caragiulo. “We need more enforcement, more qualified [police] officers. There is lots of opportunity to alter some of these things — how you permit operations, how you position speakers. You can’t treat all businesses the same.”

City Manager Tom Barwin added, “We have the message on enforcement. We’ll report back on that. I’d suggest perhaps an *ad hoc* committee, and perhaps we can retain a consultant, and we can come back in 90 or 100 days with a list of options.”

Barwin said he would like the commission to provide some names of people willing to serve on the committee. “We’ll bring back a recommendation in two weeks,” he said.

The *ad hoc* committee, he added, would operate under Florida’s Open Meetings and Public Records laws. And that means members will need to undergo mandatory training because the ACLU is watching.

So is the Downtown Improvement District. Its board members agreed the next day to participate in the process, bringing the voices of the landlords and bar operators to the “Noise Ordinance party.” Expect it to be a noisy one — again. 



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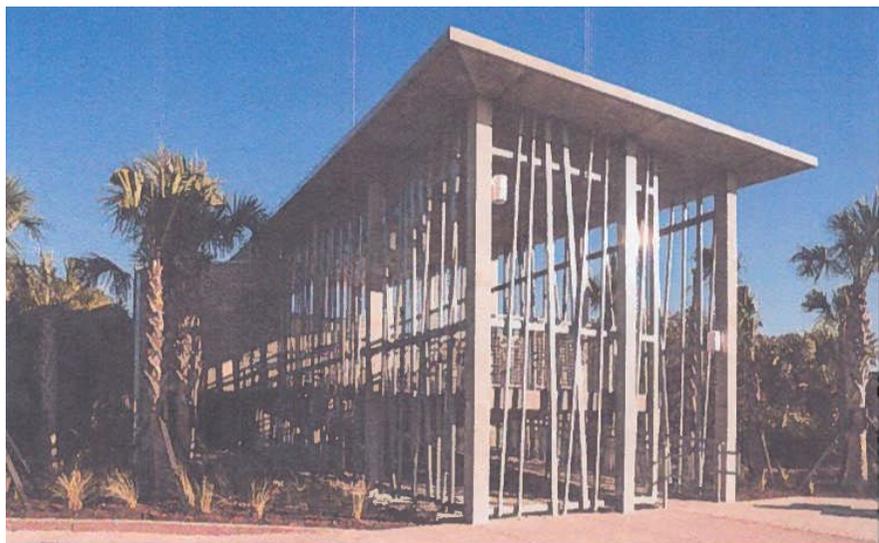


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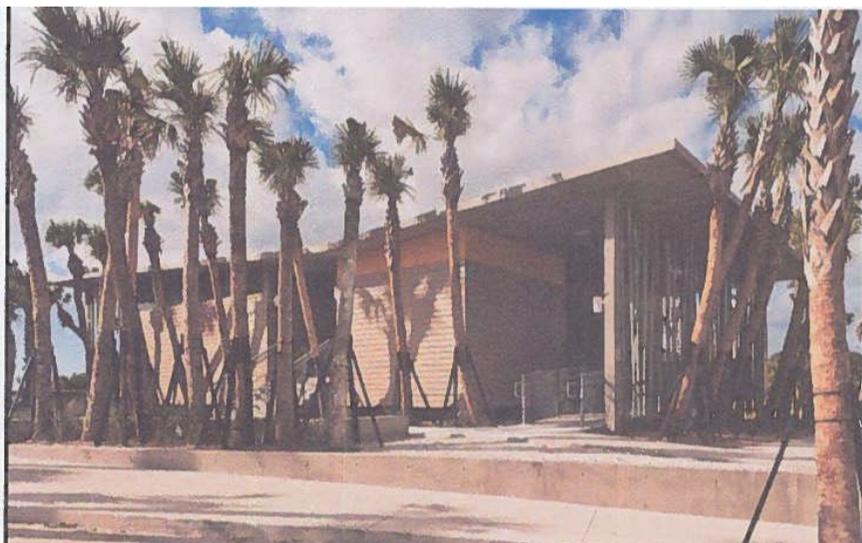
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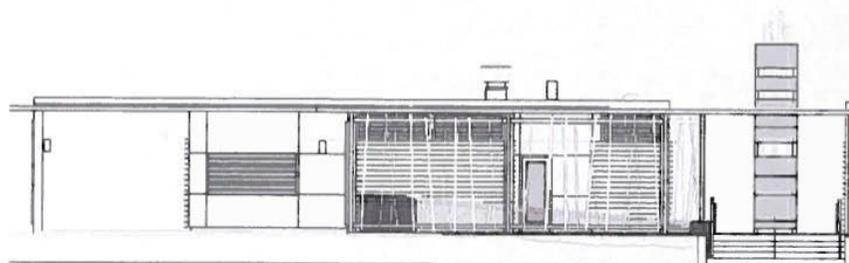
# QUESTIONING INTERNAL CHARGES



Caspersen Beach



Manasota Beach



North Jetty (elevation view)



S. Lido (rendering)

*County illustrations show the South Lido Beach restroom facility will resemble other restroom facilities already constructed or planned. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

## THE COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES A \$1.3 MILLION SOUTH LIDO BEACH RESTROOM PROJECT BUT INDICATES CHANGES AHEAD FOR CALCULATING STAFF EXPENSES

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

While they approved a contract this week to allow the construction of a new restroom facility on South Lido Beach, the Sarasota County Commission also made it plain to staff members that they want to find a more economical way to manage such projects.

More than anything else, Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Nora

Patterson took issue with how staff bills internal costs for time it spends on projects.

Barbetta pointed out that almost \$280,000 — or about 37 percent — of the \$1.3 million total cost of the project reflected time billed for the Public Works Department employees working on it plus the expense of hiring

**“ To take a project like this and have it end up at \$1.3 million doesn't make a lot of sense to me. ”**

Joe Barbetta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County

an outside construction management firm to oversee construction.

“It’s a small project,” Barbetta continued. “I don’t understand why the architect/engineering team [or a staff engineer] can’t manage this project.”

The vote was split 3-1, with Commissioner Christine Robinson wanting more detail on the breakdown of internal costs. Nonetheless, she praised Isaac Brownman, the county’s interim director of Public Works capital projects, for his presentation and readiness to answer questions.

Chairwoman Carolyn Mason was absent because of illness.

The vote had been postponed from Feb. 26, when commissioners questioned what they said appeared to be too high a construction cost for the square footage of the facility.

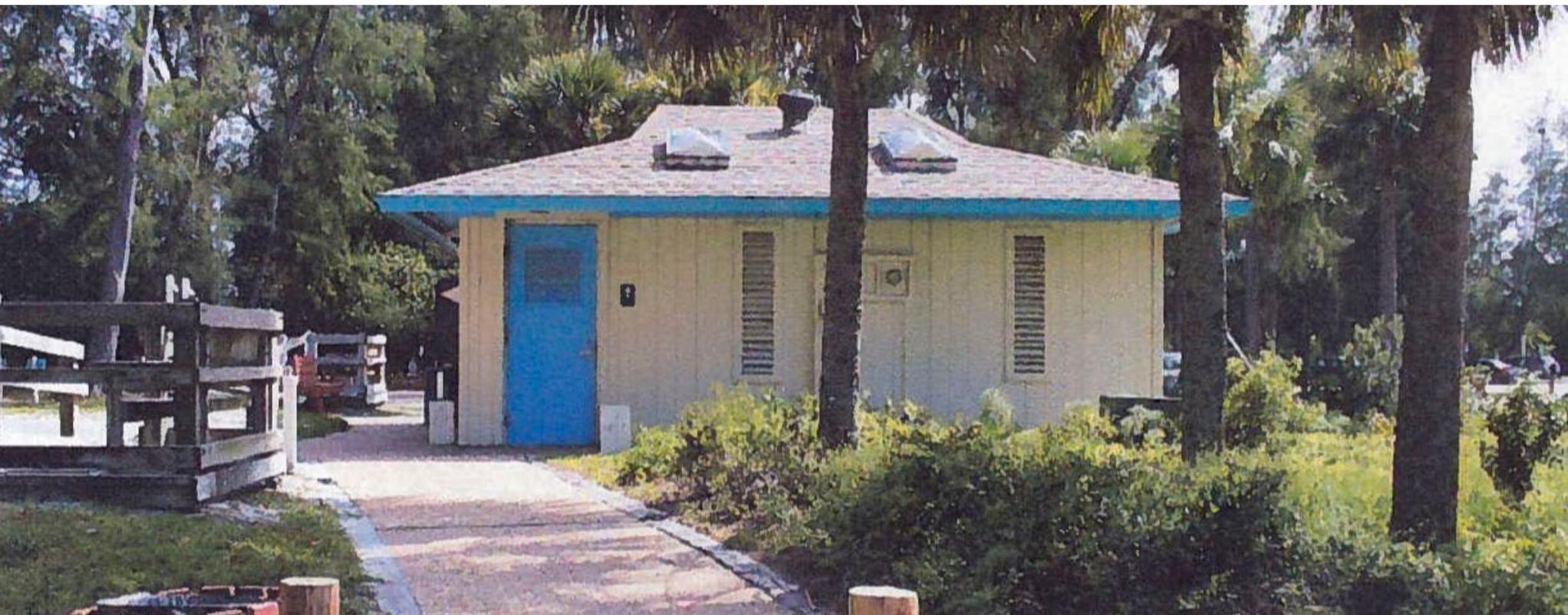
The Procurement Department had recommended the County Commission approve a bid from Core Construction Services of FL, based in Sarasota, for \$859,754.45.

Looking at the consent agenda material staff had provided, Patterson said on Feb. 26 that the cost came out to about \$533 per square foot. Barbetta pointed to the total project cost of \$1,287,000, which was about \$798 per square foot.

## FEATURES AND FACTS

Brownman explained on March 6 that the existing South Lido Beach restroom facility is not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Moreover, he said, county staff was utilizing a design for five planned restroom projects throughout the county that would be durable and distinctive, reflecting a county “brand.” The new facility also would be constructed to withstand 130 mph wind, and it would incorporate composite decking material, natural air ventilation, a cistern to collect water for toilet flushing and a new event/registration room.

Todd Sweet, principal architect of Sweet Sparkman Architects in Sarasota, which designed the facility, noted that the structure would be elevated to 13 feet 8 inches from



*The existing restroom facility at South Lido Beach does not comply with federal guidelines for handicap-accessibility, county staff says. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

a mean elevation above ground level of between 4 and 5 feet. Because of that 9-foot vertical transition, Sweet said, an ADA-accessible ramp slightly more than 120 feet long had been incorporated into the design.

The total area of the structure, Sweet added, will be 2,858 square feet.

Backing out the landscaping cost for the project — about \$100,000 — and the expense for a dumpster enclosure in a parking lot about 100 yards away from the facility, the “hard construction cost was about \$663,000, Sweet said. That was about \$231 per square foot.

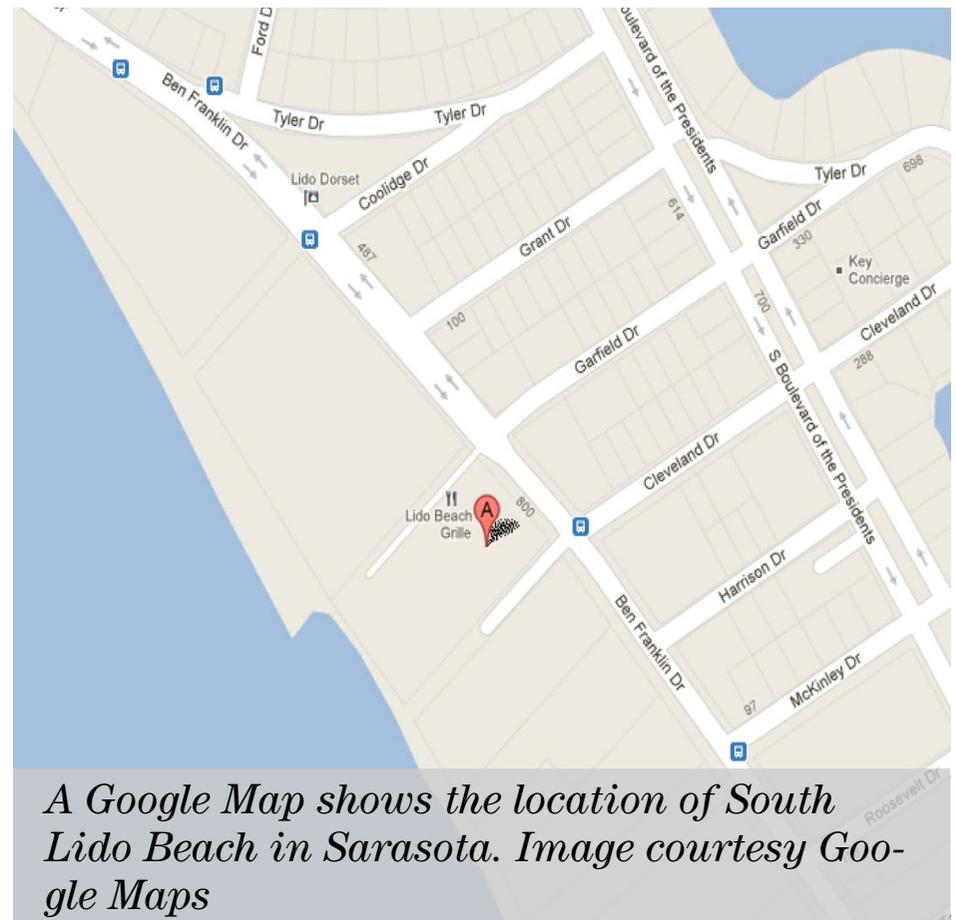
The overall expense was comparable to the cost of new restroom facilities at Casperson Beach and Manasota Beach, he pointed out.

When Brownman provided a breakdown of the other expenses, he noted that \$135,052 was the expense for internal support of Public Works staff. Additionally, the “Central Service” expense was \$46,900. The latter amount reflected charges “across the organization,” he said, including the county’s Human Resources and Information Technology departments’ support, as well as support from the Office of Financial Planning.

Since 2008, he noted, the Public Works Department had been adding such charges to project totals.

## THE FIGURES

While Barbetta said Sweet’s cost-per-square-foot figure was reasonable, he objected to the internal expenses. “With the amount we’ll spend on projects for construction management,” he added, “we might as well hire a full-time, retired architectural engineer and have him work for us and pay him \$200,000 or



*A Google Map shows the location of South Lido Beach in Sarasota. Image courtesy Google Maps*

\$300,000 a year, and we would save *millions* of dollars.”

Moreover, Barbetta said, such a person “could manage a lot of our projects ... To take a project like this and have it end up at \$1.3 million doesn’t make a lot of sense to me.”

He added, “To have Public Works supported by construction projects is not the right way to do it.”

Brownman pointed out that the system was set up in 2008 “to relieve a burden on the general fund at the time.”

“It’s a phantom cost,” Barbetta said of the staff time being billed.

Barbetta added that he would guess five or six county employees sit in on meetings once a project has been designed, when one or two probably would be sufficient.

Brownman pointed out that staff does coordinate projects and review consulting architects’ work.

“You’re billing hours,” Barbetta said.

“The cost is still there,” Brownman told Barbetta.

Barbetta agreed but pointed out of the South Lido project, “We’re not giving money to the contractor. It’s an internal charge and that’s why I have a problem. ... To the public, it’s looking like a \$1.3 million project when in reality it’s a \$900,000 project.”

Nonetheless, Barbetta continued, “At least today [the figures] alleviate the concern we’re building a gold-plated restroom facility.”

Robinson pointed out that the situation was one of accounting.

Patterson questioned whether project costs were being inflated through the internal charges system.

Brownman replied that he and James K. Harriott Jr., the county’s chief engineer, had been discussing the situation with staff in the Office of Financial Planning, looking “at opportunities to change this model, if possible.”

“I sort of wonder if you aren’t, in your internal support figure, sort of double-supervising stuff beyond the point that it’s actually needed,” Patterson told him.

An outside construction manager can spend “significantly more time on a project than our resources can afford,” Brownman responded.

Furthermore, he said, if the County Commission hired someone to assist internally as a construction manager, that person would not be able to work on every project going on at the same time, because of the demands of the work.

With smaller projects, Robinson pointed out, the consultants already working on them probably could handle more oversight through the construction phase instead of the county having to hire outside firms. “This might be a place where we can hit a sweet spot and save some money,” she said.

Staff already had been talking with Sweet about expanding the scope of his firm’s contract, Brownman told her. “We can proceed with that if that is the board’s will,” he added.

“We really do need to take a hard look at the practices we have been using,” Patterson said, “and make sure we are fair.”

Additionally, Patterson said she would like to see staff spend more time working on the estimate for each new project instead of relying on costs for previous, similar projects, to calculate expenses.

Vice Chairman Charles Hines pointed out that the county needed “a change in the way that we have been doing business. This is [notice] going to all staff and the administration,” he added, “when we have to explain to the public why a bathroom at a beach costs [\$1.3 million].”

Barbetta made the motion to approve the contract; Patterson seconded it.

Just before the vote, however, Patterson asked Sweet whether the ramp would be the only way to enter the new facility.

“The ramp is the only way up,” he replied. Parks and Recreation Department staff had indicated to his firm, Sweet continued, that liability issues had arisen in the past with steps. Moreover, he said, if the project had steps, they would be “going up 9 feet in the air.” 

A close-up photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a black top, holding a large sandwich. The sandwich is made with a crusty, golden-brown roll and is filled with lettuce, tomato, onion, and a dark meat patty. The woman's hands are visible on either side of the sandwich, holding it steady. The background is a plain, light color.

# This may take a while.

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## THE DID'S DOINGS

*The popularity of Tube Dudes downtown has sparked discussion about whether they should be regulated like advertising signage. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### TUBE DUDES, SIDEWALKS AND ONE UNUSUAL LAWSUIT ARE THE FOCUS OF DOWNTOWN GROUP'S DISCUSSIONS THIS WEEK

By Stan Zimmerman

*City Editor*

“We don’t have an ordinance that deals with taste,” said John Moran, the operations manager of the Downtown Improvement District during the group’s meeting this week, on March 5. “This came up when we thought we had a proliferation of Tube Dudes.”

“Every one [of them] is a sign,” said DID Chairman Ernie Ritz of the Tube Dudes around town. “It’s holding a pizza or a hair blower, I bet there’s already a sign ordinance they should meet.”

In reality, the signature sculptures of

Scott Gerber are neither art nor advertising. “It is not treated as a sign under the sign ordinance,” said Steve Stancel, the city planner who is the liaison with the DID.

Moran added, “I was informed yesterday this is not art and not under the purview of Public Art Committee.”

“Are you suggesting a specific Tube Dude ordinance?”

John Moran  
Operations Manager  
Downtown Improvement District

“They are cute; the public loves ’em,” said Dr. Mark Kaufman. “But the proliferation is too much, too much of a cute thing. More than two per block is getting ridiculous.”

“What happens if there is 30 or more that pop up? It’s going to be addressed sooner rather than later,” said district member Tom Mannausa.

To reflect the “what is it?” tenor of the discussion, the district members agreed to put the “Tube Dude Question” on their next agenda, for March 19. The item will focus on “art/sidewalk/signage.”

“Are you suggesting a specific Tube Dude ordinance?” asked Moran.

“Let’s just get some input and planning guidance,” said Mannausa.

“You do not want this to become a significant problem after the tenants have spent the money on them,” said Kaufman. “They are not cheap.”

Right now “the dudes” hang out in Gerber’s showroom in the old Sarasota Hardware

space on Main Street, as well as in front of several downtown businesses.

Despite the whimsy, sidewalk space is becoming a premium business element in Sarasota. The proliferation of sidewalk cafes with overhanging awnings, sandwich board advertisements and Tube Dudes is cutting into pedestrian space both downtown and on St. Armands Circle, critics say.

“There is a right of way problem and a Tube Dude problem,” said Kaufman. “Sandwich boards are already regulated.”

DID member Eileen Hampshire quipped in response, “You’d never know it.”

As their final item on their March 6 agenda, the Sarasota city commissioners talked about “table creep” at cafes. Theoretically, a business must keep open a five-foot-wide path for



*City officials remain concerned about cases of downtown outdoor dining areas intruding into sidewalk space. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

pedestrians, but serving carts, waiters and shifting tables often narrow that gap.

The city is about to install much wider sidewalks downtown and some commissioners hope the pedestrian pathway can be expanded in the process.

“We’re about to undertake a huge public investment in widening the sidewalks, and we don’t want to end up with just five feet,” said Commissioner Terry Turner.

Staff was instructed to start looking into the issue of pedestrian access.

## THE PUBLIC RECORDS SUIT

City Attorney Bob Fournier in past weeks has briefed at least two city advisory boards about what he has called an “unprecedented” lawsuit filed by Michael Barfield, legal advisor to the Sarasota chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, to produce public records not on city computers.

The suit originated in September, when two members of the Downtown Improvement District said publicly that they delete email. William Pettey noted during a Sept. 18 DID meeting, “I routinely delete them.”

Fellow DID member Kaufman said he did, too. “I may have deleted some. I delete and then go through the trash and delete them again.”

Unfortunately, Barfield at the time was requesting emails from April, and when he heard about the regular deletions, he amended his suit to seek unspecified records.

Fournier told the Planning Board on Feb. 27, “The case involves allegations board members have emails on their [private email] accounts that are public records. That is not really un-

lawful. The problem comes up, if you have custody [of the public record] but you can’t produce it,” he said. “[Barfield is] requesting a mandamus injunction to prevent advisory boards from using their personal computers to send public records.”

“We think this might be a strange and unusual suit,” added Fournier. “It might not be recognized. It’s unprecedented. There’s no other suit like it in Florida.”

Fournier also briefed the Downtown Improvement District on the subject on March 5.

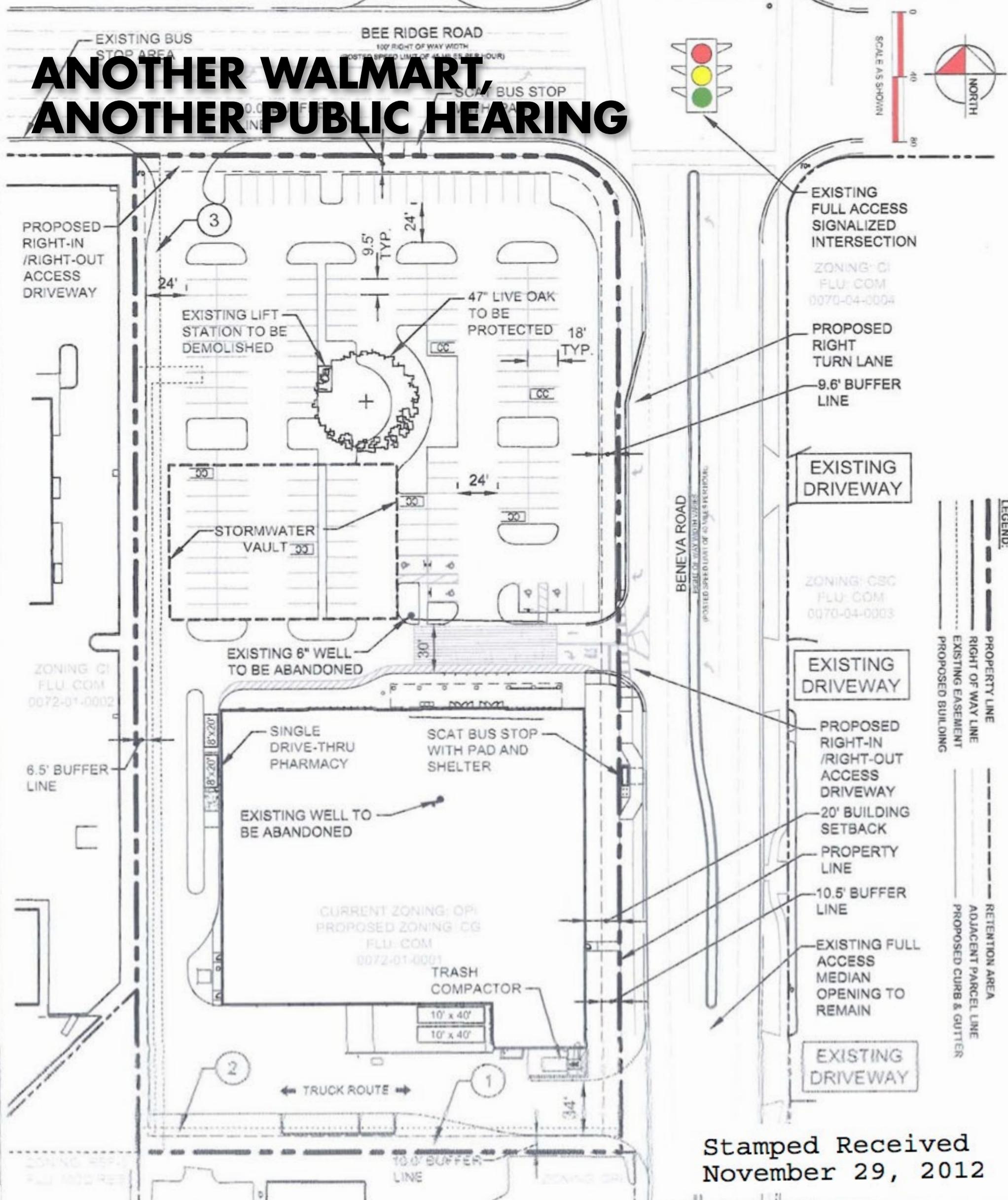
“We agree board members should be urged to use their official [email] accounts,” he said. “If somebody believes somebody individually has a public record on their [private] computer, they should come forward and ask for it. We’d need some indication of what the record was in order to respond. The city would be responsible for their [legal] defense. This suit isn’t about asking to see a specific record.”

Fournier added that things are moving “slowly.” The main allegation is that advisory board members are avoiding public records laws by using personal email accounts, he said. “Nothing in the statutes forbids official communication on personal computers. This also deals with Planning Board members and former Charter Review Board members,” added Fournier. “You cannot enjoin something that is not unlawful.”

Barfield has participated in several public records and open meeting lawsuits in the past several years, prevailing on most. But Fournier maintains this one is different.

“This suit isn’t about asking to see a specific record,” he said again March 5. “If litigated, I think there is a good chance we will prevail.” 

# ANOTHER WALMART, ANOTHER PUBLIC HEARING



Stamped Received  
November 29, 2012

An engineering diagram shows the site plan for the proposed Walmart at the intersection of Bee Ridge and Beneva roads. Image courtesy Sarasota County

## AT THE PETITIONERS' REQUEST, THE COUNTY COMMISSION DELAYS CONSIDERATION OF A ZONING CHANGE TO ALLOW A NEW WALMART TO BE BUILT AT THE BEE RIDGE/BENEVA ROADS INTERSECTION

By Rachel Brown Hackney

*Editor*

April 24: That was the decision of the Sarasota County Commission this week as it sought a new date for a public hearing on a rezoning request to allow a Walmart grocery store to be constructed at the Bee Ridge Road/Beneva Road intersection.

With Chairwoman Carolyn Mason out sick, Tom Polk, the county's director of planning and development services, told the commissioners the petitioners were seeking another date for the hearing.

Because a 2-2 tie on the rezoning request would be the same thing as a denial, Polk pointed out, the petitioners wanted to have the matter heard by all five commissioners.

Already, this latest Walmart proposal has been drawing the ire of nearby residents, three of whom took the opportunity March 6 to tell the commissioners the intersection in question is too busy to support another business such as a Walmart.

The site, which has been home to the Rivers Edge Community Church, is zoned Village I Commercial Center. Don Neu, the agent representing Beneva Land Trust/Rivers Edge Community Church Inc., has requested the zoning be changed to Commercial Corridor.

The Sarasota County Planning Commission unanimously recommended approval of the change.

The site encompasses 4.03 acres on the southwest corner of the intersection, according to a memo from Polk to the County Commission.

The zoning change would permit construction of a 41,180-square-foot freestanding Walmart Neighborhood Market grocery store.

With Vice Chairman Charles Hines presiding, Polk first suggested moving the public hearing to April 9. However, Polk pointed out that meeting would be in Venice.

*About 300 [signers of a petition] had absolutely no idea this development was under consideration.*

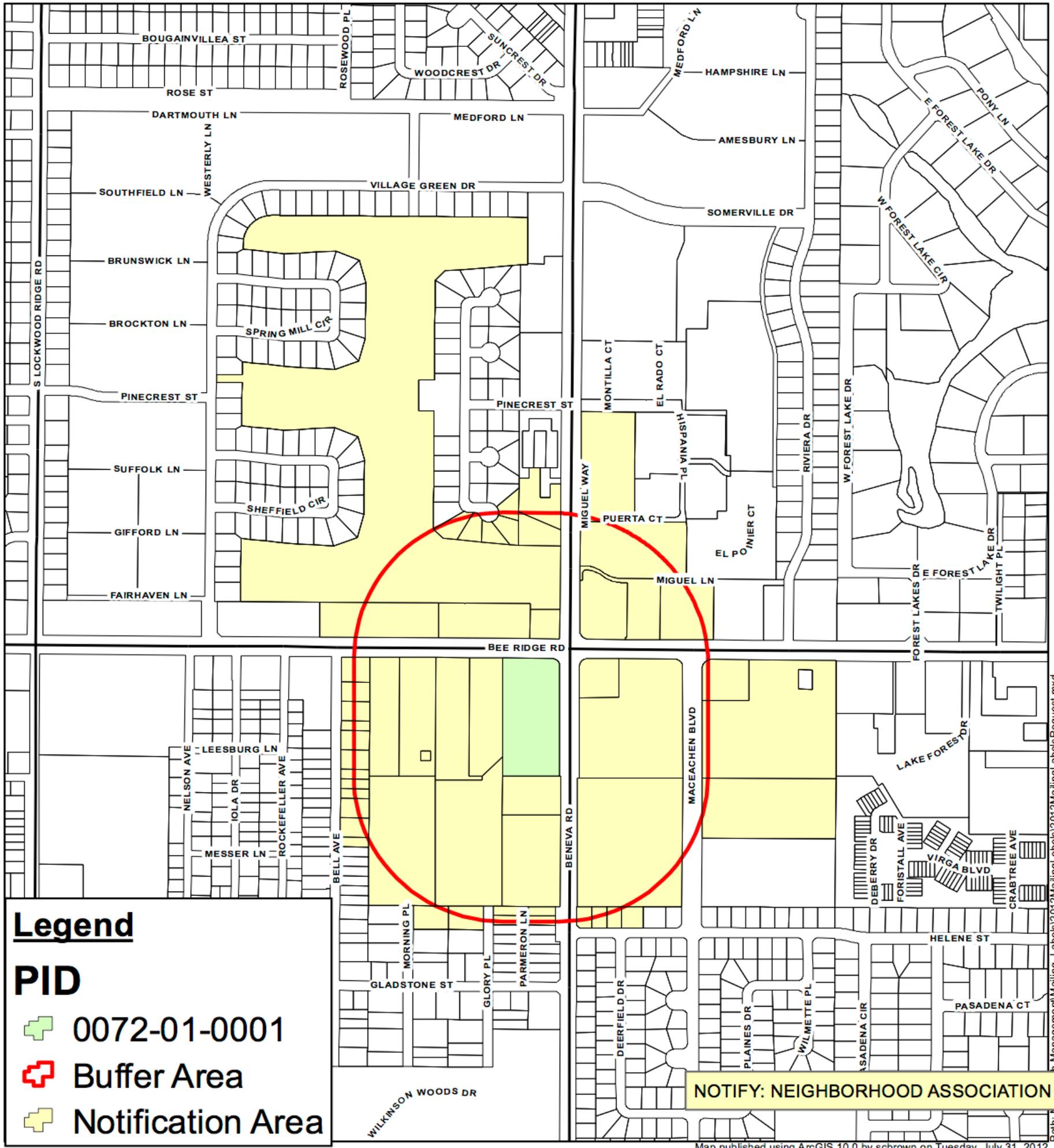
Sharon Whalen  
Sarasota resident

"I can tell you I would be jumping up and down and screaming," Commissioner Christine Robinson said, if she were interested in speaking about the matter and it was heard in south county instead of in Sarasota.

Then the commissioners settled on the delay until 1:30 p.m. on April 24.

After seconding Robinson's motion to that effect, Commissioner Joe Barbetta explained to the audience that no fault for the postponement rested with the developer. With this type of quasi-judicial proceeding, he added, it was preferable to have the full commission present.

# Notification Labels 0072-01-0001 Buffer: 750 Feet



*A map shows the area where neighbors were notified about the proposal for a new Walmart on Bee Ridge Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

After unanimously approving the new date, the board did agree to allow any people who had signed up to speak at the March 6 public hearing to do so.

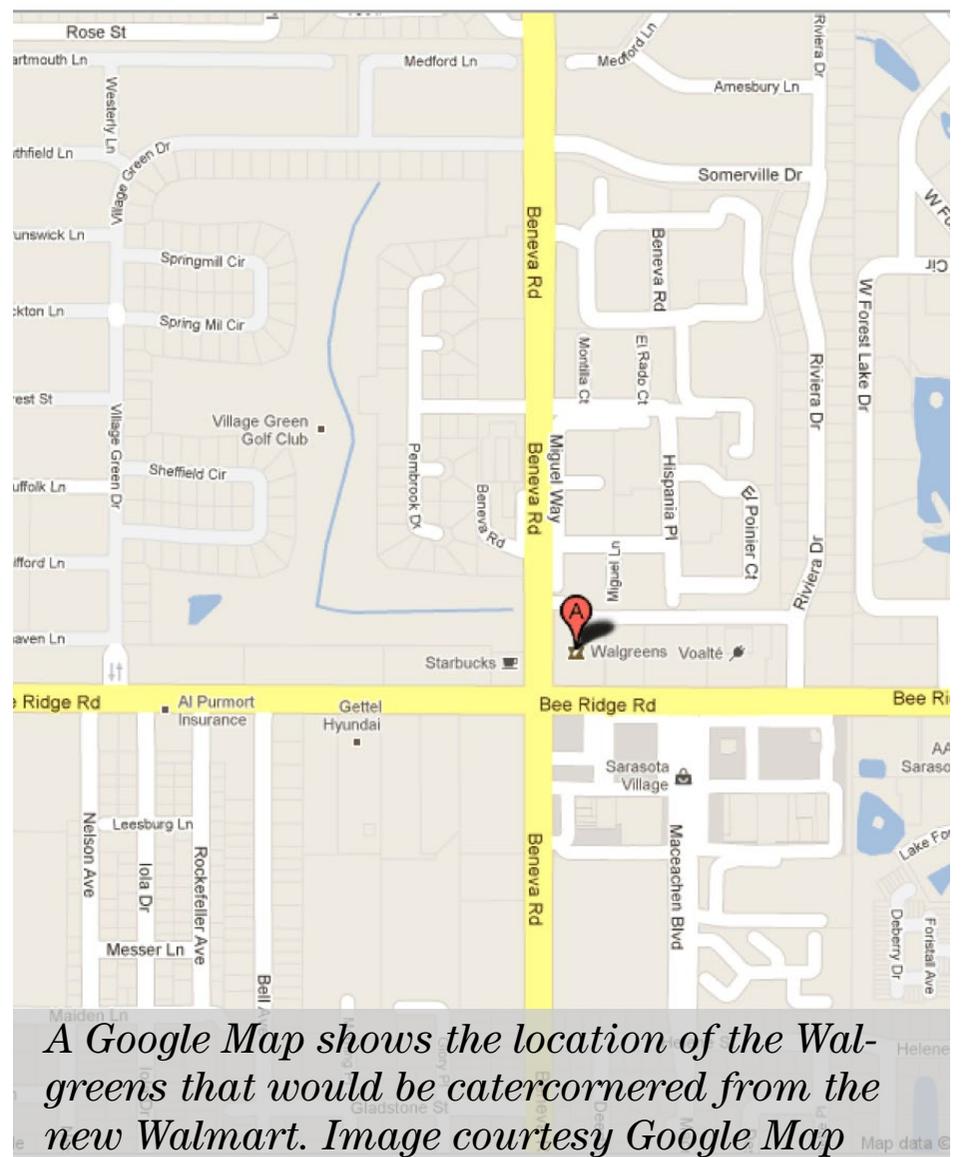
## PUBLIC PROTESTS

The first person to take that opportunity was Sharon Whalen, who already had sent Mason an email on March 3 protesting the rezoning.

In the email, Whalen wrote, “Last month more than 15 individuals testified to the [Planning] Commission — to no avail. One by one we shared our concerns about what is already a very dangerous area (for both cars and pedestrians.) We tried to get them to understand that we don’t need another grocery store (there are 8 full service grocery stores within a 2 mile radius).”

She added, “We tried to help them see that replacing a church that operates just a few hours a week with a 24 hour a day, 40,000 square foot grocery (or any major commercial development) is just not neighborhood friendly. It is the opposite of what the [county’s] comprehensive plan calls for and the opposite of what the neighborhood wants.”

Whalen continued in the email, “The crowd at that [Planning Commission] hearing was nearly speechless when the commissioners asked no questions of us, and ruled unanimously in favor of Walmart without even acknowledging the legitimacy of the concerns of neighbors. **We hope that those of you who are elected officials will be more mindful of the concerns and interests of both taxpayers and voters.**”



Addressing the commissioners on March 6, Whalen said she had a petition with 318 signatures opposing the rezoning. “About 300 of [the signers] had absolutely no idea this development was under consideration” before learning of it through her efforts, she added.

“Our biggest concern as it relates to our neighborhood ... is the ‘zoning creep,’” Whalen told the board.

As commercial development expands in the area, she said, “Our neighborhood starts to deteriorate more and more.”

She also invited the commissioners to drive through that intersection between 3 and 4 p.m. on a weekday, when, she said, traffic is so thick that drivers have to wait through multiple changes of the lights.

Whalen noted that the people who had signed her petition wanted the owners of the church property to be able to sell it, but with the current zoning intact.

Finally, Whalen pointed out, the site has numerous mature trees. Sarasota's green spaces were among the features that convinced her to relocate to the community, she said, bemoaning the potential loss of trees on the church grounds.

Referring to a transition of usage on the site from a church to a grocery store that would be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Whalen added, "is just nothing that's good for our neighborhood."

Two other speakers who addressed the commissioners also pointed out how heavy traffic is at the intersection, which includes a shopping center with a Publix grocery store and a bank; a Walgreens; and a Starbucks.

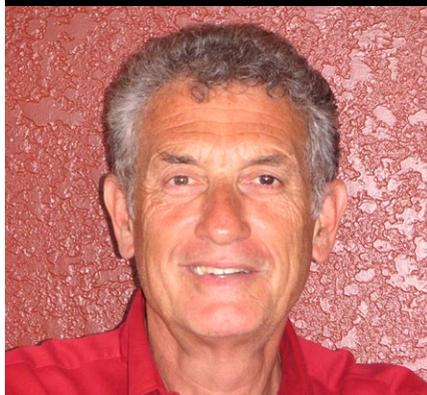
"I think it's a burden on the applicant to prove this will be safe," Ken Davis said of the Walmart plan.

Richard Moran, who noted he has lived in Sarasota for 21 years, repeatedly told the board during his allotted five minutes, "This is a dangerous spot."

Moran concluded, "You guys are all smart. Use common sense. Think." 

"The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of Hell, a hell of Heaven." — *John Milton*

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# REDUCING THE IMPACT

*An aerial map shows the general location of the Honore Avenue/Clark Road intersection in Sarasota County. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

## **A CONTRACTOR AGREES TO A LATER START AND FASTER SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETING WORK THAT WILL CLOSE THE HONORE AVENUE/CLARK ROAD INTERSECTION**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

After voicing concerns about the impact on traffic — and winning concessions from the contractor — the Sarasota County Commission voted unanimously on Tuesday, March 5, to approve the closure of 700 feet of Honore Avenue at the Clark Road intersection beginning no earlier than April 1 to allow work to proceed on a Sarasota Memorial Hospital (SMH) project.

(Board Chairwoman Carolyn Mason was absent

because of illness, leaving the vote at 4-0.)

Although the project originally was scheduled to begin 10 days after the board's action, Commissioner Nora Patterson won agreement

from the contractor, Ajax Paving Industries of Florida — which has an office in Nokomis— to wait until after Easter (March 31) to begin the work and to adhere to a six-day-a-week sched-

“*March is still high season, and April's not far behind. ... Why are we not waiting until after Easter?*”

Nora Patterson  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



ule. That way, estimates indicate, the project should be complete within three weeks.

Originally, Steve Ayers, manager of Ajax, told the board the schedule called for a start in March because of SMH's stipulation that the entire project be finished by early August.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta concurred with Patterson's requests, noting how busy the Honore/Clark intersection is. He was on Clark Road over the weekend, he pointed out, "and we were backed up to I-75."

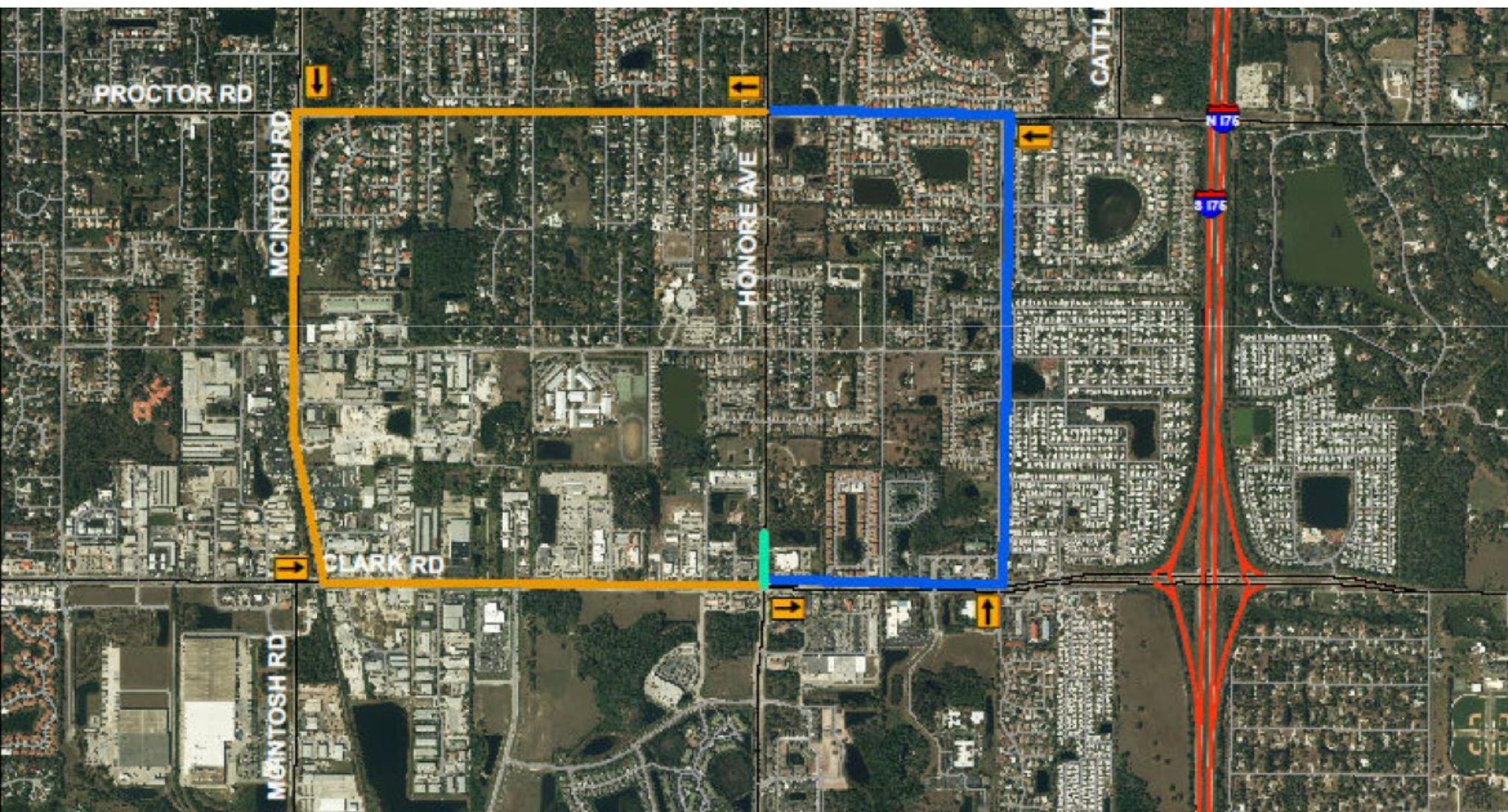
According to material presented to the County Commission, northbound traffic will be rerouted from Clark at Gantt Road, while southbound traffic will be funneled along Proctor Road at McIntosh Road. Hard barriers will be installed on Honore Avenue parallel to Clark Road during the closure.

## THE OPTIONS

A March 5 memo to the County Commission from county Chief Engineer James K. Harriott Jr. and Program Manager Thai Tran points out that the intersection improvements are necessary for the hospital's Clark Road campus expansion. Those improvements include the installation of stormwater pipes, drainage swales, additional turn lanes and traffic signal replacement. (The county is not paying for any of the work, according to agenda material.)

The drainage structures already there needed to be replaced, Harriott told the commissioners during their regular meeting in Venice, because "they are undersized for this particular improvement."

Harriott also pointed out that the existing structures are buried about 16 to 18 feet deep.



*An illustration shows the Gantt Road and Proctor Road detours planned while the intersection is closed at Honore Avenue and Clark Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

“We try to limit closures as much as possible,” he continued.

Although staff and consultants had reviewed alternatives, Harriott explained, the road closure seemed the best option. FDOT also had supported that alternative, he said. “[It] provides the best mix of traffic,” he added, and it would not overburden the traffic signals.

If just one lane were shut down, he noted, the resulting situation would necessitate traffic moving “very close to a large hole.” Only a 12-foot-wide travel path could be created to enable the project to proceed, he pointed out.

The primary concern was the safety of motorists and the work crews, Harriott added.

Additionally, the Florida Department of Transportation agreed that keeping a single lane open would result in “large queues backing

up onto Clark Road,” which the department found unacceptable, the March 5 memo noted.

A second option was use of a jack and bore operation, the memo pointed out. That would entail a multi-stage process “consisting [of] a temporary horizontal jacking platform and a starting alignment track in an entrance pit at a desired elevation,” the memo explained. A product would be “jacked by manual control along the starting alignment track with simultaneous excavation of the soil,” with the soil transported back to the entrance pit, it added.

While traffic lanes would remain open, the method “is not physically possible at this location due to the area needed to set up the entrance pit and the area needed to reach the depth of the entrance pit considering OSHA safety requirements [for] the construction workers,” the memo pointed out.



An illustration shows details of the work plans for the Honore Avenue/Clark Road intersection. Image courtesy Sarasota County

## OTHER ALTERNATIVES

After Harriott provided a project and options overview, Patterson asked, “Shouldn’t we be doing [the work] as rapidly as we can?”

“In theory, yes,” Harriott replied. However, he continued, if Ajax crews worked at night as well, the noise and lighting would be disruptive to guests of a nearby hotel as well as residents.

“Four weeks to close a main road is a big deal,” Patterson said.

Ayers then told the commissioners the Ajax team felt daytime work would be “safer for everybody.”

Ayers added, “We hope to do [the work] in three weeks,” though the company had requested four in the event of unexpected delays.

“I have seen some pretty major projects that were done only at night ... including the replacement of some major parts on the [north] bridge to Siesta Key, in an area surrounded by residents,” Patterson replied. “Anyway, three weeks would be better than four.”

Then Patterson pointed out to Harriott, “March is still high season, and April’s not far behind. ... Why are we not waiting until after Easter?”

Harriott emphasized that the project is under the control of Sarasota Memorial, not the county.

When Patterson asked whether county staff had discussed the timing with representatives of the hospital, Harriott reiterated, “We don’t hold the contract.” Nonetheless, he said, coun-

ty staff had requested the work begin at the end of March.

That was when Ayers pointed out that the whole project had to be completed by late summer. If the firm waited until June to start, for example, he said, that would coincide with the usual onset of the rainy season.

“I have no problem waiting till the first of April,” he added, “but if you want much later than that, you’re really pushing it.”

“Frankly, even the first of April would help a great deal,” Patterson responded.

Barbetta then asked why SMH would pursue a road closure without first checking with county representatives.

That point was raised in a pre-bid meeting, Ayers said, adding that while hospital representatives had asked the contractors to consider how the work could be handled, “[that project aspect] was kind of open-ended.”

After the board’s vote, Commissioner Christine Robinson thanked Ayers for the concessions on the schedule. “This is a major intersection,” she added, “[but] Ajax has always been a good, responsible partner in Sarasota County, and this is just further evidence of that.”

Noting that Charles Bailey, SMH’s attorney, was in the audience, Robinson also asked that if such a situation arose again in the future, the commission would appreciate having someone from the hospital consult with it before seeking a vote.

“It would have been nice for the hospital board to be a partner in this,” Robinson added. 

# IT PROBLEMS ONLY



The Sarasota City Commission prepares to start a recent meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel

## TIPSTER COST THE CITY \$636,187.07

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

When former state Sen. Bob Johnson notified a city commissioner in a September 2011 email that then City Manager Bob Bartolotta was deleting emails at City Hall, little did Johnson imagine his communication would end up costing the city much more than half a million dollars.

The investigation into the allegation ended Monday, March 4, with a final report to the City Commission by John Jorgensen, the senior forensic analyst of The Sylint Group. Despite an investiga-

tion by three criminal law enforcement agencies, no charges were filed against any current or former city employees.

The initial allegation eventually led to the resignation of Bartolotta, his replacement with Interim City Manager Terry Lewis and

the search for a permanent replacement. One employee was placed on administrative leave with pay for 14 months. The director of the Information Technology Department was fired.

“*There was not criminal wrongdoing found, and almost all the issues identified are IT operations problems that are the result of lack of funding, staff resources, training or all three.*”

Ari Weinstein  
iNet Consulting



After Jorgensen's report March 4, City Commissioner Terry Turner circulated a spreadsheet prepared by the city's former finance director, Chris Lyons, detailing the cost of the incident. Nearly \$130,000 was paid to Sylint, and \$72,434 was spent in legal fees.

Bartolotta received \$112,760 in severance pay, and nearly \$120,000 was paid to the employee on administrative leave from the Information Technology Department.

The searches for a new city manager and IT director and the new hires' moving costs added up to \$53,435.

The grand total for the investigation and its inconclusive aftermath was \$547,017.72. That figure does not include the \$89,169.36 paid to Interim City Manager Terry Lewis, which pushes the total to \$636,187.07.

## SYLINT'S FINDINGS

Sylint was hired by the city on Nov. 8, 2011 to investigate the allegations Johnson raised in an email to City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo. "And they did find a lot of issues over there," Johnson told *The Sarasota News Leader*.

"Sylint identified unusual activity and significant issues regarding the management of the City of Sarasota Information Technology (IT) department operations and the potential misuse of access to City of Sarasota email data and potential exposure of Personal Identifiable Information (PII) and Personal Health Information (PHI). A second audit/investigation was begun to resolve those issues," the company reported Monday.

Sylint tipped law enforcement officials to the possibility illegal activities had occurred, and



*City Manager Robert Bartolotta resigned in January 2012 in the wake of allegations he had broken the law by accessing certain city emails. Contributed photo*

eventually the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development all were brought into the case. None of the three will press charges, according to reports.

Sylint found what its report called "several serious lapses" in IT management. "Certain people's accounts were known by others, so they could use other people's passwords," Jorgensen told the commission.

"This has been a very unfortunate time for the city. I don't think any of us thought the computer system was as bad as it was," said Commissioner Shannon Snyder. "Our team was not competent enough to handle it."

Jorgensen noted, "We do not believe there was a breach [into the computer system], and the information did not get out into the wild. We believe the corrective actions taken by the IT Department are sufficient to protect the City of Sarasota at this time."

## DOUBTS EXPRESSED

Another local IT consultant was less than flattering after reading the Sylint report.

“There was not criminal wrongdoing found, and almost all the issues identified are IT operations problems that are the result of lack of funding, staff resources, training or all three,” wrote Ari Weinstein to Turner. Weinstein is a principal in iNet Consulting.

“There is a lot of focus on the searching and access of emails that are exempt from public records requests, which seems to ignore the fact that supervisors have the clear legal right to access these emails,” wrote Weinstein. “[M]any of the so-called security breaches identified are simply out-of-date systems. While this isn’t ideal, it isn’t the crisis that Sylint portrays it to be.”

Part of the fallout of the investigation was the transfer of the IT Department from the city manager’s realm to the control of City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini.

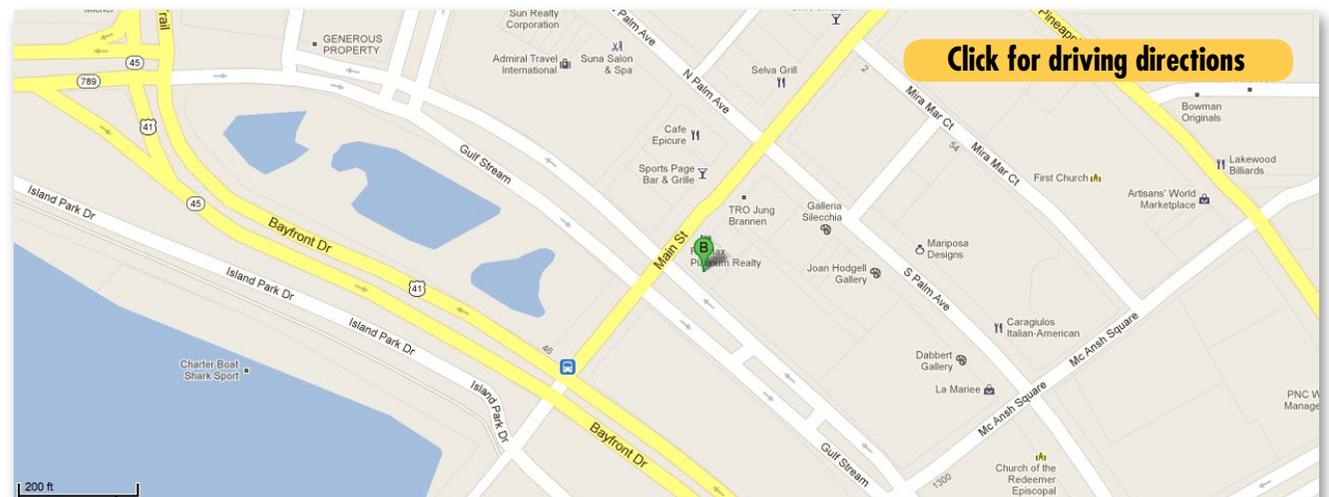
“We are currently working on various IT-related policies to bring forward,” she told the commission March 4. “I would really like [them in] a resolution so the commission can buy into this process.”

Mayor Suzanne Atwell summed up the saga: “We need to remove this cloud of uncertainty that’s been over the city for 16 months. It’s been frustrating and drawn out. It’s been tough going. Now the staff and us and the citizens need to get on with the business of the city.”

The motion to accept the Sylint report passed unanimously. 

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## UNCHARTERED WATERS

Parents of students at the Imagine School in North Port crowd the Sarasota County School Board chambers the evening of March 5. Photo by Scott Proffitt

### AS A LOCAL CHARTER SCHOOL ATTEMPTS TO BREAK AWAY FROM ITS VIRGINIA-BASED PARENT COMPANY, THE SCHOOL BOARD URGES MEDIATION

By Scott Proffitt

Staff Writer

As a charter school, the Imagine School of North Port is operated by a local governing board and a principal at the local level, but it is under the aegis of Imagine Schools, the largest charter school organization in the country.

The North Port school is an A+ rated charter that has been part of the Sarasota County Schools district since 2008. Parents and students say they are thrilled with the school, but corporate representatives say

parents and faculty have grown unhappy with the parent company's taking \$1 million a year from the local school's revenue.

The North Port school's governing board has taken steps to legally sever the relationship with that Virginia-based parent corporation, but management in Virginia says the Sarasota County group is illegally attempting to violate the charter agreement and dis-

“ This is something that we don't want to get involved in. We encourage all of you to get to the table and to mediate and get this resolved for the good of our children.

Jane Goodwin  
Chairwoman  
Sarasota County School Board



rupting the academic year, including seeking renegotiation of faculty contracts at a critical time — right before students take the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

The contrasting perspectives of the situation were presented during the March 5 meeting of the Sarasota County School Board, but it appears the issues are far from being resolved.

Among the speakers who addressed the board, Ray Lowe, who has two children at the North Port Imagine School, said he and his family are very happy with it. However, Lowe added, he has been frustrated by the parent company's repeated failure "to expand the school as required. ... It is about the money. Short of closing the school, there is no other way than the decision by the board and the principal to attempt to sever the ties with the parent corporation."

Rod Sasse, executive vice president with Imagine Schools, told the board, "We have no answers as to why this action would be taken. We have had several teachers call us in distress."

Sasse accused Principal Justin Matthews of telling teachers to resign then sign new contracts.

Parent Tracy Raleigh said the Imagine School of North Port is the best school of all she has seen in the four states where she has lived and of all those her children have attended. She added that she supports the effort to transform the school into a standalone entity, separate from its corporate parent.

Chrissy Bynum's child has been attending the school since it opened, she told the board. "As a parent, it is reassuring to know [Principal] Matthews keeps such a close eye on our stu-



*Teacher J.J. Andrews addresses the School Board. Photo by Scott Proffitt*

dents. I do not believe it is in the best interest to stay with [the parent company]. It makes more sense to keep the money local.”

Although Imagine Schools is the largest private corporation operating charter schools in the nation, it has a history of school closings as well as investigations into circumstances in which schools purchased with public monies were leased to the local charters at allegedly unfair rents, according to *The Washington Post* and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

Since the inception of Imagine, it has combined two corporations: a for-profit entity and a nonprofit one. The company website says, “Imagine Schools currently operates through two affiliated organizations: Imagine Schools, Inc. and Imagine Schools Non-Profit, Inc. Both Imagine Schools, Inc. and Imagine Schools

Non-Profit, Inc. serve the exclusive purpose of educating children in grades PreK-12. The Imagine Schools Non-Profit application for federal tax-exempt status is currently under review by the IRS. Subject to favorable rulings from the Internal Revenue Service, the organizations plan for Imagine Schools Non-Profit, Inc. to acquire ownership of Imagine Schools, Inc., after which Imagine Schools, Inc. would convert to nonprofit status. Once this transition is complete, the entire Imagine Schools system will operate through nonprofit corporations exempt from tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.”

Although a favorable IRS ruling came down last year, the integration into a single nonprofit has not occurred, according to other information on the corporate website.



*Students and parents rode an Imagine School bus to the School Board meeting. Photo by Scott Proffitt*

The School Board members Tuesday conveyed to the audience their awareness of the complexity of the situation.

Board member Shirley Brown told the parents, “There is a concern when a school becomes a principal,” referring to the overwhelming praise parents had bestowed upon Matthews during the public comments portion of the meeting. “Does that mean the parents will take their kids out and bring them into our [non-charter] schools?” if Matthews is forced out.

Brown added, “I have concerns with why these actions were taken in the middle of the year. Where are these teachers going to be? Where are these students going to be?”

School Board member Frank Kovach added, “Through it all, it appears learning is still taking place. We have to let the legal process proceed and hope our kids are not negatively affected.”

A short-term answer has come courtesy of 12th Judicial Circuit Court Judge Charles Williams, who has sided with the local school’s governing board and principal, just until school lets out in May. In a ruling, Williams said he wanted to avoid disruptions to the students. He made it clear his decision would stand on a temporary basis only, leaving the final resolution unclear.

However, parents, students and the local governing board members made it clear they are eager to engage the School Board in the dispute.

The school’s charter, a contract between the governing board and the School Board, is legally binding, allowing the charter school sig-



*Parent Tracey Raleigh makes a point to the School Board on March 5. Photo by Scott Proffitt*

nificant leeway in self-governance, district officials pointed out. The School Board’s powers to intervene are usually limited to any breach of the charter.

Art Hardy, the School Board’s attorney, told *The Sarasota News Leader* he was unaware of any precedence to guide this matter through the courts.

“I’ve heard today and heard anecdotally about Imagine issues in Pittsburgh and Atlanta, but, honestly, I don’t know any details.”

Board Chairwoman Jane Goodwin concluded during the meeting, “This is something that we don’t want to get involved in. We encourage all of you to get to the table and to mediate and get this resolved for the good of our children.”

Hardy paraphrased Williams’ comments, noting the judge wanted everything to stay as routine as possible until after the school year ended. Then all bets are off, so to speak. 



## AMNESTY DAY

*The Burmese python is a great threat to native Florida species, according to wildlife experts. Photo by Tatiana Staats*

### **FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION OFFERS NO-PENALTY WAYS FOR PET OWNERS TO GIVE UP CREATURES OF 'CONDITIONAL SPECIES'**

**By David Staats**

*Contributing Writer*

Saturday, March 2, was Amnesty Day. No, it was not the day when amnesty was granted to true penitents who really, really had intended to pay those nearly forgotten, overdue U.S. income taxes but who never quite got around to writing those checks.

This was the Nonnative (Exotic) Pet Amnesty Day, which was held in Fort Myers. It was an opportunity for owners of eight “conditional species” (known as “reptiles of concern” until 2010), such as Burmese pythons, to surrender

them to the care of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, no questions asked. FWC staff members would then place surrendered pets in good health in trusted foster homes.

In addition to the Burmese python, the “conditional species” category includes the Northern African Rock python, Southern African Rock python, amethystine python, reticulated python, scrub python, green anaconda and Nile Monitor lizard. After July 1, 2010, under Flor-

ida law, these animals cannot be legally possessed by individuals. Persons who owned these exotic pets before the law went into effect are now obliged to maintain a valid annual license for these animals, to have an electronic identity chip implanted in them and to care faithfully for them for the duration of the animals' natural lives.

Foster placement is the greatly preferred solution for establishing new homes for exotic pets that, for whatever reason, have become too difficult or costly for their owners to continue to care for. Under no circumstances should any "conditional species" be released to wander freely through the neighborhood or the wilds of, say, Myakka River State Park.

Missed the March 2 Amnesty Day? No problem. There is another in Miami at the end of March. Please consult the FWC's information on [Exotic Pets Amnesty Day](#) events. Amnesty Day events are held in different locations around the state on a frequent basis.

The Burmese python (*Python molurus bivittatus*) poses an especially serious threat to native Florida wildlife, as it has no natural predator and preys indiscriminately on several native Florida species. First sighted in Everglades National Park in 1979, this python's population is estimated today at as many as 100,000. Importation of these snakes into the U.S. has recently been banned by federal law.

During the 2013 Python Challenge, which was held from Jan. 12 to Feb. 10, a total of 68 Burmese pythons were "harvested" from Everglades National Park and three other sites. Given the snake's stealthiness, most herpetologists concur that 68 kills is indeed an impressive number. The approximately 1,600 regis-

tered hunters from 38 states and Canada had to be qualified by FWC in order to participate.

## HOW FAR NORTH?

Of particular concern to environmentalists is the prospect that the Burmese pythons will steadily migrate northward from the Everglades, acclimatizing themselves as they move into the more temperate environment of Sarasota County, where they could establish new breeding colonies.

In 2008, then New College Professor Meg Lowman, extrapolating from data compiled by her students to create a mathematical model, estimated that by 2015, a breeding colony of 1,500 Burmese pythons will have been established permanently in Myakka River State Park. This assumes, of course, that no preventative measures will have been taken in the meantime by the state and county agencies charged with controlling these snakes.

Some scientists regard Lowman's projection as vulnerable to challenge. Dr. Kenneth Krysko, the highly respected herpetologist and senior biological scientist at the University of Florida's Museum of Natural History in Gainesville, wrote in a recent email that "although there is evidence that Burmese Pythons have expanded their range from Everglades National Park northward to at least Lake Okeechobee, it is highly unlikely that there will be 1,500 pythons in Sarasota within two years. There have been multiple pythons removed from Myakka over the last decade, but we believe that these were independent illegally released animals unassociated with the northern range expansion of Everglades pythons. Only time will tell if pythons can become established in Sarasota."

## ALTERNATIVES

So, if you do have a pet Burmese python or another exotic pet that you find increasingly difficult to care for, how do you arrange for its well-being and care going forward?

The best way is to call Liz Baracco, the FWC amnesty adoption coordinator (office: 1-954-577-6409; cell: 1-561-235-4811; hotline: 1-888-Ive-got-1, that is, 1-888-483-4681). You do not have to wait until the next scheduled Amnesty Day. Amnesty Adoption will arrange pick-ups.

The hotline is manned 24/7. You may call it to arrange adoption for *any* exotic (that is, nonnative to Florida) pet — for example, a hedgehog, Tokay gecko, etc. The Amnesty Adoption program is not restricted to Burmese pythons and other “conditional species.”

Baracco maintains an active database of qualified adopters around the state who are prepared and eager to accept your exotic pets.

Some Burmese python owners worry that because they do not have the required permits and licenses for their pets, they could face legal trouble if they were to contact Amnesty Adoption. No worries on that account: There are *no* penalties for owners of unlicensed or even illegal exotic pets surrendered to Amnesty Adoption. FWC is interested only in the animal, not the owner.

If you need to find a new home for your exotic pet before the next Amnesty Day, please call the hotline to make immediate arrangements for its collection and secure placement. The process is simple and the FWC staff is helpful and friendly. 

## 6pm Thursday, March 28th

Election reform will definitely be on the table during this year's Legislative session in Tallahassee.

Come join the conversation with representatives of three groups that have it at the top of their priorities list.

- ★ **SUSIE COPELAND**  
Manatee NAACP, President
- ★ **PAT PRICE**  
Voter Service Chair --LWVSC for the past 15 plus years
- ★ **DONNA CUBIT-SWOYER**  
Board Secretary for Sarasota Alliance for Fair Elections (SAFE)

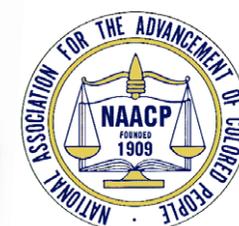
★ Program Moderator is **COOPER LEVY-BAKER**, Associate Editor Sarasota News Leader ★

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# PLEA FOR SAFE PASSAGE



*A Sarasota County sign on the north side of Avenida de Mayo alerts residents and business owners to the upcoming Traffic Advisory Meeting about parking issues on the street. (An entrance to the Municipal Parking Lot is on the left side of this photo.) Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## RESIDENTS SAY THE PARKING OVERFLOW FROM SIESTA VILLAGE ONTO AVENIDA DE MAYO HAS CREATED DANGEROUS SITUATIONS

By Rachel Brown Hackney

*Editor*

For more than a year, Siesta Key resident Marlene S. Merkle has been working with neighbors and Sarasota County officials to try to rectify what she calls “a dangerous situation” on Avenida de Mayo.

When cars park on the side of the narrow street — which they increasingly do at night and on weekends, especially during season — traffic is impeded and drivers run the risk of colliding, she says in a Nov. 16, 2012 application to

the Sarasota County Traffic Advisory Council (TAC).

On Monday, March 11, the TAC will hear the request of Merkle and several of her neighbors to ban parking on the south side of the street.

If the council approves the request, the mat-

ter will go to the County Commission, Ryan Montague, a staff member in the Mobility/Traffic Office, told *The Sarasota News Leader* on March 5. Typically, Montague

“*The mail truck especially has difficulty and an ambulance or fire truck would be at even ... greater disadvantage.*”

Marlene Merkle  
Application for the  
Traffic Advisory Council

added in an email, it takes eight to 10 weeks to schedule a TAC matter on a County Commission agenda.

Siesta architect Mark Smith raised the upcoming TAC vote during the March 5 regular meeting of the Siesta Key Village Association. It might be wise for SKVA President Russell Matthes to send an email to the County Commission saying Siesta Village needs as much parking space as possible, Smith suggested.

Matthes agreed to check into the issue.

“That’s a big stretch,” Glenn Cappetta, owner of Sun Ride Pedicabs, said of the length of Avenida de Mayo.

In a telephone interview with *the News Leader*, Merkle pointed out that she has lived on Avenida de Mayo for 25 years.

Because of curbing along the south side of the road, she said, cars end up parked in the street. That “eliminates two-way traffic,” she pointed out. “It just creates a really dangerous situation,” she added, es-

pecially for people trying to enter Avenida de Mayo from a side street.

When vehicles try to exit the municipal parking lot, which is bound on one side by Avenida de Mayo, she continued, “they have a difficult time turning, too.”

Her application to the TAC adds, “The mail truck especially has difficulty and an ambulance or fire truck would be at even ... greater disadvantage.”

Additionally, she wrote, “Entering [the street] from Canal Road is especially difficult as the cars sitting on the right of the road block the right lane of traffic.”

Moreover, she said of the vehicles, “they park all over the right of way,” which damages landscaping.

In conclusion, her application says, “We respectfully request that you approve ‘No Parking’ signs for Avenida de Mayo on the side of the street across from the public parking lot.”

The situation, Merkle told the

long line of cars parked on grass  
ruining landscaping



facing out of village  
Avenida de Mayo

*A photo with Marlene Merkle's notes shows vehicles parked on the grass on the north side of Avenida de Mayo. Contributed photo*

*News Leader*, is “something that’s just bothered me for a while.”

She is appreciative and supportive of tourism on Siesta, she pointed out, but with more and more people visiting the island, the parking spillover has grown worse. Just the previous day, she noted, “I was kind of shocked when I came home from work” because of the number of cars parked along Avenida de Mayo.

Although she first contacted County Commissioner Nora Patterson more than a year ago to seek help in resolving the problems, Merkle said personal circumstances and the fact that the TAC meets only four times a year had re-

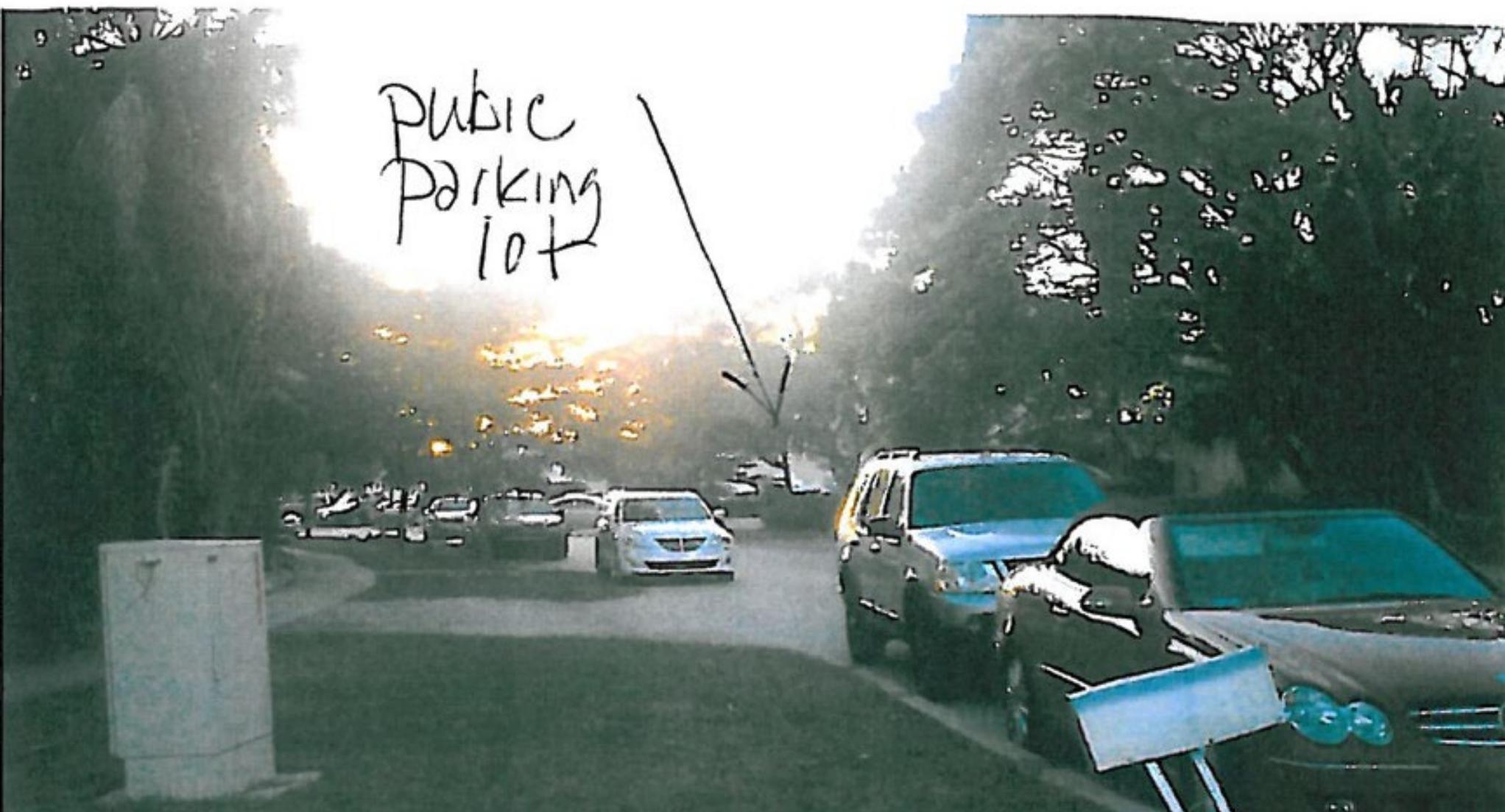
sulted in the effort stretching out as long as it has.

She plans to attend the TAC meeting on Monday, she added, hoping its members will recommend the parking restriction to the County Commission.

“If they don’t,” she told the *News Leader*, “I did the best I could.”

*The Traffic Advisory Council will meet at 2 p.m. Monday, March 11, in the Commission Chambers of the Robert L. Anderson Building, 4000 S. Tamiami Trail, in Venice. Merkle’s request is Item 3 on the agenda.* 

long line of cars parked on road



*A photo with Marlene Merkle’s notes shows vehicles parked in the street on the south side of Avenida de Mayo. Contributed photo*



## RAMPING BACK UP

*Pallets of pervious pavers await the volunteers' touch at the Florida House. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

### **FLORIDA HOUSE PREPARING TO STAND ALONE WHILE EXPANDING ON ITS ORIGINAL MISSION**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

The Florida House is reinventing itself again.

Born in a drought to demonstrate water conservation, it morphed into a learning center for sustainable construction and living. After partnering for two decades with government agencies, the Florida House is making a transition to a self-supporting enterprise.

The Sarasota County School Board still owns the property, and Sarasota County Government still owns the demonstration house. But the Florida House Institute is now moving to standalone status.

As a going-away grant, Sarasota County last year awarded \$100,000 to the organization to prepare the house and grounds for their new role.

The original model allowed local and state inventors and businesses to install state-of-the-art equipment so the public could look at emerging technologies that were economical and ecological. The new model will allow those same inventors and businesses to demonstrate their wares through classes and Internet streaming.

“This is a Sarasota County asset, neutral ground for good science-based accountability and partnerships,” said John Lambie, the executive director.

This new era is a coming-home party for him, as he was one of the two co-founders of the idea during a drought in the late 1980s. “There was a ballot initiative to halt any new construction for two years, that’s how serious the water situation was,” he recalled. While the initiative did not pass, it resulted in a serious interest in water conservation.

“*We really need to create best practices for these things so people can understand it’s easy to make a real difference in our community’s environment.*”

John Lambie  
Executive Director  
Florida House

In part due to the leadership of the Florida House, Sarasota County residents remain statewide champs in low-water usage. The Florida House, for example, uses only 10 percent of its water from the county supply. The remainder comes from a cistern and water-conserving techniques.

Lambie wants the newest incarnation “to be a conduit for local business; a design center; a showroom where we can create educational modules.”



*John Lambie (left) and Rand Carter, volunteer coordinator for the Florida House. Photo by Stan Zimmerman`*

One such project under way is the installation of pervious pavers on the southern side of the house.

The individual blocks are designed to create small gaps (too small to catch a stiletto heel). The gaps allow rainwater to percolate into an under layer of crushed rock and prevent immediate runoff into the storm sewer and Sarasota Bay. Engineers call it low-impact design, and they are starting to use it along streets and in parking lots. The Florida House is demonstrating how individual homeowners can use it, too. The project is funded by the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program.

Lambie pointed to the pervious blocks being installed by volunteers. “That rainwater was headed to the bay. But soon it will stay here to water the roots of the plants and trees. And just as important, it’s freshwater that won’t end up in the bay to displace intertidal organism like oysters,” he said.

Another project just starting up involves a demonstration for urban orchards and agriculture. “We want to show folks how to grow groceries in their backyard,” said Lambie. “We really need to create best practices for these things so people can understand it’s easy to make a real difference in our community’s environment.”

Yet another project is a shaded two-car electric vehicle charging station from Apollo Sun-guard, a local company.

The business model starts with the Florida House’s original mission — demonstration of how to apply old and new conservation technologies. “Hands-on learning,” said Lambie. “Do-it-yourself projects.”

A second aspect is creation of a meeting facility. Lambie is planning to enclose a north-facing porch to provide meeting space for up to 50 people at one time, with technology incorporated to allow use of Internet streaming, so sessions can reach much larger audiences. The facility would be available to local businesses for video-conferencing and long-distance learning. Rentals would support the Florida House.

“And we could take that all on the road,” said Lambie.

A third arm of the plan would be what he called a “think tank.” It would seek grants and contract work to expand the foundation’s aims. At its inception, the Florida House was unique in the United States. There are now eight other demonstration homes across the county built on Lambie’s model.

“You have to decide what you want, and we can help with that,” he said. “Perhaps you want to retrofit your home. Well, what do you want to do? Age in place? Plan to give it to your kids to raise their kids? We can help you create a long-term plan that is more efficient — conserves resources and enhances efficiency.”

“I am here to help create a self-sustaining community,” said Dick Singer, a member of the board of directors. “People can come here to get basic information. When they don’t know where to turn, there is the Florida House,” he added.

*The Florida House is located at 4454 Beneva Road. It is open by appointment; call 924-2050.* 



## A NEW SEAWALL

*The City of Sarasota and Sarasota County jointly own Bay Island Park on Siesta Key, where a new seawall will be built. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

### **BAY ISLAND PARK TO SEE REPLACEMENT OF 40-YEAR-OLD STRUCTURE**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**

*Editor*

With no comments on March 5, the Sarasota County Commission unanimously voted to award a \$997,379 bid to CB Construction Services Corp. of Fort Myers for the construction of a new seawall in Bay Island Park on Siesta Key.

The work is scheduled to begin this month, with completion planned before Sept. 30, according to agenda material provided to the commission. About 82 percent of the cost — \$823,451 — will be covered by a West Coast Inland Navigation District grant, a March 5 memo to the commission adds, which is why “substantial completion” must occur prior to Sept. 30, when the grant will expire.

The County Commission approved the item among a block of projects on its Consent Agenda during its regular meeting in Venice.

The vote included the adoption of a budget amendment to appropriate a City of Sarasota contribution for the work in the amount of \$114,378 and the approval of an agreement with the city for the project.

The City Commission approved the project on Jan. 22, according to material presented to the County Commission.

The March 5 memo to the County Commission from Carolyn Brown, general manager of the county’s Parks and Recreation Department;

Chief County Engineer James K. Harriott Jr.; and Brad Robertson, project manager for capital projects, points out that Bay Island Park is on the west side of the Siesta Drive bridge. The portion of the park on the south side of Siesta Drive is county-owned, while the city owns the north side of it.

“The shoreline of the park is hardened with a seawall/bulkhead around the entire perimeter,” the memo notes.

That seawall is more than 40 years old and in need of replacement, the memo points out.

The park, the memo continues, “is heavily used for recreational fishing”; easily accessible, it is popular with the public. The park “also provides a mooring location for marine law enforcement and emergency services for firefighting and rescue operations to the near-

by spoil islands parks and is used by boaters for loading and offloading,” the memo says.

The project will entail the “removal of the current seawall and construction of a new seawall using pre-cast concrete panels,” the memo adds. Sidewalk improvements will be undertaken as well.

Five contractors submitted bids for the project, the memo notes, with CB Construction Services deemed the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. The highest bid received was \$1,554,308, according to a memo from a county Procurement Department analyst.

During the Feb. 7 Siesta Key Association meeting, President Catherine Luckner noted that the project would not necessitate construction traffic in the park. Instead, she said, the contractor plans to use barges to access the area. 



*The seawall in Bay Island Park shows signs of wear. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



*Swimmers and a paddleboarder enjoy the Gulf of Mexico's warm waters at Siesta Public Beach.  
Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## **SIESTA BEACH STORMWATER PROJECT BID RECOMMENDED**

The Sarasota County Procurement Department on March 4 issued a notice of a recommended bid for the stormwater project at Siesta Public Beach.

Forsberg Construction Inc. of Punta Gorda was determined to have provided “the lowest responsive and responsible bid,” according to the notice. The company put in a bid of \$4,286,083.28 as the base price, with an extra \$264,600 for alternate work proposed for the project, for a total of \$4,550,683.28.

An analyst in the Procurement Department told *The Sarasota News Leader* he believed the bid recommendation would come before the Sarasota County Commission on April 23.

Only three bids were submitted for the project, and all of them were close to three times higher than the \$1.5 million original estimate of staff.

An analysis provided to the County Commission in a Feb. 13 memo indicated the biggest reason for the higher bids was too low an es-

timate for what the memo called “the most challenging portion of the pipeline” that will take treated stormwater into the Gulf of Mexico. While Erickson Consulting Engineers, which worked on that aspect of the project, had put the cost at \$681,475, the memo said, the corresponding portion of the lowest bid was \$2,291,200.

The memo pointed out that this project “is the first in Florida” of its kind.

The Forsberg bid was the second lowest of the three submitted, according to the Procurement notice. Gibbs & Register Inc. of Winter Garden submitted the lowest bid: \$4,550,683.28, including the alternate work, the notice says. However, Procurement staff found the company could not meet all the qualifications specified for the project.

The project is designed to prevent future closures of Siesta Key Beach to swimming because of unhealthful levels of bacteria resulting from stormwater runoff into the Gulf.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

## ARLINGTON PARK GYM CLOSÉS FOR RENOVATIONS

The Arlington Park gymnasium, located at 2650 Waldemere St. in Sarasota, soon will undergo a much-needed renovation necessitating the gym to be closed for approximately two weeks, the City of Sarasota has announced.

The makeover will begin Monday, March 11; it is expected to be finished Monday, March 25.

The project includes installing a new floor, new gym divider curtain and new basketball goals as well as adding padding to the walls

near the goals, a city news release says. The goal winch system also will be converted from manual to electric, the release notes.

This is the first time the gym will have been updated in 30 years, it adds.

The \$134,000 project is being funded through the countywide local option sales tax, also known as the penny sales tax, approved by Sarasota County voters, the release points out.



*The Arlington Park gym is overdue for renovations, according to city staff. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota*

## SARASOTA K-9 SEARCH AND RESCUE SEEKING VOLUNTEERS

Are you community-minded and interested in joining a unique Sarasota team? Sarasota K-9 Search and Rescue Team (SSAR) is seeking volunteers.

A Meet and Greet session for potential recruits will be held at 9 a.m. Saturday, March 9, in the conference room at Animal Services, 8451 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota, the county has announced.

“This team is a group of highly trained volunteers who assist in the location of missing persons,” a news release notes. The members partner with Sarasota County public safety agencies, including Emergency Management, Fire-Rescue and law enforcement, the release adds. The team’s services may be requested only through Sarasota County Emergency Management or the Florida Forest Service, the release points out.

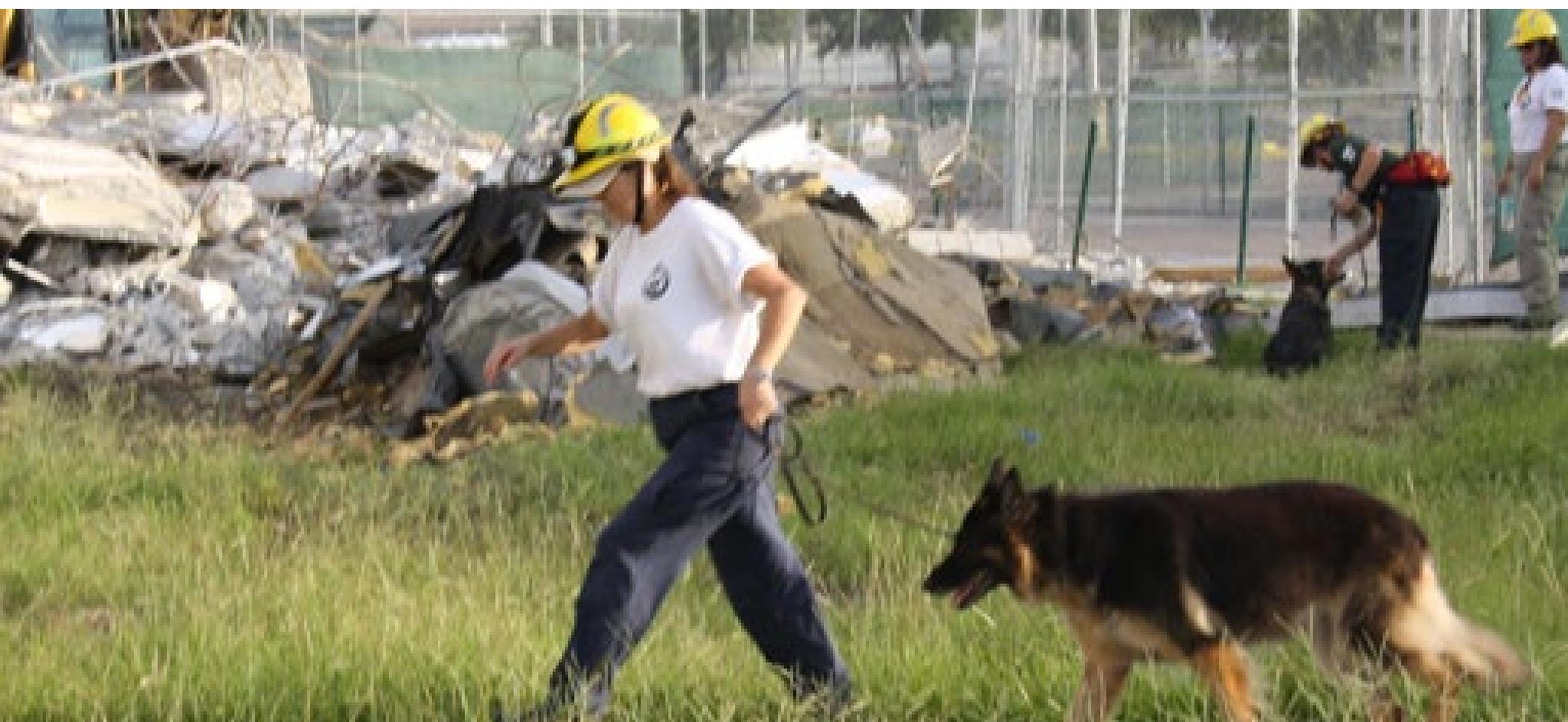
K-9 Search and Rescue has earned numerous performance awards, most recently a special

resolution from Gov. Rick Scott recognizing it “for its outstanding work and commitment to finding the lost,” the release says. The team has been successful in many high-profile cases throughout the state, the release adds.

Members include individuals working in law enforcement, firefighting, emergency management, the military, medicine, animal care and computer technology, the release notes. Retirees and homemakers also are welcome, it points out. “Not all of SSAR team members are dog handlers,” the release says.

SSAR sponsors its training programs through fundraising efforts, the release continues. Experience in fundraising, special event assistance and administrative work is highly valued, the release adds.

This organization is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. To learn more about it and how to volunteer or assist, visit the [website](#).



*The K-9 Search and Rescue Team is looking for new volunteers. Image courtesy of SSAR*

## WHY DOES SARASOTA LOOK THE WAY IT DOES?

A panel of architecture experts will convene on Tuesday, March 12, at 7 p.m. at The Crocker Memorial Church, 1260 12th St., Sarasota to talk about how Sarasota came to look the way it does.

This interactive panel discussion is part of a yearlong series called *Conversations at The Crocker*, presented by the Historical Society of Sarasota County. Admission is free to Historical Society members and \$10 for guests, a news release notes.

The Florida Cracker, vernacular cottage, Mediterranean Revival and Sarasota School of Architecture will be among the design styles discussed when Harold Bubil, real estate editor of the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, moderates a panel comprising architects Carl Abbott, Frank Folsom Smith, Guy Peterson and Clifford Scholz, the release adds.

“Sarasota has always had important and imposing homes,” says Bubil in the release, “starting with The Acacias, the Edson Keith Mansion, the Ringling Palaces, Crosley Mansion, and the big ranch homes of the 1950s and 60s. Then we have the high-rises of downtown and the advent of the new Med Rev homes over the past 30 years, as well as the recent trend toward West Indies design. Our panel will discuss the aesthetic influences that came to shape our city.”

Abbott opened his Sarasota architecture office in the 1960s after studying at Yale under Paul Rudolph, the release notes.

Smith “is a first-generation Sarasota School of Architecture stalwart” who designed Plymouth Harbor with Louis Schneider.



*The Umbrella House was designed by internationally renowned architect Paul Rudolph. Contributed photo*

Peterson, “a second-generation Sarasota school modernist, made a name for himself as the design architect for Sarasota Memorial Hospital’s Emergency Care Center,” the release continues.

“Scholz’s name has been synonymous with high-end home design in Sarasota for two decades,” the release adds.

All proceeds from the panel discussion series help to maintain the Historical Society’s two heritage properties at Pioneer Park — the Bidwell-Wood House (1882, Sarasota’s oldest private residence) and the Crocker Memorial Church (1901), the release points out. Docent-led tours of both buildings are available an hour before each of the *Conversations at The Crocker* events.

For additional information, visit [www.HSOSC.com](http://www.HSOSC.com) or call Linda Garcia, the Historical Society site manager, at 364-9076.

## SCHIMMEL APPOINTED TO TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

During the March 5 regular meeting in Venice, the Sarasota County Commission appointed Norman Schimmel of Sarasota to the seat on the Tourist Development Council (TDC) that had been vacated by Bob Waechter of Siesta Key.

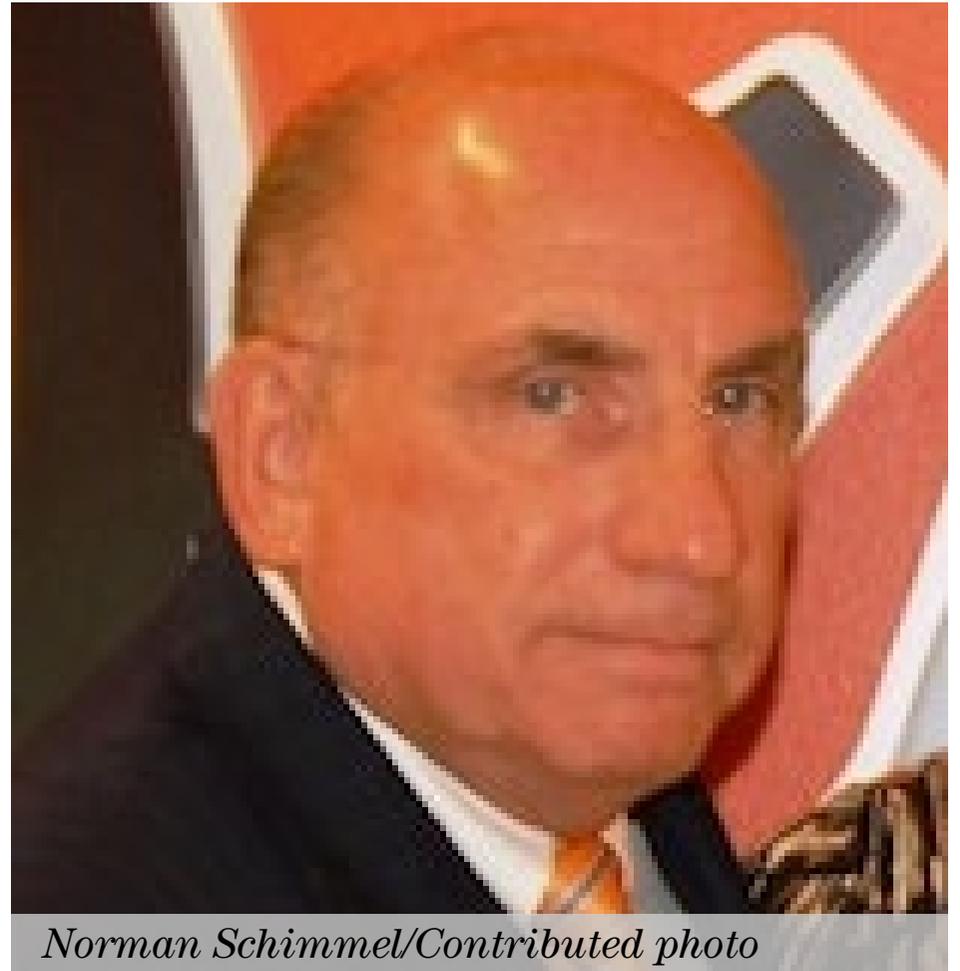
Waechter resigned on Jan. 6 from both the Sarasota County Board of Zoning Appeals and the TDC. He was charged Dec. 14 with a third-degree felony after he allegedly used personal identity information to purchase a prepaid VISA card in the name of Lourdes Ramirez, president of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, to make campaign contributions to Democratic candidates Keith Fitzgerald and Liz Alpert in the 2012 campaign.

Schimmel was president of Normande Lighting from 2004 to 2008, a company he created that supplies lamps to eight of the top 10 retailers in the United States, according to his resume.

In 2011, he was named "The Voice of Sarasota" by the county's tourism office — now Visit Sarasota County — for his work promoting tourism in the area.

Schimmel is also a member of the county's Citizen Tax Oversight Committee. He previously served on the Public Facilities Financing Advisory Board and the Keep Sarasota County Beautiful Advisory Board.

Two other people had applied for the seat: Victoria Brill of Longboat Key, a legislative aide to state Sen. Bill Galvano of Manatee County; and Richard Cautero of Venice, managing director and president of Executive Advisory Services, a business consulting firm.



*Norman Schimmel/Contributed photo*

Brill was a write-in candidate for the office of Sarasota County supervisor of elections during the 2012 campaign, making it impossible for anyone but a registered Republican to vote in the primary. Incumbent Kathy Dent won the race. Former County Commissioner Jon Thaxton, who could not seek re-election because of term limits, challenged Dent for the seat.

Cautero was vice president for finance and corporate planning and strategy for the Altria Group Inc. (formerly Philip Morris Cos.) from 1999 to 2006, his application says.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta nominated Schimmel to serve on the TDC. No other nominations were offered. The vote on Schimmel's appointment was unanimous.

Chairwoman Carolyn Mason was unable to attend the meeting because of illness.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

## PHILLIPPI FARMHOUSE MARKET OFFERING 'SPRING BREAK RELIEF'

Just in time for “spring break mommas’ relief,” the Phillippi Farmhouse Market will host its second Children’s Day at the Market on Wednesday, March 13, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., the market has announced.

Parents are invited to bring school-age children to 5500 S. Tamiami Trail to enjoy hand-crafted wooden games of skill designed by Krisztina, “who wowed the children for hours last year,” a news release says. “There will be plenty for the children to do while you shop for your fresh, locally produced harvests from farm and sea,” it adds.

The market also will feature arts and crafts for all ages, face painting and a wide selection of children’s books by local authors.

Along with local products, the market features vendors selling prepared foods to enable customers to enjoy picnics on the grounds. Among the selections are Perry’s BBQ, hot dogs, crepes, kettle korn, freshly made lem-

onade, ice cream milkshakes with fresh mint from the Herb Guys and ice cream from the Purple Cow, the release points out.

The teenage Garbage Men Band will be entertaining with their hand-made instruments made totally from recycled “garbage,” the release points out — cereal boxes, empty bottles, old pipe and Fisher Price outgrown toys.

Volunteers with the Sarasota Humane Society will be present as well with their “Adorable Adoptables.” Market shoppers also are welcome to bring their own well-behaved dogs on leashes, the release notes.

An escorted tour of the Historic Edson Keith Mansion will begin at 10 a.m. Interested persons are asked to meet on the front porch.

The market is located on the grounds of Phillippi Estate Park, which has plenty of free parking. For more information, call 861-5000 or visit [www.farmhousemarket.org](http://www.farmhousemarket.org).

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## CITY COMMISSION RECOGNIZES SARASOTA’S INTERNATIONAL AERIAL STAR

Sarasota Mayor Suzanne Atwell recognized internationally known aerialist Nik Wallenda on March 4 for his Jan. 29 high wire walk across the bayfront.

During a presentation that was part of the City Commission’s regular meeting, Atwell gave Wallenda a framed photo showing him on the wire mid-walk; the frame held an engraving saying, “A Man and His City.”

The photo, taken by Norman Schimmel of Sarasota, shows [Wallenda framed against the downtown skyline](#) along the Tamiami Trail.



*Nik Wallenda addresses the City Commission audience on March 4. Photo by Kelly French*

“You are truly a part of our history,” Atwell told Wallenda.

Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, had reported to her that day, Atwell said, that the tourism office had determined the walk garnered 167,807,055 media impressions in the United States alone. (A media impression is any look at a story in a traditional news medium or online.)

The photo, Atwell added, “highlights not only [Wallenda’s] walk but the breadth and beauty of his city. ... This shows a unique and telling perspective of a son of Sarasota. ... It’s about Nik’s relationship with this city.”

Wallenda captured international attention last summer when he walked a high wire spread across Niagara Falls — the first person to achieve the feat.

The January walk — with Wallenda starting from a crane on the Sarasota bayfront and heading to the Marina One condominium tower on the east side of U.S. 41 — was designed to put the city in the spotlight, he told the City Commission in seeking approval for the stunt.

Wallenda was a star again of the Circus Sarasota season this year in the city.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*



(From left) Norman Schimmel, Mayor Suzanne Atwell, aerialist Nik Wallenda of Sarasota and Jennifer Mitchell, marketing director of Circus Sarasota. Photo by Kelly French

## ORIOLES TO CONDUCT YOUTH CLINICS ON MARCH 9 AND APRIL 13

As part of their Sarasota 365 commitment to the community, the Orioles and Orioles-REACH have scheduled three clinics for area youth on the main field at Ed Smith Stadium over the coming weeks.

Two are for pre-selected children from local Boys and Girls Clubs, a news release says, while the third, on April 13, will be open to Sarasota County youth ages 8-14. All participants will receive instruction in baseball fundamentals from Orioles players, coaches and staff members, the release points out.

The first clinic was held March 2. The second clinic will take place on Saturday, March 9, at 12:30 p.m. It will include 25 participants from the Gene Matthews Boys and Girls Club in North Port and 25 youth from the Robert and Joan Lee Boys and Girls Club in Venice, the release adds.

In addition to baseball instruction, the Orioles will provide transportation to and from the

ballpark and refreshments for all the participants.

The final clinic, scheduled for April 13 at 2 p.m. at Ed Smith Stadium, will be open to pre-selected Sarasota County youth. Those interested must complete an application form available at the stadium or at [www.orioles.com/sarasota](http://www.orioles.com/sarasota). (Click on "Community Calendar.") Print and mail the completed form to Ed Smith Stadium, Attn: April 13 Clinic, 2700 12th St., Sarasota, FL 34237 or drop it off at the Herald-Tribune Information Booth behind home plate on any game day by March 30.

From the submissions received, 50 boys and girls will be randomly selected to receive instruction in throwing, hitting, fielding and base running from Orioles minor league players and instructors, the release adds.

Those youngsters selected will be notified by April 5.



*The Baltimore Orioles play the Boston Red Sox at Ed Smith Stadium on Feb. 27. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## PUBLIC MEETINGS SCHEDULED ON SCAT TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) will hold meetings this month for the public to review and comment on potential changes to SCAT's Transit Development Plan, the county has announced.

Among the topics will be future bus routes, planned services and existing services, a county news release says.

The Transit Development Plan is the 10-year strategic guide for public transportation, the release notes. It includes an evaluation of existing services, a review of demographic and travel behavior characteristics of the service area, a summary of local transit policies, the

development of proposed transit enhancements and 10-year implementation and financial plans.

Meetings will be held as follows:

- Monday, March 11, 3:30 to 4:30 p.m., conference room, North Port Public Library, 13800 S. Tamiami Trail, North Port.
- Thursday, March 14, 3:30 to 4:30 p.m., conference room, Fruitville Public Library, 10 Coburn Road, Sarasota.

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

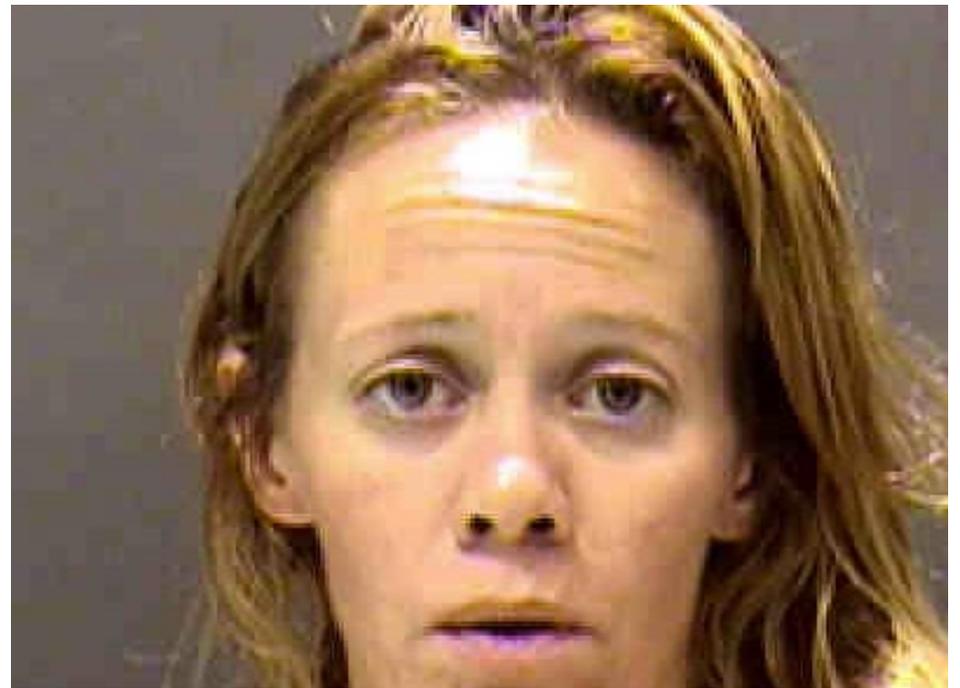
## WOMAN ARRESTED AFTER 'BIZARRE INCIDENT' ON INTERSTATE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office arrested Kristina Grzep, 41, of 9035 Misty Creek Drive, Sarasota, "following a bizarre incident" that ended on I-75 on the morning of March 4, the office has announced.

Deputies received a call around 9 a.m. about a suspicious vehicle at State Road 72 and the Bee Ridge Road extension, a news release says. "When the marked units arrived, Grzep fled, driving her Hummer H3 toward a deputy's vehicle and forcing him to take an evasive maneuver," the release adds.

As Grzep drove north on Bee Ridge Road, the release continues, deputies twice successfully deployed stop sticks to deflate her vehicle's tires, but Grzep continued driving, forcing deputies to use a maneuver to bring her vehicle to a stop at the northbound onramp to I-75.

Grzep would not exit the vehicle, so deputies initially feared she was suicidal, the release says. However, once a Sheriff's Office negotiator convinced Grzep to exit the vehicle,



*Kristina Grzep/Contributed photo*

"deputies found she had been huffing nitrous oxide," the release adds. Grzep was medically cleared then taken to the Sarasota County Jail, the release notes.

Grzep was charged with Fleeing to Elude, Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon on a Law Enforcement Officer, Unlawful Distribution of Nitrous Oxide and two counts of Resisting Arrest without Violence.

## PRESSMAN TO BE HONORED WITH BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING AWARD

The Jewish Museum of Florida-Florida International University (FIU) has announced that Sonia Pressman Fuentes is one of five winners of the 17th Annual Breaking the Glass Ceiling Award for women who have been successful in fields generally dominated by men.

Each of the winners will be honored during a reception and ceremony at 3 p.m. on Sunday, April 21, at the museum, which is located at 301 Washington Ave. in Miami Beach.

The event will include presentations by the honorees describing the obstacles and inspirations they encountered on their individual journeys to success, a news release says.

In 1965, Fuentes joined the General Counsel's office of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) as its first woman attorney. She drafted one of the EEOC's earliest Digests of Legal Interpretations, its first Guidelines on Pregnancy and Childbirth and the decision protecting employment rights of stewardesses, the release points out.

In 1966, she became one of 49 founders of the National Organization of Women. She was co-founder of both Federally Employed Women and the Women's Equity Action League, and she was a charter member of the Veteran Feminists of America as well as a longtime board member of the National Woman's Party, the release notes.

In addition to more than 20 years as an attorney with the federal government, she was the highest paid woman at the headquarters of multinational corporations GTE and TRW, the release says.



*Sonia Fuentes/Contributed photo*

“A woman of great energy and zest, she began a second career after retirement, lecturing on women's rights worldwide and writing a lively autobiography, *Eat First – You Don't Know What They'll Give You: The Adventures of an Immigrant Family and Their Feminist Daughter*,” the release adds.

Inspired by her own Polish family's immigration story after fleeing Berlin in 1933, Fuentes says her identity as an immigrant is central to her lifelong commitment to equity and inclusion, the release says.

The other honorees are as follows:

- **Judge Jeri Beth Cohen**, a dependency court judge in the State of Florida 11th Judicial Circuit, began her service on the bench in the criminal division at a time when few women held judiciary positions in Miami-Dade County.

- **Sherryl Susan Evans** served as deputy sheriff for Hillsborough County for more than 32 years.
- **Marilyn Hoder-Salmon** is the founding director of the Women's Studies Center at Florida International University (FIU).
- **Betsy Kaplan** is the "mother of public arts education" in Miami-Dade County.
- The Breaking the Glass Ceiling Award was established by the Jewish Museum of Florida in 1995. More than 75 winners have been honored with this distinction to date, from a wide variety of fields, including banking, politics, law, aviation, journalism, sports and entertainment, the release notes.

The ceremony will include light refreshments. The cost for non-members of the museum is \$20; for students, \$5. For reservations, contact 786-972-3175 or [info@jewishmuseum.com](mailto:info@jewishmuseum.com)

The Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU is the only Museum dedicated to telling the story of 250 years of Florida Jewish heritage, arts and culture. The museum is housed in two adjacent restored historic buildings, at 301 Washington Ave. on South Beach, that were once synagogues for Miami Beach's first Jewish congregation. The museum's focal point is its core exhibit, *MOSAIC: Jewish Life in Florida, 1763 to Present*, and its temporary history and art exhibits that change periodically.

For more information, call 305-672-5044 or [www.jewishmuseum.com](http://www.jewishmuseum.com).

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## SCAT EXPRESS BUSES ADD WI-FI ACCESS

This week, Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) riders began taking advantage of wireless network access on SCAT's eight Express buses — serving Express routes 100X North Port-Sarasota and 90X North Port-Venice-Sarasota, the county has announced.

Designed for commuters, the 40-foot Express buses are SCAT's largest in the fleet, with seats for 40 passengers, a news release notes.

The Express buses have limited stops on long routes — about 70 minutes for the 100X and 85 minutes for the 90X — "so riders have time to relax, read or now access the Internet through a wireless network," the release adds. Each bus has a unique wireless network name, the release notes.

SCAT is providing riders with the following disclaimers:

- The SCAT wireless network is an open, unsecured network.
- Riders are advised to use the service at their own risk.
- Users are required to accept the county's terms of service.
- Sarasota County does not provide technical support for the riders' devices or possible connectivity problems.
- The county does not guarantee Internet connectivity or 4G performance. Performance may vary, based on the number of active users and the wireless provider's network availability.
- SCAT also asks Wi-Fi users to be courteous to other riders. For example, the staff advis-

es users to keep volumes muted or to wear headphones.

The Express fares are \$2.50 one-way or \$5 for round trips, the release points out. A 30-day pass is \$85, and a discounted pass costs \$42.50

for persons 65 years or older and eligible persons with disabilities.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 or TTY: 7-1-1.

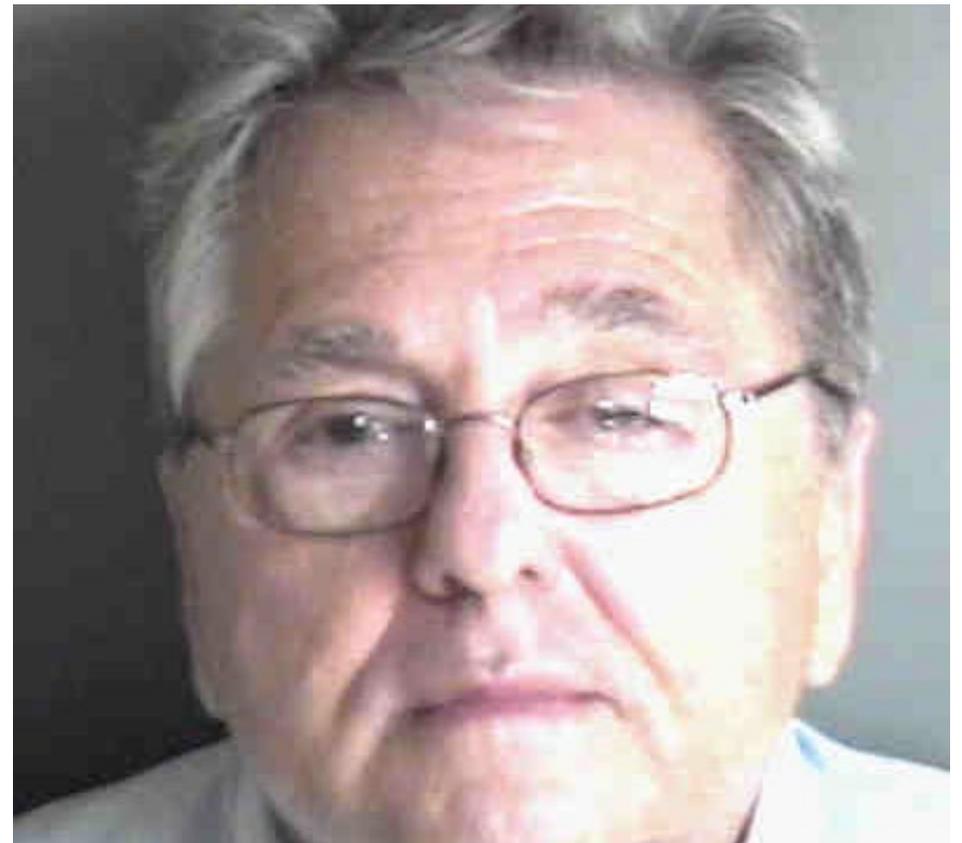
## CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR CHARGED WITH GRAND THEFT

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested Robert Kondratick, 67, of 11722 Tempest Harbor Loop, Venice, for allegedly embezzling more than \$50,000 from church funds intended to help parishioners who have fallen on hard times, the office has announced.

Kondratick was employed as administrator of the Holy Spirit Orthodox Church on Shamrock Boulevard, a Sheriff's Office report says. Church council members contacted the Sheriff's Office at the end of January after discovering funds had been misused over a six-month period from June to December 2012, the report notes. Church officials fired Kondratick at that time, the report adds.

Witnesses say Kondratick requested signed blank checks to pay what he said were church expenses, according to the report. However, the investigation revealed he cashed 28 checks, 14 of them made out to "cash" — totaling \$25,950 — with the remainder made out to himself, totaling \$28,000, the report says. "A large number of the checks noted in the memo section that they were intended for the 'Good Samaritan Fund,' the report points out. That is a fund the church uses to assist parishioners who need financial assistance, the report continues.

When questioned about the expenditures, the report says, "Kondratick would rarely have



*Robert Kondratick/Contributed photo*

an explanation and would not have any documentation or receipts."

When confronted by church council members at one point, the report adds, Kondratick said, "What do you want me to do? Work it off?"

Detectives obtained an arrest warrant for Kondratick, who turned himself in March 6 to face one felony count of Grand Theft, the report adds.

The Orthodox Church of America relieved Kondratick of his duties as priest in 2007 following an investigation into financial misconduct while Kondratick was working in Syosset, NY, the report says. Criminal charges were not pursued at that time. 

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and former head writer for "The Daily Show,"  
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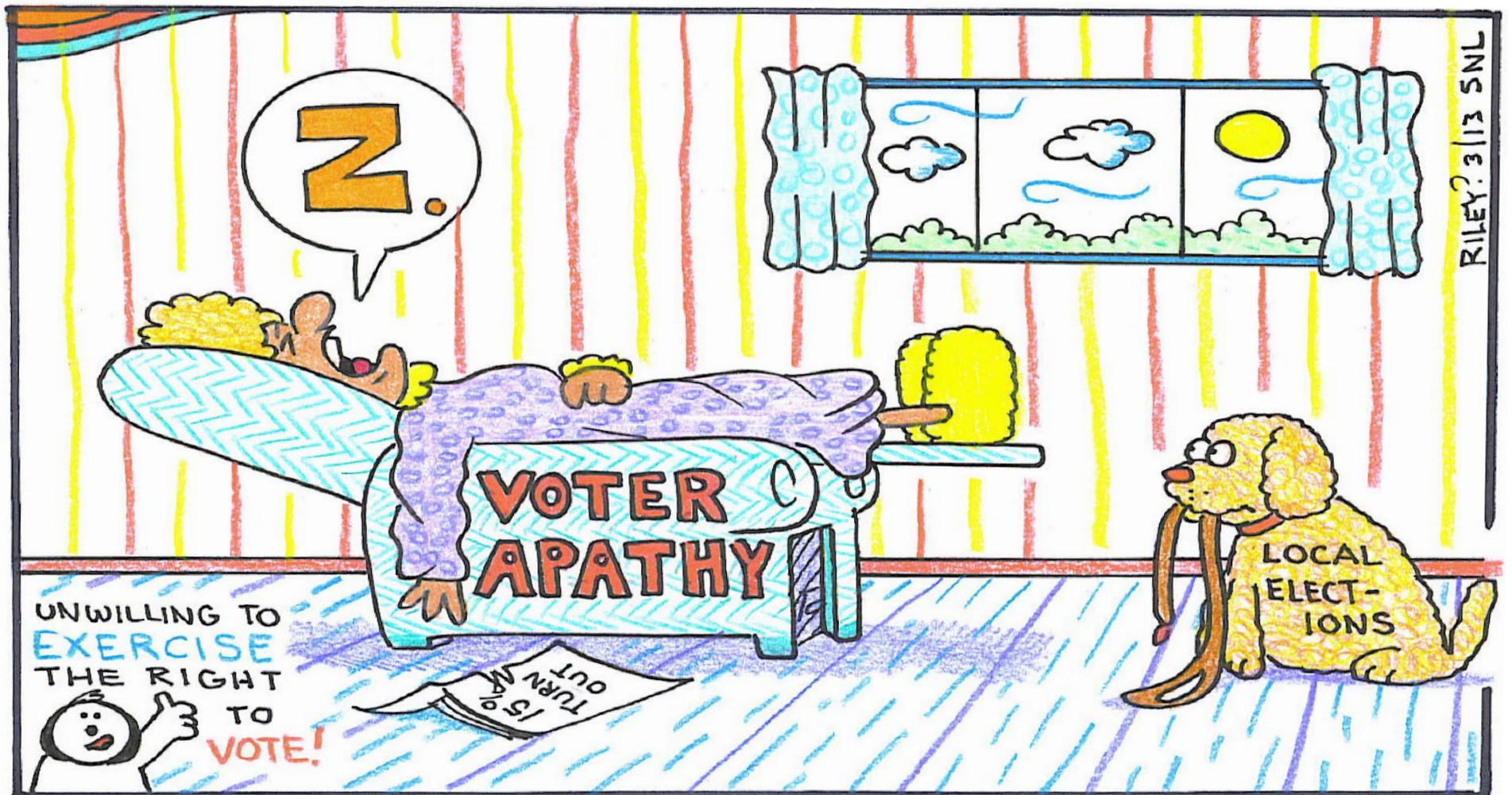
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# OPINION



## VOTE HOLLAND AND CHAPMAN FOR SARASOTA CITY COMMISSION

### EDITORIAL

The upcoming election to fill two seats on the Sarasota City Commission already has had its fair share of drama and intrigue. Yet for the discerning voter, the choice really comes down to the *familiar* versus the *unfamiliar*.

With six candidates vying for two seats, such a frame of reference allows the paring away of rhetoric and other campaign hoopla.

The familiar candidate is one who has spent many years in the community, but who also has been involved in the affairs of the community. Service on volunteer boards, commissions and advocacy groups provides a clear demonstration of both temperament and intention.

Involvement in the community allows a person to advocate for causes and beliefs deeply

held. It also becomes an indelible record, for better or worse, if that person aspires to elective office.

Voters can have a certain confidence in the future acts of a commissioner who has spent years in such service.

The unfamiliar candidate, therefore, is at a distinct disadvantage, because little is known about the person, either because the candidate is a relative newcomer to the city or because involvement in community activities has not been a priority — or both.

There are ways to overcome being lesser known. Endorsements by others who are long-term residents or are themselves involved in the community can dispel some of the uncertainty that plagues lesser-known candidates. Building a great campaign war chest, to fi-

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# OPINION

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nance media advertising and yard signs, is another way to build familiarity.

But in the end, these ersatz strategies do little to reveal the true nature of a candidate. There is no reasonable expectation of how the candidate might serve as a commissioner.

The city has a host of major issues that must be addressed in the coming months and years. The two commissioners elected on March 12 must be capable of thoughtful, careful and rational deliberation in dealing with those issues.

To gauge the ability of each candidate to serve in such a deliberative way poses the greatest challenge for voters, and the history of each candidate — as both a resident and an actively involved member of the community — is the truest barometer of future performance.

Linda Holland has been a member of the community for more than three decades. In that time, she has served on a number of boards and commissions, and she is well known as an active advocate for neighborhood interests. She has demonstrated not just by her words, but also by her service, that she will reflect carefully on the issues she is called upon to address.

Likewise, Susan Chapman has been a long-term resident of the city and actively involved

in the community. An attorney, she, too, has served on several boards and commissions, including her current seat as chairman of the city Planning Board.

Both women have gained valuable experience working with law enforcement, neighborhood preservation and downtown and North Trail revitalization. They have shown a commitment to address the fiscal concerns of the city through a balanced approach.

When we review both the civic resumes of these two women and their public pronouncements, including the extensive interviews they gave to *The Sarasota News Leader*, we feel a much greater confidence in their abilities than we do in considering any of the other candidates.

The City Commission has struggled with division in recent years, with commissioners more committed to individualism than prudent governance. With this election, the process of ending those divisions and creating a cohesive strategy for future progress can begin. The two candidates who offer the greatest hope for a new inclusiveness and the creation of a thriving city are Linda Holland and Susan Chapman.

**We urge voters to cast their ballots for Linda Holland and Susan Chapman for Sarasota City Commissioner.** 

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# OPINION

## JUST GO AHEAD AND CALL IT AN 'ADDICTION'



By Harriet Cuthbert  
*Contributing Writer*

**COMMENTARY** OK, I admit it. I have an addiction, and I am fairly sure many other people have the same one, but it is not mentioned out loud very often.

This addiction is unique. It is not bad for my physical or mental well being (quite the contrary); it does not require making “a connection” to purchase it (it is free); and when abused, it does not necessarily break up families — more than likely, it brings them together.

I am addicted to the weather in Sarasota, and especially on Siesta Key. I realized that on a recent day I had spent more than six hours outdoors, thinking of different ways to remain outdoors, which was not very difficult at all.

There are the usual choices: the beach; long walks; gardening. But what is really forcing me to stay outside and ignore all my domestic (indoor) responsibilities? Why do I feel compelled to be outdoors all day? Am I worried that this perfect weather will not last more than one day? Is it the stunning azure sky, lit up by that golden sun — with not even one cloud to mar its perfection? Is it the early morning wake-up calls of the birds, also addicted to being outside? (If there is a breeze, it is just comforting enough to cool me off from the sun's warm rays.)

I cannot stop. Why do I find myself sitting at the beach, just staring into space? Is some-

thing in the air hypnotizing me? I feel as if I can do this forever.

Yes, my addiction to our weather has taken over all my senses. I am inventing excuses to be outside: Snip a branch; dig up a weed; water the shrubs. It is getting ridiculous. Did I not just do all this yesterday?

It is so easy to nurse this addiction. It is probably the only one that will enhance and extend a life — making a person even healthier. Being an “outsider” in Sarasota should be required, both for residents and tourists.

I guess I will have to wait until next winter (or when it snows) to come inside and vacuum. **SNL**



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*The Sarasota News Leader* welcomes letters to the editor from its readers. Letters should be no more than 300 words in length, and include the name, street address and telephone number of the writer. Letters should be emailed to [Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com), with “Letter to the Editor” in the subject line. Letters actually printed will be selected based on space available, subject matter and other factors. We reserve the right to edit any letters submitted for length, grammar, spelling, etc. All letters submitted become the property of *The Sarasota News Leader*.

# Sarasota Leisure

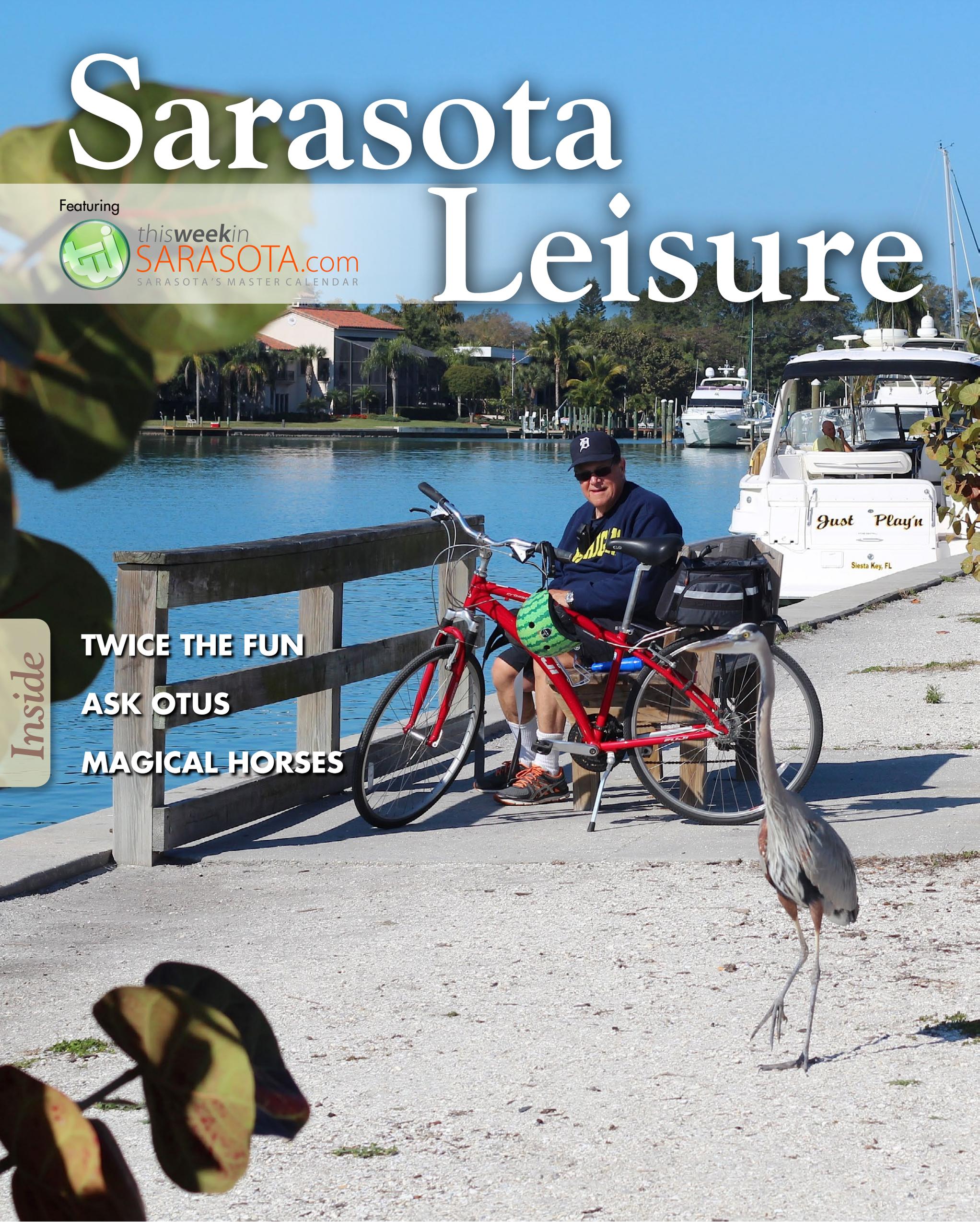
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SARASOTA'S MASTER CALENDAR

**TWICE THE FUN**  
**ASK OTUS**  
**MAGICAL HORSES**

*Inside*





Sir Frederick Ashton's

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mal Gardée*  
{The Wayward Daughter}

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# TWICE THE FUN



*Future teachers Jamilla Ali (right) and Denisha Allen (left) take a quick timeout from working with Candace Dixon on a project. Photo by Scott Proffitt*

## UNIVERSITY'S SM<sup>2</sup> EVENT OFFERS A DIFFERENT TAKE ON MATH CLASS

**By Scott Proffitt**

*Staff Writer*

Tricia Hunsader likes math. No, I mean really, she does, as she clearly demonstrated in her responsibilities for the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee (SM)<sup>2</sup> Art Fair.

SM<sup>2</sup> — or SM squared — stands for the Sarasota Manatee Sensational Mathematical Art Fair, which was held Feb. 23.

And it was both sensational and mathematical. All the arts and crafts projects were educational and hands-on, with students learning how to make a wide variety of objects that employ or represent mathematical concepts.

Some of the concepts they worked with — and utilized in creating things — are complex

but can be made easily understandable. Exposing the youngsters to these ideas plants the seed that math cannot only be interesting but even fun.

When asked how she came up with the idea of an art fair to teach math, Hunsader told *The Sarasota News Leader*, “I’m the advisor of the math club, which is [SM] squared, or Sarasota-Manatee Sharing Math, and I get to teach the math methods courses, which is a lot of fun.”

She added, “But we don’t have the freedom to do the kind of stuff we’re doing here at the fair, because there is so much content we have



*Pine View School student Ben demonstrates how much he is relishing the fair. Photo by Scott Proffitt*



*Nicholas Trent is a student at Johnson Middle School in Manatee County. Photo by Scott Proffitt*

to get through. So I was looking for something that would get the pre-service teachers [teachers who have not held posts yet] to engage in this. They are all learning ideas they can use in their classrooms.”

Hunsader continued, “I also get the chance to expose elementary kids to a lot of spatial and mathematical concepts. I’m hoping that allowing kids this kind of freedom to explore this kind of stuff ... gives them the chance to see math in a new way — to let them see that math can be fun. I want them to see math can be creative.”

As a point of fact, Hunsader added, “A lot of the stuff they are learning here ... the math behind it is college-level math.”

In this second year of the fair, the number of attendees doubled, according to Hunsader.

Among the projects, students created kaleidoscopes, optical art, fractals and origami. Outside, chalk projects and a live jazz band were the attractions, but the real action was in the Selby Auditorium, where dozens of tables were set up and dozens of eager young teachers and students were constructing cool things while Mozart played in the background.

“The purpose is to see how many different shapes they can create with just one rectangle,” said Jamilla Ali at one table.

Ali and Denisha Allen were helping Candace Dixon, a Booker Middle School student, with “Rectangle Madness.” As this reporter watched, Candace crafted a lovely and colorful piece. Ali and Allen are both working toward a Bachelor of Arts degree in elementary education at USF.



*Pine View fourth-grader Spencer works on a project. Photo by Scott Proffitt*

“It’s a fun way to learn,” said Ali.

Nicholas Trent of Johnson Middle School in Manatee County was busy making a complex structure out of a flat piece of paper. He said he really was enjoying the fair — almost as much as the Rick Riordan book he kept close at his side.

Amazingly to those perhaps not so math-inclined, all the youngsters came to the fair of

their own free will on a bright and beautiful Saturday, a clear indication of how much fun they truly were having.

“We got so many emails” from students who attended last year, asking when it was going to be, Hunsader said. “The kids got so excited.”

And judging from the results, next year should bring even more youngsters, eager to be at a crafts fair — and maybe learn a little math. 



*Tricia Hunsader/Photo by Scott Proffitt*



## ASK OTUS

### LEAPIN' LIZARDS: WATCH OUT FOR THOSE TEGUS

Dear Readers,

With spring's arrival just days away, the thoughts of many Siesta Key residents and visitors to our fair isle turn to romance. People are walking hand-in-hand on the beach and sneaking in long kisses as the sun sets, thereby missing the opportunity to see our famous "green flash."

From my oak branch, I observe couples at the bayside dock with their glasses of Chardon-

nay, again smooching away and missing the opportunity to observe that fat red moon rising or the iridescent mullet soaring through the air right in front of them.

In other words, love is blind. That is why people need an owl to keep a sharp eye on things and point out what they all have been missing while they were smooching.

It is now the height of mating season for many creatures, and from the nightly melodic mating songs of the Mockingbirds to the blooming of the heady-scented gardenia, Mother Nature provides the perfect setting for romance, a Garden of Eden.

Now you are wondering, "Where is that serpent?" Forget the snake! This is Siesta Key,

and when it comes to reptiles we can do a lot better than that!

Some of you will remember reading my very first article, published in the Aug. 23, 2012 issue of *The Sarasota News Leader*. In it, I identified a reader's photo as that of an Argentine Black and White Tegu (*Tupinambis merianae*), a species popular with collectors of exotic reptiles for its relatively docile behavior. The photo was taken on south Siesta Key.

The Tegu's markings are quite clear. The photo has also captured the lizard's huge, red, exploring forked tongue. Additionally, the photo shows an adult snowy egret. By comparing sizes, one can estimate the Tegu to be less

than 3 feet in length; it is probably a juvenile. The adult Argentine Black and White Tegu (also called an Argentine Giant Tegu) is the largest of all the Tegu species. The male can grow up to 4.5 feet and can live some 15 to 20 years in the wild. This Tegu on Siesta is likely an escaped or an illegally released former pet.

Like all reptiles and amphibians, Tegus are ectothermic and need to draw heat from the sun. During periods of cooler temperatures, they will enter brumation (the reptilian equivalent to mammalian hibernation). This is a type of hibernation that has been described as not unlike a state of suspended animation. In spring, they exit brumation when temperatures rise, the days have more hours of sunlight and the barometric pressures change.



*A reader captured this photo of a Black and White Tegu on Siesta Key last summer. Photo by Rick W.*

Brumation also prepares Tegus for the mating season. Cooler temperatures allow males to produce sperm and females to increase their ovulation cycles. So, when Tegus emerge from their burrows in spring, they will be hungry and randy. I can hardly wait.

Unless caught, Tegus will wreak havoc on our key. They are voracious omnivores with a particular fondness for eggs — especially those of our native sea turtles, alligators, crocodiles and snakes. What is even scarier is that Tegus will go after bird eggs! You see, there are not too many of my Eastern Screech Owl family members left on our key, so I am very concerned by this new threat to avian survival.

A fascinating element of a Tegu's haecceity is that it can run on its hind legs! Check out this [super cool video](#) by wildlife cinematographer Ojatro (Heiko Kiera). You will be amazed. Ojatro has filmed some of the most astonishing footage ever taken of invasive species in the Florida Everglades and their interaction with our native ones.

The Argentine Black and White Tegu is not the only Tegu species that has been sighted on Siesta Key. Its ill-tempered Venezuelan cousin, the Golden Tegu (*Tupinambis teguixin*), has also taken up residence. This adult Tegu, which measures about 4 feet in length, is also likely a former pet that its owner released when it became too large or expensive to care for.

Tegus are an “exotic” (invasive) species in Florida and are of “least concern.” This means that they accorded no legal protection. Tegu sightings are recorded by the Florida Museum of Natural History of Florida University in Gainesville.

These sightings used to be inventoried by the U.S. Geological Service's Non-native Aquatic Species program, but they have since been dropped from the database after Tegus were declared “insufficiently aquatic.” The redesignation is troubling because Tegus are champion swimmers, agile tree climbers and nimble



A Golden Tegu also has been spotted on Siesta Key. File photo

sprinters. A more plausible explanation is that the USGS/NAS Tegus register is an early victim of federal budgetary sequestration.

Anyone sighting a Tegus (or for that matter, an iguana or large snake) is asked to report the sighting by calling the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000. Also, please see the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's posting *Tegus in Florida*.

A word of advice to my readers because I want you to enjoy a lovely spring in our Garden of Eden: It is highly unlikely that a Tegus will offer you an apple. Mangoes are their favorite fruit. Should a Tegus offer you one, just say, "No!"

**Otus**

Dear Otus,

I would like to address your footnote on your March 1 [column](#) (*Mr. Squirrel goes to Washington*) regarding the Canadian dumping of the unwanted squirrels on us (and in Washington, D.C., no less).

You were spot-on in your opening paragraph, but it was not until your footnote that the proverbial penny dropped. The Canadians are no fools. With the arrival of their squirrels in Washington, our D.C. lobby industry has grown in direct proportion to the number of the squirrels. One wonders how long it will take the *Sciurus c.* lobby members to

outnumber those of the National Rifle Association lobby.

Moreover, the usage of the verb form of "squirrel" has increased tremendously in this same period of time. Hmmm ...

*Best regards,  
A perceptive fan*

Dear Perceptive Fan (*Cher Fan Perceptif*),

Thank you for your delightful missive. I do so hope the proverbial penny that dropped was Canadian! It might be quite valuable by now. As you know, production of the penny ceased in May 2012, and the Royal Canadian Mint discontinued the distribution of its pennies as of February 4.

Canada dumped its unwanted squirrels on us but not its valuable copper coinage.

Well, *c'est la guerre!* You lose and then you lose again!

*Otus (Eng.)  
Otus (Fr.)*

SNL

## ABOUT OTUS

*Otus Rufous, an Eastern Screech-Owl, was born on Siesta Key and is a full-time resident there. An avid hunter, accomplished vocalist and genuine night owl, Otus is a keen observer of our local wildlife and knows many of nature's secrets. Otus will answer your questions about our amazing wildlife, but only if you Ask Otus. So please send your questions and photos to [askotus@sarasotaneewsleader.com](mailto:askotus@sarasotaneewsleader.com). Thank you.*



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**I like to take my time.**

**Sure, it's a temptation to rush. Each issue of *The Sarasota News Leader* is brimfull of in-depth coverage of all the news and goings-on in Sarasota County. And it has delightful and informative feature stories. Thanks to its partnership with *This Week In Sarasota*, I always know what the most exciting happenings are each week. Plus, it is simply so beautiful, with photography that takes my breath away.**

**There is so much there, I don't know where to begin. So it is hard to resist the urge to read it all at once. But I know better. Take your time and indulge in all that it has to offer.**

***You have a whole week.***

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## MAGICAL HORSES

*The 'team leaders' are just about ready to start the parade on Ocean Boulevard. All photos by Norman Schimmel*

### **THE BUDWEISER CLYDESDALES DRAW ADORING FANS IN SIESTA VILLAGE**

**By Harriet Cuthbert**

*Contributing Writer*

“Have you seen the horses?” I asked a friendly looking lady with bright blue eyes.

“They’re right around the corner, getting dressed,” she answered.

I trotted over to Calle Minorga to see for myself. As I approached the area, I stopped short and just stared (open-mouthed, I am sure). Five feet away was a Clydesdale, walking gingerly but gracefully down the ramp from his traveling RV to the street. Just watching this simple act left me in awe, and my journey alongside the Clydesdales had barely begun on March 1.

There are literally hundreds of Internet links to the “Clydes,” but a quick history is in order.

Wikipedia describes them as being of Scottish descent and named in the 1700s after the River Clyde. They were bred as draught horses — those used in heavy plowing and farm labor, which is probably how they originally became known in the U.S. I think we know them best as workers for Budweiser.

The marketing geniuses who began using the Clydesdales in TV commercials many years ago seem to have succeeded beyond what they could have ever imagined. Those advertisements — even no longer than they are — starring the horses make us laugh, cry, cheer, etc.; they are amazing. I thought about this as I continued walking toward the rest of the eight horses. All the people gathered around them



*A handler begins the elaborate process of 'dressing' one of the Clydesdales.*

seemed to be spellbound. They were very quiet, respectful, observant and, I am guessing, somewhat stunned to see all these magnificent horses just two feet away from them in Siesta Village.

One of the handlers was lovingly brushing and shining the pure white feet of his charge. The patience of the horse as he stood regally while getting his final touch-ups was incredible. Another horse was getting “dressed” in his best leather straps and shiny accessories. His female handler gazed at him with a look of absolute maternal love, and we fans gazed at all the horses with our own form of adora-

tion. Even the children knew to stay quiet and calm.

We learned that the Budweiser Clydes are between 5 and 15 years of age. And, like Rockettes, they are about the same height and size. This group of horses visiting Siesta lives in Merrimac, NH, but they are only “home” about 45 days a year.

One of the handlers told me it can take up to five hours to get the horses ready for their appearances. These creatures are truly the rock stars of the equine world.

I finally awoke from my trancelike state and remembered that the horses were actually preparing for a parade along Ocean Boulevard. It was a cold and windy evening, but none of the many people lined up along the street or sitting outdoors (enjoying a Bud?) seemed to notice the weather.



*The Budweiser wagon is ready to roll through Siesta Village.*



*The harness goes on before the bridle.*

Suddenly, that oh-so-familiar sound rang out — “clip, clop, clip, clop” — louder and louder, closer and closer. Eight of these masterful animals appeared, parading down Ocean Boulevard to the roar and applause of the crowd.

The horses have made their permanent imprint on the street and in our memories. Siesta Village will never be the same again. 



*Another handler works to add a section to the wagon tongue for the next pair of horses.*



## 'GREAT PERFORMANCES'

*Sarasota Ballet dancers are exuberant in a scene from Dominic Walsh's I Napoletani. Photo by Frank Atura*

### **HULLAND, GIL EARN HIGH PLAUDITS FOR SARASOTA BALLET ROLES IN TUDOR, WALSH PIECES**

**By Elinor Rogosin**

*A&E Writer*

I was impressed and moved by Victoria Holland's restrained elegance and poignant interpretation of "Caroline," the main character in *Lilac Garden*, Antony Tudor's enigmatic ballet about love, performed by The Sarasota Ballet over the weekend.

Her role is the focus of the piece, and she gave a heartbreaking interpretation of a woman forced to marry a man she does not love. The plot is simple: Caroline must leave Her Lover (Riccardo Graziano) for the Man She Must Marry (David Tlaiye), who, in turn, is leaving An Episode in His Past (Danielle Brown). Set in the Edwardian time period, the ballet is a commentary on repressed and remembered

emotions of love, rapture, hope and disappointment, which are universal and timeless.

It seemed as if little was happening while I watched the dancers move through Antony Tudor's choreography, but at the end I felt the ballet had cast a rare spell, as if time had stopped.

The Chausson score (*Poeme for Violin & Orchestra*) was a haunting background for the stark simplicity of both the choreography and the staging that reflected Tudor's interest in exploring human psychology through subtle movement: a simple gesture of hands covering a bowed head; an overhead lift; two women

gazing at one another for a split second; couples entering and leaving the scene at intervals, filling out the social world of the main characters. But it was Victoria Hulland's controlled performance that communicated the emotional center of the ballet as her seemingly boneless body swooned into an arched back bend, or when she transformed a simplistic recurring gesture of an arm reaching out to her former lover into a desperate need to hold on to love, and then in a final act of despair, hurled herself from corner to corner of the stage before accepting her fate.

David Tlayie was correctly formal and stiff with a proprietary air as the Man She Must Marry, especially as he tucked his future bride's arm under his own and walked slowly with her at the end of the ballet. Ricardo Graziano could have shown more ardor as the lover left behind, but a forlorn Danielle Brown was well cast as the forgotten woman.

And through grace and the ease of true artistry, Hulland joined the group of extraordinary ballerinas who have inhabited Tudor's world of deep, hidden emotions since *Lilac Garden* (*Jardin aux Lilas*) was first performed in



(From left) Victoria Hulland, Saneyuki Kawashima and Danielle Brown perform a scene from the 2008 Sarasota Ballet production of *Lilac Garden*. Photo by Frank Atura

1936. Donald Mahler, who set the ballet on the company, must have been pleased.

Another highlight of the evening was the surprise breakout performance by Juan Gil in Dominic Walsh's lively ballet *I Napoletani*, which is set to a group of popular, toe-tapping, Neapolitan songs from the late 1800s. The ballet offered an opportunity for some exuberant dancing by the entire cast, but it was Gil's surprisingly deft, magical dancing in his solo that was the biggest surprise.

In the series of flirtatious vignettes set in a café, a charming Sara Scherer exuberantly showed off as she tried unsuccessfully to tempt a coffee-drinking Ricardo Graziano; Logan Learned, as a baggy-kneed Charlie Chaplin character, chased after an indifferent Victoria Hulland; and Ricki Bertoni swaggered nonchalantly as a quartet of girls followed him, hoping for his attention, before Danielle Brown appeared and it was Bertoni's turn to run after a dream.



Kate Honea is lifted high in a scene from *Les Rendezvous*. Photo by Frank Atura

One note: The stunning opening section of *I Napoletani* was set in an opera house in Naples, and though ballet has its roots in Italian history, I could not make the connection between a group of dancers in overblown white feathers rolling around the stage as if in a nightmare version of *Swan Lake* with the rest of the ballet set in a café.

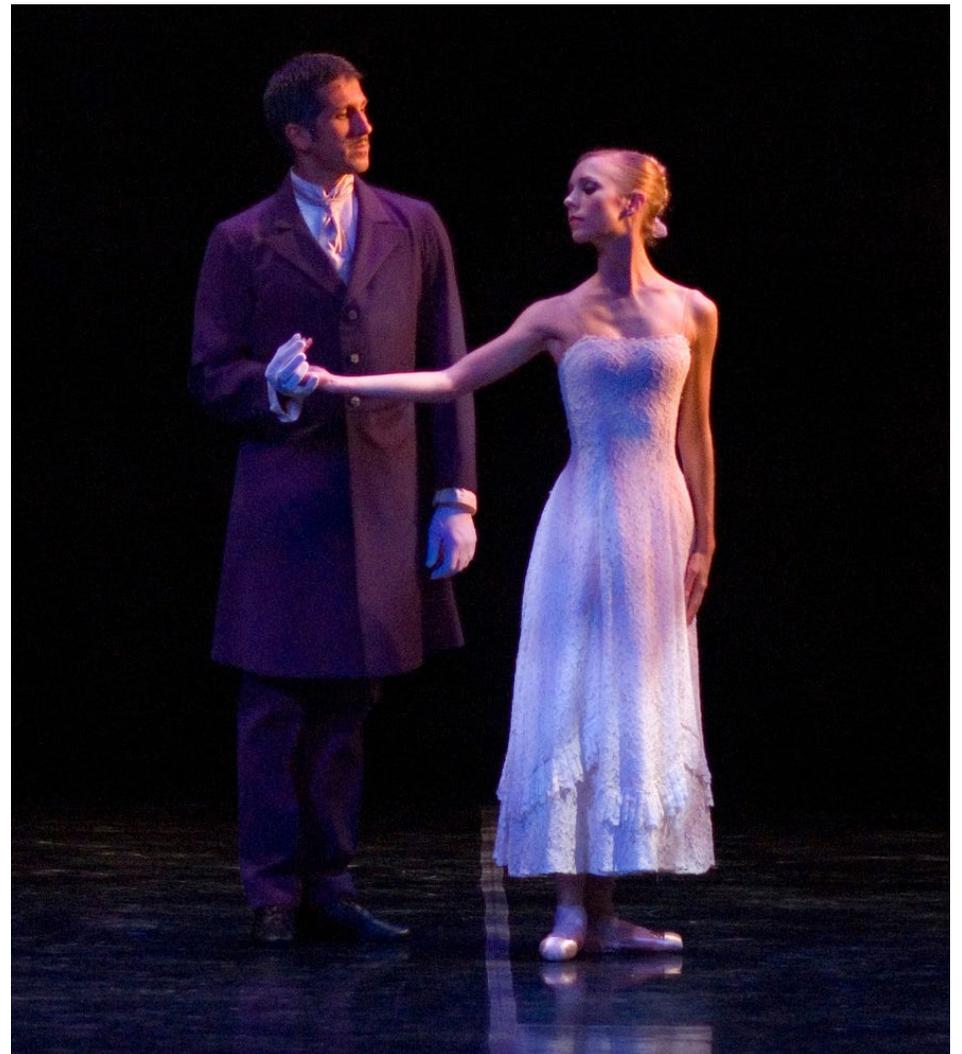
The pursuit of love was a theme shared by all the ballets in the evening's program. *Les Rendezvous*, one of Sir Frederick Ashton's early and light-hearted ballets, explored that theme in a series of vignettes — flirtations, meetings and fleeting relationships — that offered an opportunity for technical brilliance in intricately choreographed solos, *pas de trois*, *pas de deux* and small groups.

Ricardo Rhodes, who danced as if he were enjoying himself, wowed the audience in his high split jumps. Kate Honea was credible in the lead, but abstract lyrical roles do not suit her as well as when she has a chance to create a character.

The faux tango danced in unison by the six men was fast and brought life to the ballet.

Since The Sarasota Ballet is now known in the United States for having the most Ashton ballets in its repertory, it was not surprising

for the company to reprise this ballet and give the new members an opportunity to become more familiar with the classic academic requirements of Ashton's choreography. One last caveat: There are still too many frozen smiles — hopefully, they were not meant as a comment about Sir Frederick Ashton's ballets. 



*Miquel Piquer and Victoria Hulland are The Man She Must Marry and Caroline in the 2008 production of Lilac Garden. Photo by Frank Atura*



*Italy is the backdrop for I Napoletani. Photo by Frank Atura*



# *Siesta Seen*

## **PLANNING CONTINUES FOR A CODE ENFORCEMENT MEETING; LACK OF RESOLUTION ON SIESTA VILLAGE CROSSWALK LIGHTING BEMOANED; EASTER BUNNY TO VISIT**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

In its continuing effort to set up an informational meeting about zoning restrictions in Siesta Village, the Siesta Key Village Association Board of Directors met with Sarasota County Assistant Zoning Administrator Donna Thompson and Code Enforcement Officer

Kevin Burns on Feb. 19, SKVA President Russell Matthes told about 25 members during the organization's regular meeting on March 5.

The discussion focused on noise complaints and signage violations, Matthes added. Although he had requested that Thompson and



*Siesta Key Village Association President Russell Matthes wants to maintain a tourist-attractive Village, free of signs violating county code, he has told members. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

# Siesta Seen

Burns bring the SKVA board detailed information about what is and is not allowed in the Village overlay district, he said, they focused more on the noise issues, including the special exceptions for Village businesses and permissible sound levels and time restrictions.

“In fact, it was a little confusing,” Matthes noted of the discussion, “because [Thompson and Burns] weren’t on the same page with some of the issues at hand, from A-frame signs to retail out on the front of your business to making ice cream [at a sidewalk stand].”

However, Matthes continued, “They’re getting on the same page; they’re working on it.”

During the Feb. 5 SKVA meeting, members requested that Matthes try to schedule a program for Village business owners and managers to learn about the zoning code stipulations in the overlay district. Village Café co-owner Kay Kouvatsos noted that many new people have started businesses in the Village since the overlay district was created about 14 years ago, and they do not know all the rules.

During the Feb. 19 SKVA board meeting, Matthes said, Thompson and Burns expressed reservations about gathering together members of the Village Association, the Siesta Key Association, the Siesta Key Condominium Council and the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce all at one time to go over the zoning code. “They were concerned that might be a bit of a free-for-all,” Matthes pointed out.

“I assured them we have done this in the past,” he said. “We can work with the condo association, the SKA and the Chamber to resolve some of these issues as a group.”

Thompson and Burns told the SKVA board members they first would talk with the SKA and the Condominium Council boards — and possibly the Chamber board — before holding the group meeting, Matthes added.

The biggest concern remains enforcement, he continued. Although Commissioner Nora Patterson had suggested the SKVA and the other organizations needed to exercise “a louder voice” in venting frustrations to county officials, Matthes said, he told her the problem is “We don’t have any enforcement.”

John Lally, the long-time Code Enforcement officer for Siesta Key, has been out on sick leave for a number of weeks, Matthes explained during the Feb. 5 SKVA meeting. During the 2012 fiscal year, the County Commission approved paying Burns for 15 hours of overtime work to handle code violations, but Burns works all over the county, Matthes pointed out. “So we don’t have any enforcement.”

Matthes added, “When I come into the Village in the morning, it’s nice and neat and organized and, I think, attractive to a tourist. ... When I leave the Village [in the evening], it looks pretty rough, because there’s a lot of different signs and activity” prohibited in the overlay district, “and I think it creates an uneven playing field.”

# *Siesta Seen*

He said he had heard no more from anyone with the county since that Feb. 19 board meeting. Nonetheless, he continued, he would talk with representatives of the SKA and Condo Council boards about planning for the joint meeting.

Kouvatsos emphasized that the program be “informational.”

“An informational meeting,” Matthes concurred, adding, “There will be some question-and-answer time ... what’s allowed; what’s not allowed.”

Then Glenn Cappetta, owner of Sun Ride Pedicabs, pointed out that he had seen Burns just recently, “and he had 600 signs in the back” of his pickup truck.

Cappetta added that he understood county officials had sent a letter to business owners in violation of the overlay district’s signage regulations, pointing out they had two weeks to come into compliance or their signs would be confiscated.

“He did pull the signs,” Sarasota County Sheriff’s Deputy Chris McGregor interjected of Burns. “Twenty of ’em are in our office,” McGregor added.

During the Feb. 5 SKVA meeting, McGregor pointed out that Burns shares office space with the deputies in the Community Policing Station on Ocean Boulevard in the Village.

McGregor said on March 5 that Burns did allow business owners to retrieve signs from

the office. However, Burns told them “there would be a \$10 fee to pick up A-frame signs” if he found any more in violation of the code, McGregor continued. He had seen “a big difference” in the Village without the non-conforming A-frame signs McGregor noted.

“He was cool, very cool,” Cappetta said of Burns’ actions.

## **CROSSWALK TALK**

During the SKVA meeting, Matthes asked Peter van Roekens, vice president of the SKA and a Terrace East representative to the Village Association, for the latest news about the more than yearlong effort to secure illumination for Village crosswalks.

Van Roekens reminded the members that the bid Sarasota County staff received in February for the proposed bollards with LED lighting at seven Village crosswalks had come in well above the estimate county staff had provided.

(While staff had indicated to the County Commission that providing and installing the bollards would cost about \$31,500, the only bid that came in was \$118,500. It was submitted by a local firm, C-Squared CGC. No responses came in when the Procurement Department first sought to keep the bids under \$50,000.)

“The bid was ridiculously high,” van Roekens told the SKVA members this week.

Ryan Montague, the county staff member in the Traffic/Mobility Office charged with overseeing the project, had told him, van Roekens

# Siesta Seen

continued, that staff was going to propose the county purchase bollards and install them on its own. However, a memo to that effect had not been completed for the County Commission as of his March 4 conversation with Montague, van Roekens added.

Montague had written the memo on Feb. 22 and passed it along to higher-level staff for approval, van Roekens indicated. His own discussions with staff had led him to believe “that memo will be [in front of the commissioners] in a day or two,” van Roekens added.

Regarding the whole process, van Roekens continued, “It’s gone on and on and on ... we’ll see what happens now.”

In mid-February, after the single bid came in, I contacted Mark Smith, the immediate past chairman of the Siesta Chamber, who had worked with van Roekens, Matthes, Montague and other county employees to set up bollard demonstrations in the Village last summer.

Smith had not heard the bid amount; when I told him, he replied, “It’s absolutely unbelievable.” He added, “I guess the economy’s picking up,” if a contractor felt he could put in that amount.

Tom Maroney, general manager of business operations in the Public Works Department — who also has been working on the project — told me, “Absolutely, we have no idea where that bid came from.”

Commissioner Patterson, who lives on Siesta Key, concurred that the bid was a quite a

Sarasota County  
ATTACHMENT "A"  
SCOPE OF WORK / SPECIFICATIONS

- 1.0 Purpose**  
It is the intent of Sarasota County to solicit quotes to provide and install fourteen (14) LED bollards at seven (7) crosswalks at Siesta Key Village. The quotes shall include all material, equipment, labor and permits necessary to complete this job.
- 2.0 Technical Specifications**
- 2.1 LED Bollards**
- a. Housing**
1. Material: Pre-cast concrete
  2. Shape: Rectangular
  3. Dimensions: 44"x8"x8" to 46"x10"x10"
  4. Color: Match Siesta Blend brick pavers
  5. LED fixture shall be inlaid into housing at a 40 to 80 degree downward angle
- b. LED**
1. 14-18 watt
  2. 5500K-6500K Color Temp
- c. Power source**
1. 240v UNV



- 3.0 Installation**
- 3.1** Bollards must be installed in concrete and/or brick pavers, with concrete footers approximately 8-12" below ground surface.
- 3.2** All locates are the responsibility of the successful Bidder, a call to Sunshine State One-Call before digging shall be done by contractor, Sarasota County will assist with identifying, making aware of known underground piping and circuits.
- 3.3** Any dig-in will be reported immediately to the County Project Manager any repair will be approved and inspected by County Project Manager, no repair cost shall be paid by County.

*As of early this week, county staff had not completed a memo to the County Commission regarding a new recommendation for providing bollard lighting at Siesta Village crosswalks. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

bit higher than she had anticipated. “I can’t be sure the commission would back doing” the project for that amount, she added. “I sold [the effort] on the premise that it would cost about \$30,000.”

When I spoke with Montague on Feb. 15, he told me, “Originally, the goal was to get [the bollards] in before season started, and now we’re in the midst of season. ... It is a time-sensitive project.”

# Siesta Seen

## ON THE 'BUNNY TRAIL'

On a happier note: The Siesta Key Village Association will host its annual Children's Easter Party and Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 30, from 9 a.m. to noon at Beach Access 5, located at the intersection of Ocean Boulevard and Beach Road. All children ages 1 to 6 are invited to register and participate, an SKVA news release notes.

The event, sponsored by the SKVA and Beach Bazaar, features the traditional Easter egg hunt, face painting, games, photo opportunities with the Easter bunny, a firetruck and ambulance to explore and the Sheriff's mounted patrol.

All Easter eggs will contain prizes donated by Siesta Key Village merchants, the release points out. "Each child who registers will also receive a bag filled with goodies," it adds.

Children are asked to bring something to carry their collected eggs.

Registration is required for the Easter Egg hunt, because participation is limited to 125 children. The fee is \$10 per child. Registration forms are available online at [www.siestakeyvillage.org](http://www.siestakeyvillage.org) or at the following locations: Beach Bazaar, 5211 Ocean Blvd.; Village Café, 5133 Ocean Blvd.; and the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce, 5118 Ocean Blvd. For registration information, contact Roz Hyman at 349-2770, Ext. 227. 



*Siesta Village is preparing for its own version of an Easter egg hunt on March 30. Photo by Gerbil via Wikimedia Commons*



*Lord of the Dance will take the Van Wezel stage on March 12. Contributed photo*

## **LORD OF THE DANCE RETURNING TO THE VAN WEZEL**

Generations of audiences — more than 60 million people from 68 countries — have seen *Lord of the Dance* created by Michael Flatley. On March 12, the show will return to the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall in Sarasota.

Creator and Artistic Director Michael Flatley, “who added fresh costumes, a visually stimulating set featuring an LED wall and revised lighting and set designs this year, still oversees all aspects of the production,” a news release notes. “*Lord of the Dance* is a classic tale of good versus evil based on mythical Irish folklore that brings a romantic and passionate love story to stage,” the release adds.

Don Dorcha, Lord of Darkness, challenges the ethereal lord of light, the Lord of the Dance, in the story, the release points out. “Battle lines are drawn, passions ignite and a love story fueled by the dramatic leaps and turns of danc-

ers’ bodies begins to build against a backdrop of Celtic rhythm,” says Flatley in the release. “Fans can expect a vast number of scenes of precision dancing, dramatic music, colorful wardrobes and state-of-the-art staging and lighting.”

Along with Dance Director Marie Duffy-Pask, Flatley handpicks the cast of more than 40 dancers; each has achieved individual recognition as a national or worldwide dance champion, the release notes. “Flatley also conceptualized and staged the show in a mere 16 weeks but also paid particular attention to the costumes, lighting and staging, which are cinematic in scope,” the release says.

Tickets are priced from \$30 to \$65. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit [www.VanWezel.org](http://www.VanWezel.org).

## U.S. ARMY CHORUS QUARTET TO PERFORM

A quartet of soloists from the celebrated U.S. Army Chorus will travel from Washington, D.C., to Sarasota this month to perform in several free concerts for the community.

The quartet will visit locations in Sarasota and Boca Grande, singing the National Anthem, popular tunes from Broadway musicals and favorite arias from select operas, a news release notes.

On Friday, March 15, the Army quartet will appear at Faith Lutheran Church, 7750 Beneva Road in Sarasota, for a 7 p.m., concert followed by a meet-the-artists reception.

“The U.S. Army Chorus, a national treasure, is the last all-male performing ensemble left in the military,” says Faith Lutheran Music Director Dr. Joseph Holt in the release. “They are highly trained professional singers, accustomed to performing for U.S. presidents, the Queen of England, the Pope, dignitaries from all across the world — and, most importantly, for the American public which they serve.”

Holt, who was principal pianist for the Chorus for 20 years, will accompany the quartet of singers as well as perform a special solo during the concert, the release points out.

Holt retired as Master Sergeant from the U.S. Army in 2010. He subsequently moved from Washington, D.C., to Sarasota, where, in addition to his position at Faith Lutheran, he also serves as artistic director for Gloria Musicae, the release continues.

“Musicians from The U.S. Army Band and Chorus (Pershing’s Own) have performed at Faith Lutheran several times over the last few years — and each time, every seat is filled,” says Holt in the release.



*A quartet of soloists from the U.S. Army Chorus will perform several times in Sarasota this month. Contributed photo*

All Army Chorus concerts are free and open to the public; however, goodwill ticket donations of \$15 will be gratefully accepted by the church to help defray event costs, the release notes. Advance ticket donations may be made online at [www.faithsarasota.com](http://www.faithsarasota.com) or by calling or visiting the church office.

The quartet will also perform on March 15 during military appreciation day at Ed Smith Stadium in Sarasota, the Baltimore Orioles’ spring training home. On March 17, the singers will perform in Boca Grande at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church; their performances in the area will conclude with a concert for the students, parents and faculty of Sarasota Military Academy on March 19, the release adds.

Faith Lutheran Church is located at 7750 Beneva Road in Sarasota, close to the Sarasota Square Mall near the intersection of U.S. 41 and Beneva Road. For more information, call 924-4664 or visit [www.faithsarasota.com](http://www.faithsarasota.com).

## CIRCUS SARASOTA TO PRESENT FOUR CIRQUE DES VOIX SHOWS

Cirque des Voix, the upcoming collaboration among Key Chorale, Sarasota Young Voices and Circus Sarasota, “is intended to blend and contrast the sublime beauty of the human voice with the graceful strength of the human body,” Circus Sarasota has announced.

With four performances only from March 8 through March 10, “Cirque des Voix will take audiences on a journey which celebrates the musical arts and circus arts together,” a news release says. “The show blends the grace and thrills of the world’s greatest circus performers with stunning choral music” from composers such as John Williams, Danny Elfman, Paul Schwartz, Beethoven, Orff and Jenkins, “all in the unique setting of the Sailor Circus arena,” the release adds.

Among the movie themes incorporated into the show will be Ennio Morricone’s *Gabriel’s Oboe*, which will accompany the aerial performance of Sarasota’s own Dolly Jacobs, the release continues.

Tino Wallenda and The Flying Wallendas “will defy gravity and belief” while the orchestra performs John Williams’ *The Lost World* and Hans Zimmer’s *Gladiator*, for another example of the blending of music and acts, the release adds.

For details about the performances, including ticket information, visit [www.CircusSarasota.org](http://www.CircusSarasota.org) or call 355-9805.



The Flying Wallendas perform during a 2012 production of Cirque des Voix. Photo by Norman Schimmel

## DABBERT GALLERY PRESENTS **BLACK & WHITE AND RED ALL OVER**

*Black & White and Red All Over*, featuring works by Barbara Krupp and Allan Teger, is the featured exhibit at Dabbert Gallery through March 30, the gallery has announced.

“Barbara Krupp’s large paintings set your imagination free as you are immersed in exhilarating color, a visual symphony of vibrant harmony,” a news release says.

Teger’s dual reality *Bodyscapes* have been created with single-shot, traditional film photography, the release points out.

The show introduces four one-of-a-kind examples of Teger’s work with the negative of each included, the release adds.

Dabbert Gallery is located at 76 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota. For more information, visit [www.dabbertgallery.com](http://www.dabbertgallery.com) or call 955-1315.



*The Treasured Toys of Nature by Barbara Krupp/Contributed image*



*Log Cabin by Allan Teger/Contributed image*



*Adirondack by Allan Teger/Contributed image*



*Champagne Sunset by Barbara Krupp/Contributed image*

## CONCERT ASSOCIATION TO PRESENT BEETHOVEN ORCHESTRA OF BONN

Sarasota Concert Association's 2013 *Great Performers Series* will present the Beethoven Orchestra of Bonn with Stefan Blunier, conductor, and Louis Lortie, pianist, on March 19 at 8 p.m.

The concert will be held at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.

Since its founding more than 100 years ago, the 106-piece Beethoven Orchestra of Bonn "has maintained a busy schedule of domestic and international touring," a news release says. In addition to presenting master classes and operas, the orchestra's wide-ranging commitment to social causes has become a fixture in the German cultural spectrum, the release notes.

Blunier, who was born in 1964 in Bern, Germany, became the general musical director of the Beethoven Orchestra of Bonn in 2008, the release continues. He has since appeared as a guest conductor with more than 90 symphony orchestras across Europe and Asia, the release adds.

French-Canadian pianist Lortie has attracted critical acclaim throughout Europe, Asia and the United States, "renowned for his interpretations of Chopin, Ravel and Beethoven," the release points out. "Lortie has extended his interpretative voice across a broad range of repertoire rather than choosing to specialize in one particular style," it adds. The *London Times*, describing his playing as "ever immaculate, ever imaginative," has identified the artist's "combination of total spontaneity and



*The Beethoven Orchestra of Bonn/Photo courtesy of the orchestra*

meditated ripeness that only great pianists have.”

The concert will feature Beethoven’s overture from *The Ruins of Athens*; *Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58*; and *Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92*.

Tickets are \$40, \$50, \$60 and \$70. Tickets and information for the *Great Performers Series* are available by calling 955-0040 or visiting [www.scasarasota.org](http://www.scasarasota.org).

SCA also presents Munchtime Musicales, a series of free concerts featuring performances by high-caliber, area-based artists. The series continues with studio artists from the Sarasota Opera on March 20 and the Mike Markaverich Trio on April 17, the news release adds.

All performances are at noon at the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center, 709 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Seating is open; no reservations are taken. For more information about Munchtime Musicales, call 351-7467 or visit [www.scasarasota.org](http://www.scasarasota.org).



*Stefan Blunier/Photo courtesy of the artist*



*Louis Lortie/Photo courtesy of the artist*

## JEWISH FEDERATION TO HOLD ISRAEL FILM FESTIVAL

To commemorate the 65th anniversary of the modern state of Israel, The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee has selected six new, award-winning films for its 2013 Israel Film Festival, the Federation has announced.

The festival, presented in partnership with the Sarasota Film Festival, is scheduled for March 17-21 at various venues in Sarasota and Manatee counties, a news release says. Showings will be followed by discussions with the audiences.

The films were chosen by Roz Goldberg, chairwoman of the festival, and her committee, in consultation with Yitzi Zablocki, director of the Israel Film Center in New York City, the release notes. "Festival attendees will experience an outstanding roster of films about Israel: its people, its aspirations, its triumphs and its challenges," says Goldberg in the release, adding that the festival will also host special guests to participate in post-film discussions.

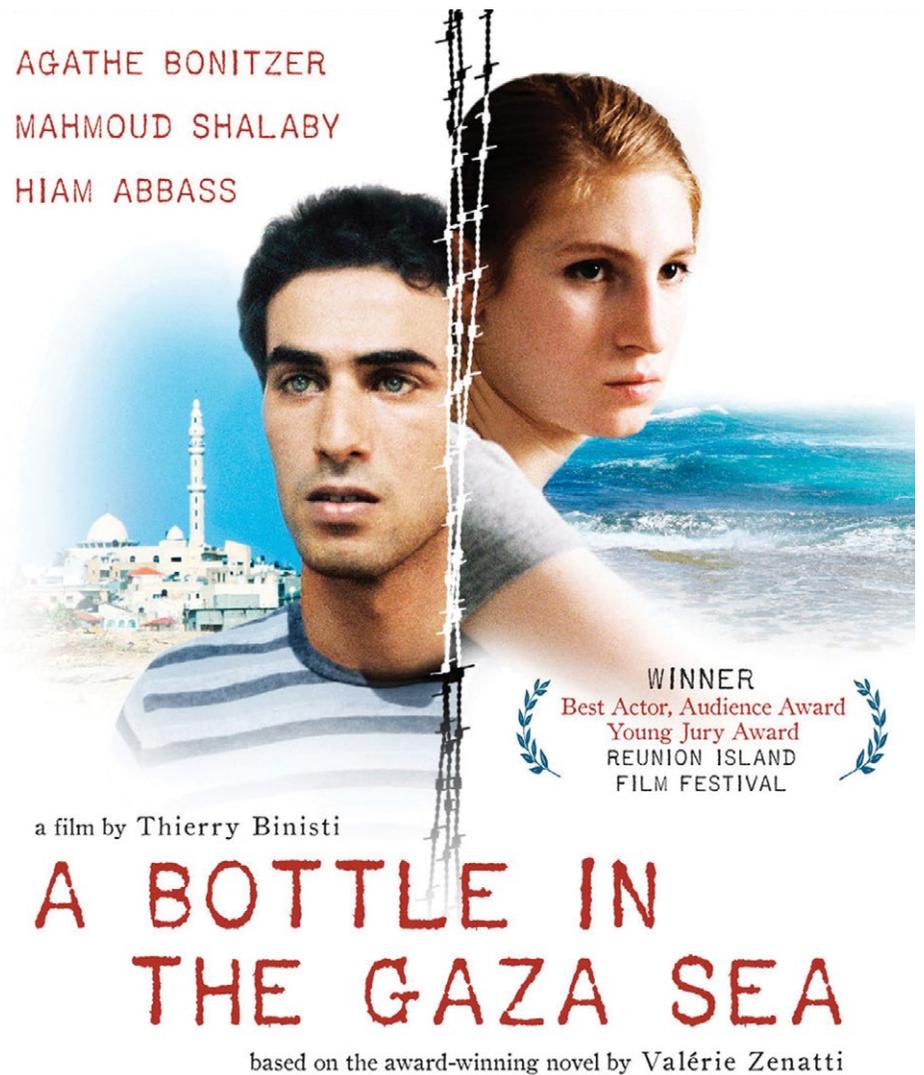
"Although all of the films are about Israel this year, they could not be more different," notes Goldberg in the release. "One film transports the audience to 1936 Tel Aviv; another, to ... Tel Aviv of today; and a third, to kibbutzim established nearly 100 years ago. Another film remembers the drama of the miraculous Entebbe hostage rescue, and a fifth offers a glimpse into the hopeful interaction between ... Israeli and Palestinian teenagers," she continues.

Josh Aronson, the director, screenwriter, and producer of *Orchestra of Exiles*, the festival's opening night film, will be present for the screening on March 17 on the Federation campus and a second screening on March 20 at Temple Beth Israel.

AGATHE BONITZER

MAHMOUD SHALABY

HIAM ABBASS



*A Bottle in the Gaza Sea* will be shown March 18 and March 19. Contributed art

"*Orchestra* is an exciting documentary about the remarkable musician whose prescient efforts brought the Israel Philharmonic into being," says Goldberg in the release, noting that local philanthropist Gerry Daniel, who was in Tel Aviv in 1936 for the first performance of what was then the Palestine Philharmonic, will join the post-film discussion on March 20.

Tickets are \$7 per film. A six-film festival pass is \$36, while a \$50 patron pass offers reserved seating to all six films. Tickets may be purchased online at [www.jfedsrq.org/events.aspx](http://www.jfedsrq.org/events.aspx) or by calling 552-6304.

For more information about The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee, call 371-4546 or visit [www.jfedsrq.org](http://www.jfedsrq.org).

- Avi Offer, THE NYC MOVIE GURU

**“Conveys a bright sense of a vibrant young man in love with his life, with women and with Israel.”**

- Jordana Horn, THE JEWISH DAILY FORWARD

A WARRIOR'S HEART.  
A POET'S SOUL.

# **FOLLOW ME**

THE YONI NETANYAHU STORY

CRYSTAL CITY ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS AN ARI DANIEL PINCHOT FILM "FOLLOW ME: THE YONI NETANYAHU STORY"

YONI'S LETTERS READ BY MARTON CSOKAS DIRECTION BY DAVID J. GOULDING ORIGINAL MUSIC BY CHARLIE BARNETT EDITED BY DAVID GROSSBACH ASSISTANT EDITOR LAURA ROSE  
SOUND SKIP SOBELLE ASSOCIATE ARIANE WEISEL MARCALIT GRACE MOZES FOOTLIK AMY JOHANSON PRODUCED BY STUART AVI SAVITSKY

*Follow Me will be shown March 19 and March 20. Contributed art*

## SELBY GARDENS HOSTING SUMI-E EXHIBITION

Using a mere handful of brush strokes, artists have captured the essence of nature for Marie Selby Botanical Gardens' [Sumi-e Exhibition](#), the Gardens has announced.

The Sarasota Chapter of the Sumi-e Society's oriental brush paintings will be on display in the Historical Selby House through March 28 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., a news release notes.

"Rather than attempting to paint an exact replica of an object or scene, Sumi-e masters assertively concentrate the spirit of their

muse into the fewest brush strokes possible," the release points out. "This Asian art form, among other practices of oriental brush painting, proves to be an intellectual and spiritual pursuit as well as an artistic wont," the release adds.

This exhibition is free with regular Gardens admission. For more information and admission fees, visit [www.selby.org](http://www.selby.org) or call 366-5731. The Gardens is located at 900 S. Palm Ave. in Sarasota. 



*Artwork by Marilyn Offer is among the Sumi-e paintings on display at Selby Gardens. Contributed photo*



*Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman serves homemade dessert to Evelyn Osterweil at a Temple Emanu-El's Lunch with the Rabbi program. Contributed photo*

## **LUNCH WITH THE RABBI CONTINUES ON MARCH 13**

The popular monthly Lunch with the Rabbi program will continue its third year on Wednesday, March 13, at noon at Temple Emanu-El, 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

“An afternoon of casual socializing and stimulating discussion with Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman, Lunch with the Rabbi centers on topics of current Jewish interest and news from Israel,” a Temple news release says. This month, Glickman will report on his recent participation in the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) National Policy Conference in Washington, D.C., where more than 13,000 at-

tendees gathered to discuss American policy towards Israel and hear from governmental leaders, including Vice President Joe Biden, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Florida congressional delegation.

Each attendee is asked to bring a brown bag lunch; homemade cookies are provided for dessert.

Lunch with the Rabbi is free and open to the entire community, the news release adds. For more information, call the Temple Emanu-El office at 371-2788.

## FAIRCLOTH TO DISCUSS THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

At 7:30 p.m. on March 15, the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (CHJ) will welcome guest speaker Sean Faircloth, the director of strategy and policy at the Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science.

Faircloth's topic will be *How the Religious Right Harms All of Us and What We Can Do About It*, a news release says.

Prior to joining the Dawkins Foundation, Faircloth served as the executive director of the Secular Coalition of America, the release notes.

"An accomplished legislator," the release continues, Faircloth served for a decade in the Maine Legislature. He spearheaded more 30 pieces of legislation and is the recipient of innumerable awards, the release adds.

Additionally, Faircloth is the author of *Attack of the Theocrats*, of which a reviewer said, "There's no doubt in my mind that were he zapped back in time to meet Thomas Jefferson, the founding father would clap him on the shoulder and say "Thanks," the release notes.

CHJ meets at Unity, located at 3023 Proctor Road in Sarasota. The program is free and open to the public.

For more information call 929-7771 or visit [www.chj-sarasota.org](http://www.chj-sarasota.org).



Sean Faircloth/Contributed photo

**Take Your Time**  
**You Have All Week**

Enjoy The News Leader Anytime - Day or Night



# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**08+**  
MAR

**Art Uptown presents *Around Here*, a one-woman exhibition by artist Rita Rust**

March 8-30, 1367 Main St., Sarasota. Free admission; 955-5409 or [ArtUptown.com](http://ArtUptown.com).

**08+**  
MAR

***A Tribal Collection: Rainforest Masks of Costa Rica***

March 8 to April 19, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, 900 S. Palm Ave. Exhibit free with regular admission. Free to members and to children under age 6. Admission for non-member adults, \$17; for children 6-11, \$6. Information: 366-5731 or [Selby.org](http://Selby.org).

**10**  
MAR

**Paul Duffy, Michial Hickmott and Greg Holt in**

*A Tribute to St. Patrick's Day*

March 10, 4 p.m., Unitarian Universalist Church, 3975 Fruitville Road. Admission: \$15, includes wine and cheese reception. Information: 371-4974 or [uusarasota.org/concerts](http://uusarasota.org/concerts).

**13**  
MAR

***The Pirates of Penzance***

March 13, 8 p.m., Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail. Admission: \$10-50. For tickets: 953-3368 or [VanWezel.org](http://VanWezel.org).

**15**  
MAR

**WSLR presents 'Spider' John Koerner**

March 15, 8 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court. Admission: \$12 in advance or \$15 at the door; tickets available at [WSLR.org](http://WSLR.org).

**17**  
MAR

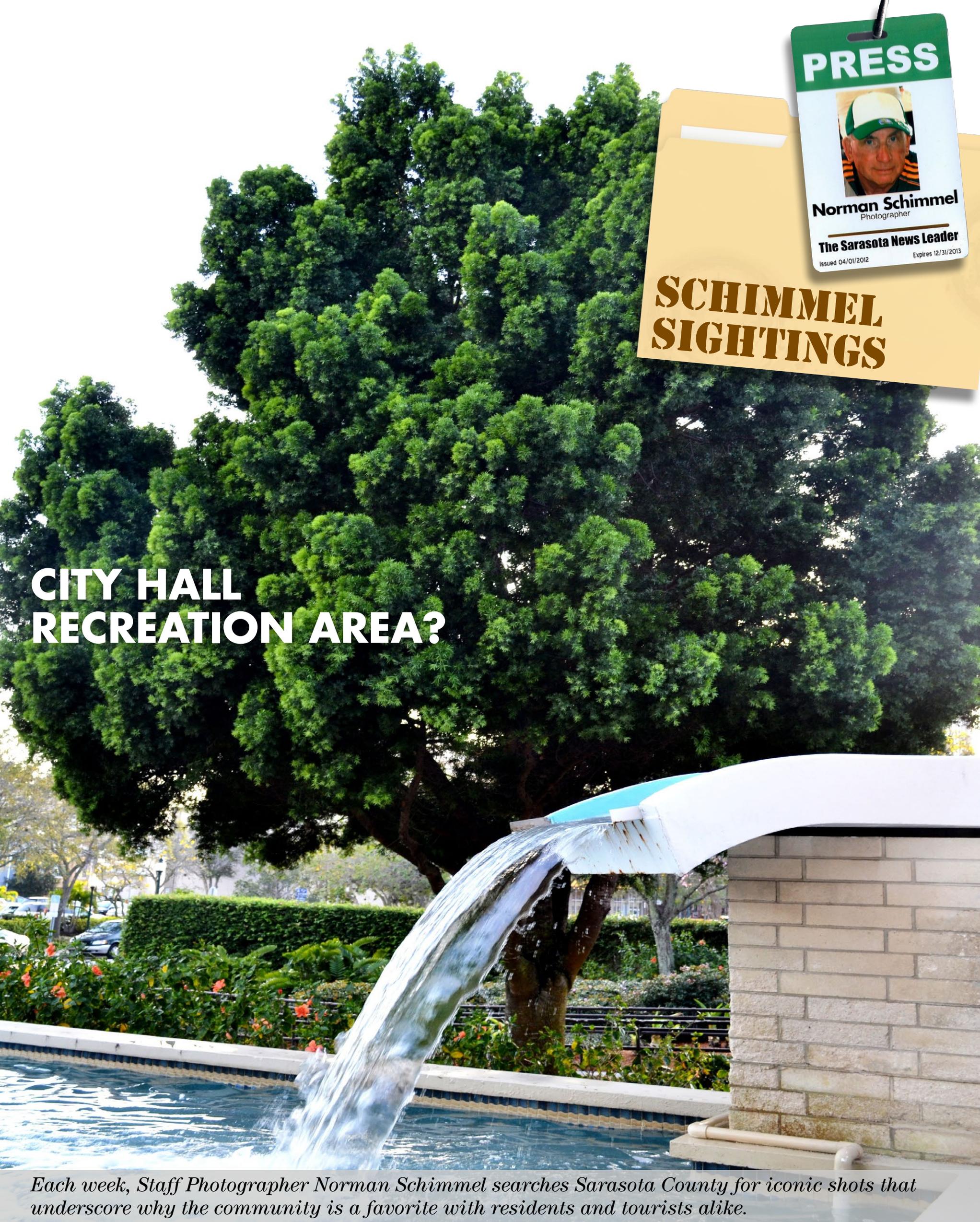
**Chautauqua Sunday After Brunch Soirée**

March 17, 2 p.m., Sherra Babcock, director of education at the world-famous Chautauqua Institution, will be at Bookstore1Sarasota, 1359 Main St., Sarasota, to talk about the role the written word plays in Chautauqua's mission. She also will introduce the 2013 picks for the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle — the oldest continuous book club in the U.S. More event information at [www.bookstore1sarasota.com](http://www.bookstore1sarasota.com) or 365-7900.

*To get all the details on these and other great activities — food, nightlife, music, art, theater, children's events, learning opportunities and more — go to Sarasota's No. 1 source for local events, hot spots, fun activities and hidden gems:*



thisweekin  
**SARASOTA.com**  
SARASOTA'S MASTER CALENDAR



**PRESS**



**Norman Schimmel**  
Photographer

**The Sarasota News Leader**

Issued 04/01/2012 Expires 12/31/2013

**SCHIMMEL  
SIGHTINGS**

**CITY HALL  
RECREATION AREA?**

*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.*