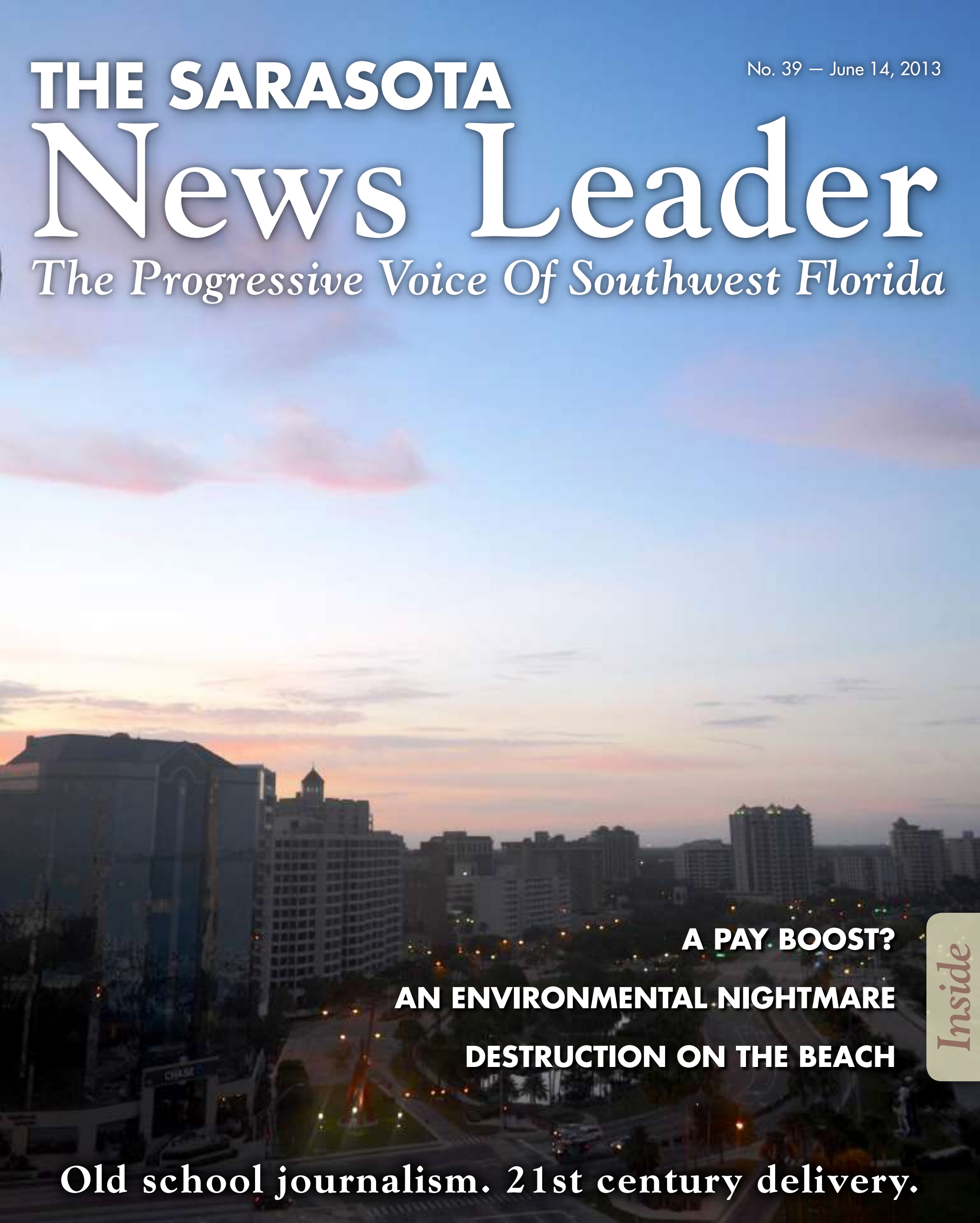


**THE SARASOTA**

No. 39 — June 14, 2013

# News Leader

*The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida*



**A PAY BOOST?**

**AN ENVIRONMENTAL NIGHTMARE**

**DESTRUCTION ON THE BEACH**

*Inside*

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# A.K.A. HELP

# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

*The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida*

**Rachel Brown Hackney**

Editor and Publisher

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

**Cooper Levey-Baker**

Associate Editor

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

**Stan Zimmerman**

City Editor

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

**Norman Schimmel**

Staff Photographer

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

**Fran Palmeri**

Contributing Writer

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

**Harriet Cuthbert**

Contributing Writer

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

**Elinor Rogosin**

A&E Writer

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

**Scott Proffitt**

Contributing Writer

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

**John Riley**

Editorial Cartoonist

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

**Vicki Chatley**

Copy Editor

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

**Letters To the Editor**

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

**Cleve Posey**

Production Manager / Graphic Designer

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

**Robert S. Hackney**

General Manager

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

**Advertising Sales**

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

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# Welcome

Although I believe our staff is comprised largely of “news junkies,” we try very hard to offer a lot of diversity in the topics we cover. This week proves no exception. If anything, we have an even broader mix than usual.

Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker tackled quite a complex story about a Sarasota couple mired — almost literally — in an effort to see a canal cleaned up in the downtown area.

City Editor Stan Zimmerman was all over the place this week — from Main Street to St. Armands to Sarasota Police headquarters, where he saw a number of new officers get their badges.

On Siesta Key, I learned from Sarasota Audubon members, more malicious damage was inflicted on a buffered area designed to encourage the successful procreation of the endangered snowy plovers that visit our county each year. You do not have to be a wildlife lover to find the circumstances heart-wrenching.

Back downtown, the County Commission held two workshops this week — one that included the latest decisions about a proposed bus rapid transit system along U.S. 41 and another on its operating funds budget for the 2014 fiscal year. Whenever the budget is figuratively on the table, you may rest assured that the topics will be many and varied. On June 12, recommended pay raises for non-union county employees and new sports facilities were the focus of some pretty intense discussions.

Finally — and most assuredly not the least of our offerings this week — Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel drove up to Nathan Benderson Park to watch high-wire *Wunderkind* Nik Wallenda practice for his Grand Canyon crossing on June 23. Norm took some excellent shots from a wide variety of angles to give you a great overview of the training.

Enjoy!

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

Editor and Publisher





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A chart shows the remaining County Commission meetings regarding the 2014 fiscal year budget before it goes into effect on Oct. 1. Image courtesy Sarasota County — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

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Front cover: *Sarasota Sunrise* - Norman Schimmel  
Sarasota Leisure: *Nik Skywalker* - Norman Schimmel



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## A PAY BOOST?

*Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Christine Robinson listen to a presentation during a budget workshop in May. File photo*

### **THE COUNTY COMMISSION ON JUNE 21 IS EXPECTED TO DECIDE WHETHER NON-UNION COUNTY EMPLOYEES WILL GET A RECOMMENDED 3 PERCENT RAISE IN THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Sarasota County commissioners this week requested more information in advance of their next budget workshop — on June 21 — before committing to a proposed 3 percent merit-based pay increase for non-union employees as part of the county’s 2014 fiscal year budget.

County Administrator Randall Reid recommended the raises, saying a preliminary 3.37 percent increase in property tax values made them feasible.

“It’s very hard right now to reward anyone for great performance,” Reid pointed out. “There’s nothing to give [an employee] other than [the comment], ‘It’s wonderful you have a job and I’ll try to make this as nice a place to work as possible.’”

“*It’s very hard right now to reward anyone for great performance.*”

Randall Reid  
Administrator  
Sarasota County

He added, “There’s very little leverage or incentive or reward you can give to someone.”

Commissioner Christine Robinson said she



had worked in a situation where pay raises were merit-based as well as one where all employees were given flat increases. Those environments were very different, she pointed out, with workers proving more inspired in their jobs in the office offering merit-based pay.

Last year, Robinson was the sole commissioner to vote against a \$1,000 lump-sum payment for non-union employees in the current fiscal year. At the time, she said that while she agreed with the value of county employees, she was concerned that property tax values still were in a decline as a result of the recession.

In proposing the raises to the board during its June 12 budget workshop, Reid noted that other than the \$1,000 lump-sum payments in FY 2013, county employees had received no



*Chief Financial Planning Officer Steve Botelho and County Administrator Randall Reid listen to remarks during the May 14 County Commission budget workshop. File photo*

## Agencies Proposing Compensation Increases:

Agency	Budgeted or Recommended Pay Increase	Notes:
Hillsborough County	3.5%	
Lee County	3.0%	
Manatee County	4.0%	4% is the average (1% will be across-the-board plus 1%-5% based on performance)
Palm Beach County	3.0%	
Pasco County	3.0%	
Pinellas County	2.8%	
Seminole County	3.0%	
State of Florida	\$1,400	Employees making < \$40,000; plus eligible for \$600 1-time performance bonus
	or \$1,000	Employees making \$40,000 or more; plus eligible for \$600 1-time performance bonus

*A chart shows recommended salary adjustments for employees working for other local governments. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

adjustments to their base pay since the 2009 fiscal year.

Moreover, Reid told the board, employees already are paying higher health insurance rates, and they have been required to contribute 3 percent of their salaries to the Florida Retirement System (FRS) since FY 2011.

He also pointed out that the county has reduced the number of its full-time positions by 13 percent over the past six years. "Competitive pay helps retain and attract quality employees," he added.

A number of other local government bodies are proposing raises for their employees, he said, based on budget projections his staff had researched, though those are not guaranteed.

Commissioner Nora Patterson pointed out that those same local government bodies might be looking at Reid's recommended increase, in spite of the fact the commissioners had not approved it.

Reid emphasized to the commissioners, "We want to base [the raises] on performance and evaluation." Someone on probation or a person who received an unsatisfactory evaluation would get no boost.

He also recommended the increase go into effect on the anniversary of the employee's hiring, not on the Oct. 1 start of the new fiscal year.

Steve Botelho, the county's chief financial planning officer, said the merit raises along



## FY14 Budget Timeline

- ✓ Budget Workshop - February 8<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ Facilities Planning Workshop - March 20<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ Budget Workshop (General Update and CIP) - April 30<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ Budget Workshop - May 14<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ Preliminary Property Values - June 1<sup>st</sup>
- Budget Workshops - June 12<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>
- Final Property Values - July 1<sup>st</sup>
- Set "Not to Exceed" Millage Rates - July 10<sup>th</sup>
- Final Budget Workshop - August 20<sup>th</sup>
- Budget Adoption (Public Hearings) - September 9<sup>th</sup> (North County) & September 23<sup>th</sup> (South County)

*A chart shows the remaining County Commission meetings regarding the 2014 fiscal year budget before it goes into effect on Oct. 1. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

with expected salary increases for union members are projected to cost the county about \$3.7 million in the 2014 fiscal year, though that estimate does not include figures from all of the county's constitutional officers — such as the sheriff and the tax collector. He and his staff are continuing to collect information from those elected and appointed officials, Botelho said.

## DIGGING INTO THE DETAILS

When Robinson asked about the administrative cost of the pay increase, Suzanne Gable, strategic and financial planning director in the county's Office of Financial Planning, replied that the county does make FRS contributions for its employees and it pays taxes on their salaries.

If the commission approved another lump-sum payment, Gable pointed out, neither the county nor employees would have to pay a percentage of that to the FRS.

In response to another question from Robinson, Botelho said that altogether, the county would be putting about \$2.5 million more into the FRS for its employees in FY 2014. He expected the health insurance expenses to rise as well, he added, but he would not know until August what the exact cost would be.

“I know a lot of employees don't look at benefits as raises,” Robinson responded, “but that's extra money we pay out that they don't have to pay.”

While Commissioner Joe Barbetta agreed that any pay increases for county employees should be performance-based, he told Botelho he wanted to see more details on raises other employers in the county, including the

School Board, would be offering in the next fiscal year.

Patterson voiced concerns that if non-union workers received the raises, employees in bargaining units would want increases as well if the county had to negotiate new contracts with them.

Then Barbetta questioned whether the 3 percent increase built into the FY 2014 budget model included all the necessary taxes. Botelho said it did.

Barbetta pointed out that each \$1,000 lump-sum payment for FY 2013 actually ended up costing the county \$1,400 by the time taxes were added into the budget.

Patterson also questioned whether supervisors would be too lenient in their evaluations of staff.

“I was here for a number of years when we had a performance standard, and it was built into the budget,” she said, “and [employees] were pretty liberally assessed and the argument ... was, if you weren't outstanding, you wouldn't be working here.”

Patterson conceded, “That is a tough one.” Nevertheless, she added, “Nobody should get a raise who's not doing satisfactory work.”

Reid stressed again that the salary increases would be merit-based.

Botelho promised to get the commissioners the additional figures they had requested as soon as possible, so they would be prepared to vote on the matter during the June 21 budget workshop.

“I know it's a difficult decision,” Reid said. 

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# AN ENVIRONMENTAL NIGHTMARE

*An engineering diagram shows the outfall canal close to the Ritz-Carlton in downtown Sarasota. All images courtesy Achim and Erika Ginsberg-Klemmt*

## SARASOTA COUPLE VOWS TO KEEP FIGHTING DOWNTOWN DITCH PROJECT

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**  
*Associate Editor*

“If Sarasota has an a--hole, we own it.” Achim Ginsberg-Klemmt laughs and gestures to a couple of colorful posters propped up in his cluttered Sarasota home office. The graphics offer an overhead view of a narrow downtown Sarasota drainage ditch — a ditch that has become a source of frustration and anger for Achim and his wife, Erika.

The outfall canal in question runs from Tami-ami Trail west, cutting between the now-levelled Quay property on the north and Café Amalfi on the south; it dumps into the small inlet below the Ritz-Carlton.

Achim’s metaphor may be grotesque, but it’s not entirely inaccurate. The ditch provides the only stormwater drainage for 46 acres of Sarasota’s densely developed downtown, and it is clogged with runoff, trash and noxious plants. “You’ve got to smell it,” Achim says, shaking his head.

And for a drainage canal, it’s not offering much drainage. As anyone who’s driven near U.S. 41 and Fruitville during a summer thunderstorm knows, the streets flood early and often. That is why the City of Sarasota and Sarasota County — which man-

“*We’ve measured exorbitantly high amounts of fecal coliform.*”

Achim Ginsberg-Klemmt

ages stormwater issues within the city limits, per an interlocal agreement — has asked the Southwest Florida Water Management District for the right to dredge the ditch, install sediment sumps and remove the vegetation.

But Achim and Erika are vigorously opposed to the project, insisting that it won't ease the flooding, that it will degrade water quality in

the bay and that the county doesn't even have the right to the whole ditch property anyway. Achim and Erika do not own the entire ditch, and in the eyes of some they do not own any of it, but they claim that a parcel of submerged land in the inlet that they purchased in 2010 in fact includes a section of the ditch. They bought the submerged land, and another nearby parcel, as a place to moor their sailboat.



An aerial view shows the canal.



*Trash is a common sight in the canal after runoff has reached the bay.*



*A variety of debris clutters the canal.*

While the dispute over who owns what is still winding its way through the courts, with several claimants stepping forward, Achim and Erika have already lost one round in their battle against the project. A Division of Administrative Hearings judge last month rejected their attempt to halt the dredge over concerns about water quality and the project's environmental impact. The judge found no reason to order compliance monitoring or sampling and wrote that the county is not obligated to improve the ditch water because the marina basin is already considered "impaired" because of high mercury levels in the fish there.

## CONTESTED VIEWPOINTS

George MacFarlane, Sarasota County operations manager for environmental utilities, says the goal of the dredge is to clear U.S. 41 of stormwater more quickly and to filter sediment out of the water before it hits the bay. By removing the plants, digging deeper, installing the sediment sumps and putting in material to keep the sand in place, the ditch will "slow down" the rush of water from Tamiami Trail, according to MacFarlane. He says that will allow sediment to settle, rather than be flushed out.



*Achim and Erika Ginsberg-Klemmt say the trash and vegetative matter has a noxious odor.*



“If we capture the sediment and we take it out of the system, then it will function better,” he adds of the drainage situation.

But Achim and Erika argue this does not account for how polluted the water is. The couple paid to have the water analyzed for bacteria. “We’ve measured exorbitantly high amounts of fecal coliform,” says Achim — several times the “legal maximum,” per an email sent by the couple to the county. The fecal coliform count was 3,100 per 100 milliliters, which the couple argued “constitutes a serious public health risk.”

“It’s tantamount to sewer water,” says Erika.

“The US-41 Outfall canal leads directly into Sarasota Bay and there is no barrier or danger signs to prevent children from playing in this contaminated water body,” they wrote in an email. “We are wondering if there are some hidden sewage leaks or illicit connections entering the storm water conveyance system.”

The county later tested water in the ditch, finding fecal coliform levels of 1,100 near Tamiami Trail, with a significant drop-off to the west. (For comparison’s sake, “the maximum allowable level, or ‘action-level’ of fecal coliform” at a Florida beach is 400, per the county’s Water Atlas.)



*A No Trespassing sign and fence warn people away from the canal.*

“We pulled samples at different locations along the ditch and at the point of the road ... the numbers were higher than they should have been for discharge,” says MacFarlane. But the ditch offers “a treatment process” of sorts. The water may be polluted right near U.S. 41, but by the time it is flushed out, it’s been cleaned up significantly.

Achim and Erika counter that dredging the canal will only allow pollutants to flow more easily into the bay. In a recommended order filed with the court by Achim and Erika, they argued that the county still lacks concrete information about exactly how polluted the water is: “Without characterization of this ma-

lor outfall’s discharge ... it would appear to be a hit-and-miss task to design a reliable treatment facility. Without compliant water quality monitoring of the design, the effectiveness of this sediment sump in waters of the State and US will never be authenticated.”

But Administrative Law Judge D.R. Alexander found that the county had no responsibility to monitor the water quality in the canal because “it can be reasonably presumed, without compliance monitoring or sampling, that the water flowing from the 46-acre urbanized watershed served by the ditch contains sediments and other pollutants typically associated with urban runoff.”



*The canal has limited water flow.*

MacFarlane says the county tests water quality at a runoff spot only when a complaint is lodged. “That’s kind of the routine — we don’t monitor every discharge point we have,” he points out. “If we think we have a problem, we’re going to start monitoring there.”

While MacFarlane argues the ditch project will result in cleaner water flowing into the bay, the county has no obligation to actually ensure that, according to Alexander. “The marina basin that is the receiving waters for the ditch has been identified by [the Florida Department of Environmental Protection] as impaired due to levels of mercury in fish tissue,” the judge wrote in his recommended order. In other words, the inlet is so polluted already that the county’s only obligation is to not make it worse.

“They really just want to bulldoze everybody,” says Achim. “They’re not authentically looking to clean anything up.” He argues that since the water level in the ditch is connected to the tide in the bay, the dredging won’t even improve flooding on U.S. 41. It makes him furious: “I can’t stand it anymore. All the s--- flows into the bay, and the trash goes in there, and nobody f----- cares. That’s where we are today.”

## ALTERNATIVES

Justin Bloom, the executive director of the Suncoast Waterkeeper, a “nonprofit grassroots environmental advocacy organization” formed last year, says he’s not familiar enough with the ditch to comment on it, but he argues there is a need “to look at this in the bigger picture of addressing stormwater issues.”

The city and the county “should be looking at soup to nuts,” he adds. “They should be look-

ing at a comprehensive plan to reduce stormwater runoff,” rather than simply improving ditches. That means investing in “low-impact green technology to capture stormwater when it hits the ground”: bioswales, catchments, pervious surfaces and more vegetation.

“That would reduce the need to have a high-tech solution to re-engineer this ditch,” he says. “If there were less stormwater coming into it, it wouldn’t be a problem.”


Stormwater runoff is the “number one” issue affecting the health of local waterways, Bloom points out.

## THE OWNERSHIP MATTER

Even though Achim and Erika lost their bid to halt the ditch project, its completion still hinges on resolving the question of who owns the western portion of the ditch. That is the very point where the canal connects to the inlet.

“One of the conditions of the permit is to make sure we own or control the land that covers the area of the ditch, and right now the Ginsberg-Klemmts claim that they own it,” says MacFarlane. He doesn’t expect any resolution for another six months or maybe even a year.

As frustrated as they are, Achim and Erika are confident they will win the ownership contest. “We fought this lawsuit on a shoestring,” says Achim. “We only deposed people that wouldn’t cost anything because they’re public servants. We didn’t have an attorney.”

He promises a tougher fight when it comes to who owns the ditch, and he says the couple has enough “historical documentation” to triumph: “We’re going to win. We’re going to prove that we own it.” 



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## DESTRUCTION ON THE BEACH

*Snowy plovers abandoned three eggs in a nest in late March on Siesta Key after the buffer area was vandalized. Contributed photo by Bob Luckner*

### **TWO NIGHTS IN A ROW THIS WEEK, VANDALS RIPPED UP SIGNS AND STAKES PUT IN PLACE TO PROTECT ENDANGERED NESTING SNOWY PLOVERS ON SIESTA PUBLIC BEACH**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Two nights in a row this week, one or more people have destroyed signs and ripped out stakes marking a nesting area for snowy plovers on Siesta Public Beach, Sarasota Audubon volunteers have reported.

The incidents, which occurred between sunset and 6 a.m., were discovered by a volunteer on the mornings of June 11 and 12, Catherine Luckner, a Sarasota Audubon member and president of the Siesta Key Asso-

ciation, told *The Sarasota News Leader* on June 12.

The destruction was in the same area where vandalism was discovered in late March and a subsequent brush fire was reported. It is in the proximity of Beach Access 9, just north of Siesta Public Beach, Luckner added.

“*I just hope that we can get enough volunteers out there to keep watch.*”

Catherine Luckner  
Volunteer  
Sarasota Audubon



“Everything has been pulled up, broken, signs torn in half,” Luckner said of the June 12 damage. “This is very destructive.”

The stakes are planted 12 inches in the sand, she pointed out, which makes them difficult to remove.

Whoever is responsible apparently has been more brazen this week about taking action, Luckner said. "Somebody is doing some of this in broad daylight," she said, making it appear as though he or she is removing the stakes because the buffer area is no longer needed, based on evidence and volunteer reports.

Sgt. Scott Osborne of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, who heads up the Community Policing Station in Siesta Village, told the

*News Leader* he plans to work with a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) officer to step up patrols in the area.

"We don't have suspects right now," Osborne said on the morning of June 12, adding, "We're going to try to catch them."

Luckner told the *News Leader* that the fine for such destruction is \$5,000.

Lt. Rob Gerkin, the district officer of the FWC, notified Luckner on the afternoon of June 12 that he had scheduled a meeting with Osborne to discuss an enforcement plan.



*An adult snowy plover blends in with the Siesta Beach sand in March. Contributed photo by Catherine Luckner*

It was clear that whoever perpetrated the damage was “specifically targeting” the buffer zones for the snowy plovers, Osborne said. The destruction indicated a lot of anger, he pointed out. The staked-off areas are well away from the Gulf of Mexico and not obstructing any path to the beach, he noted, though “somebody obviously doesn’t think so.”

“It’s scary to me that someone is so willful, when nothing is impeding them” from reaching the shore, Luckner told the *News Leader*.

The volunteer who discovered the damage on the morning of June 12 was unable to recover all the stakes and string that had been used to mark off the nesting area, Luckner said, because some of the material was thrown into standing water on the beach.



*A county sign at a Siesta beach access is designed to educate visitors about the endangered beach-nesting birds on the island. File photo*



*Private property near Siesta Beach Access 9 is a favorite nesting area for snowy plovers. Part of the area was the scene of a brush fire that was extinguished quickly in late March. File photo*

“We are doing our best to clean up debris and some of the stakes are being stacked for replacement buffers,” she wrote in an email to Osborne and Gerkin. Work already had begun on reconstructing the buffer zones, she added. However, she told the *News Leader*, because of the March vandalism and the most recent incidents, “We’re kind of running low on signs,” which had come from FWC.

It was difficult to say whether more than one person was involved, Osborne noted, because of the number of footprints left by people walking back and forth to the shoreline. Three pathways to the shore are in that general vicinity, Luckner said.

Because of the growing number of fire ant nests discovered over the past year in that buffer area, she added, the average person would want to stay well clear of it.

Luckner explained that the property, which has proven popular with the plovers over the past several years, is privately owned by the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast. Sarasota Audubon representatives planned to notify the foundation of the incidents, she wrote in her June 12 email to Osborne and Gerkin.

## **‘CHICK PATROL’**

The plovers, which are an endangered species, return to Sarasota County each year to nest, generally between March and early September.

Last year, only one of the chicks hatched on Siesta “fledged,” or reached the point of flying

on its own, Luckner pointed out. When the buffer area suffered the first round of vandalism in late March, she added, three eggs were lost. Another active nest was destroyed as a proximate result of the flooding on the beach produced by Tropical Storm Andrea, she said; displaced fire ants attacked that nest.

Volunteers have reported one other nest appears to have the potential of producing chicks, Luckner said. A Sarasota Audubon member who walks the beach early in the mornings also had told her this week that further nesting activity seems imminent in the foundation’s conservation area.

Eight pairs of the birds have been seen recently, she noted, though as many as 22 of the birds were observed in March.

“They will keep trying,” she said of the plovers’ nesting attempts.

Still, one concern has been an increase in the number of single-parent nests discovered this season, Luckner continued. “It’s kind of unusual.”

In those cases, the adult plover is loath to go out to forage for food. “They just wither” as they wait for the eggs to hatch, she explained.

Sarasota Audubon welcomes more volunteers to help keep a watch over the birds until the end of nesting season, Luckner added. Helpers often are referred to affectionately as members of the “Chick Patrol.” Anyone interested in helping out may visit the Sarasota Audubon [website](#), where email addresses are available, or call the chapter at 364-9212. People also are



welcome to call the [Siesta Key Association](#) at 364-4880.

Luckner's husband, Bob, coordinates the volunteers who look out for the plovers on Siesta Beach.

"I just hope that we can get enough volunteers out there to keep watch," she added.

Those volunteers also are needed for public education, she explained. "We just want to engage people in a real positive way [about] survival of the species," Luckner said.


Helping make it possible for the endangered birds to nest safely is "one of the few things we can do as human beings ... then they'll do the rest."

## CONTACTS

Catherine Luckner provided the *News Leader* the following phone numbers for people to report incidents involving wildlife:

- FWC violations: 888-404-3922 (anywhere in Florida).
- FWC Lt. Gerkin: 239-229-4424 (cell phone).
- Sarasota County Sheriff's Office dispatch for non-emergencies: 316-1201.
- Longboat Key Police: 366-1977.

## Injured wildlife

- Save Our Seabirds: 388-3010.
- Wildlife Center of Venice: 484-9657. 

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# THE \$8 MILLION QUESTION

Sarasota County's 40-acre [17th Street Park](#), located at 2810 17th St., has facilities for baseball, football, tennis and BMX/Strider bike racing. Image courtesy Sarasota County

## MONEY FREED UP BY A CHANGE IN THE COUNTY'S OPERATING RESERVES POLICY IGNITES MORE DEBATE OVER HOW THE COUNTY COMMISSION CAN BEST PUT THE FUNDS TO USE

By Rachel Brown Hackney

*Editor*

The Sarasota County commissioners remained at an impasse this week over how exactly to spend \$8 million in one-time funds it freed up with a May 14 vote to change its operating reserves policy.

Although they focused on sports facilities, the board members voiced opposing views over the types and locations.

During the commission's June 12 budget workshop, Steve Botelho, the county's chief financial planning officer, raised the matter of the \$8 million. One recommen-

dation, he said, was for the county to spend \$1 million on software to update its financial management system. The existing system was implemented in 1995, he pointed out.

The upgrade would satisfy several recommendations the National Institute of Government Purchasing had made regarding policy and other revisions for the county in the wake of Purchasing Department improprieties discovered in 2011, Botelho

added. "So it's a very good investment."

Then Commissioner Joe Barbetta reprised a point he had made during the board's May

“Sports tourism has proven to be extremely beneficial to the community.”

Joe Barbetta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



14 budget workshop: “I try to find projects that have an economic impact and some kind of return on investment ... to the county.” He noted that Tourist Development Tax revenue had increased substantially over the past several years, and much of that was related to the county’s investment in facilities.

He suggested proceeding with renovations at the [BMX facility on 17th Street](#).

According to material presented to the board for the May 14 meeting, that project includes a new 5-meter ramp and the addition of an 8-meter ramp, as well as reconfiguration of the track. The description notes, “The 8 meter ramp, only the second such permanent struc-



*Commissioner Nora Patterson. File photo*



*A BMX bike rider competes in an event in Sarasota County. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

ture in the USA, would allow Sarasota County to host a myriad of national events while also providing a training venue to BMX Olympians.”

If the county completed those renovations, Barbetta said on June 12, “I think we would be pretty much assured of several ... BMX events in the community with a pretty good economic impact.”

He estimated the competitions at the park could bring in \$3.5 million to \$4 million a year.

The estimated cost of the renovations is \$1.75 million, with about \$1 million left unfunded, Barbetta added. “I would implore my fellow commissioners to look into this as a revenue generator.”

Moreover, Barbetta said, “The participants in BMX events usually don’t drive cars, so that means their parents come here, and they’re here five, six, seven days at a time, and they spend money.”

Those families also potentially would learn enough about Sarasota County in that period

of time, Barbetta continued, to entice them to buy vacation homes or even consider relocating businesses to the community.

“I agree, Commissioner Barbetta,” Chairwoman Carolyn Mason said.

## **MORE ATHLETIC FIELDS**

Then Commissioner Christine Robinson pointed out that the materials the board members received for that May 14 budget workshop indicated the county had no plans for the next several years to construct new athletic fields; yet, those fields “serve dual purposes, and we need them from county line to county line for recreation and competitions.”

Robinson added that, based on the May 14 discussion, the only capital need the commission would be underfunding for the next five years would be road resurfacing.”

“The bridges,” Commissioner Nora Patterson interjected. “[We] took care of about half” of them with funding allocations at the May 14 meeting, Patterson pointed out.



*Benderson Park, off University Parkway, is being designed for major triathlons as well as world-class rowing competitions. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

“I still think that we need to be sure that we don’t leave future commissions in a lurch” in regard to road resurfacing and bridge renovation and rehabilitation projects, Robinson continued. However, she said, the county has an insufficient number of athletic fields.

“I’m all for brand-new ones, too,” Barbetta told her. “I have no problem with that.”

“Neither do I,” Mason added.

“Sports tourism has proven to be extremely beneficial to the community,” Barbetta said.

“When I look at the tennis courts at 17th [Street] and Tuttle [Avenue] and see soccer games going on at night,” Mason pointed out, “that’s an additional indication that we need some more athletic fields.”

Robinson also noted that both the City of Venice and the City of North Port had asked the County Commission about partnering with them to construct new athletic fields. Neither of them has city-owned fields within municipal boundaries, she added.

“We might be able to maximize our dollars with partnerships as well,” Robinson noted.

“Good idea,” Mason said.

Then Vice Chairman Charles Hines said he was concerned about constructing fields without nearby hotels and motels to house participants for tournaments the county would try to lure. Having traveled for “many, many years” with [AAU Baseball](#), he said he knew participants preferred to stay within a mile or two of

Revenue Comparison of Fiscal Years 2011, 2012 and 2013  
\* Collections through 5/31/2013

	FY 2010/2011			FY 2011/2012			FY 2012/2013			FY 2012/2013 Difference
	4.5% Tax	.5% Tax	TOTAL	4.5% Tax	.5% Tax	TOTAL	4.5% Tax	.5% Tax	TOTAL	
October	529,560.14		529,560.14	597,144.83	66,349.43	663,494.25	633,380.57	70,375.62	703,756.19	40,261.94
November	544,284.32		544,284.32	654,455.53	72,717.28	727,172.81	688,713.86	76,523.76	765,237.62	38,064.81
December	677,574.33		677,574.33	770,074.69	85,563.85	855,638.54	906,936.44	100,770.72	1,007,707.16	152,068.62
January	1,161,605.63		1,161,605.63	1,378,775.19	153,197.24	1,531,972.43	1,457,539.07	161,948.79	1,619,487.86	87,515.42
February	1,414,801.57		1,414,801.57	1,689,977.03	187,775.23	1,877,752.26	1,751,204.14	194,578.24	1,945,782.38	68,030.12
March	1,960,784.54		1,960,784.54	2,283,250.93	253,894.55	2,536,945.48	2,408,587.95	267,620.88	2,676,208.83	139,263.35
April	1,256,588.35		1,256,588.35	1,251,866.56	139,096.28	1,390,962.84	1,158,687.70	128,743.08	1,287,430.78	(103,532.06)
	Tax Rate Increased from 4.5% to 5%									
May	746,236.59	82,915.18	829,151.77	811,380.70	90,153.41	901,534.11				
June	797,775.75	88,641.86	886,418.61	959,813.86	106,645.98	1,066,459.84				
July	959,565.21	106,618.36	1,066,183.57	974,867.01	108,318.56	1,083,185.57				
August	591,598.76	65,733.20	657,331.96	666,992.14	74,110.24	741,102.38				
September	460,852.01	51,205.78	512,057.79	507,262.64	56,362.52	563,625.15				
<b>Totals</b>	<b>11,101,028.21</b>	<b>395,114.37</b>	<b>11,496,142.58</b>	<b>12,545,861.09</b>	<b>1,393,984.57</b>	<b>13,939,845.66</b>	<b>9,005,049.73</b>	<b>1,000,561.08</b>	<b>10,005,610.81</b>	<b>421,672.20</b>

Note: The above figures do not include the one-time settlement of \$200,145.63 paid directly to Sarasota County in February 2011 as a result of a class action lawsuit against the online travel companies.

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

A chart compares county Tourist Development Tax collections over the past three fiscal years. The 2013 fiscal year will end Sept. 30. Image courtesy Sarasota County Tax Collector’s Office

where the games were played, as the teams might have multiple events in a single day.

“The hotel conversation ... I *strongly* object to,” Robinson replied. Because North Port has no hotels, she said, it would be eliminated as a site for future athletic fields, based on Hines’ contention.

Barbetta noted, “The demand creates the need for the hotels.” The locations of existing hotels and motels should have no bearing on where new fields are placed, he said.

“To me, sports fields are about serving the kids and not so much about the tournaments, and there is a shortage of fields,” Patterson added. “There’s been a shortage of soccer fields in North County forever.”

As for Barbetta’s BMX proposal, Patterson said, “I recall the last time John McCarthy [the county’s now-retired Parks and Recreation Department manager] came to us and said, ‘We need \$300,000.’ Then we could get a great tournament, and somehow it didn’t work.”

When county staff subsequently met with BMX representatives, she added, the latter “dreamed up this ideal BMX thing, and suddenly we needed \$1.6 [million].”

Patterson pointed out, “There’s just not enough money to fund every good thing that there’s a constituency behind.”

Referring to building new athletic facilities, Patterson added, “I guess my feeling is I’d love to have the money to do it, but it really needs to be evaluated against some of these other needs.”

She also noted that if new facilities are constructed, the county staff has to figure out how to pay to maintain them.


“This discussion, to me, is kind of a ‘no-brainer’ — that we invest in things that have a return on investment,” Barbetta stressed.

Moreover, he pointed out, if the county generated even more Tourist Development Tax revenue through new facilities, that would mean it could build even more athletic fields and other sports infrastructure.

“Tourist development income per penny increased all over the state of Florida” over the past year, Patterson responded. Though sports venues were a factor in that, she said, “I don’t think you’ll find that the whole increase or even possibly the majority of the increase is just dependent on the venues.”

Besides, Patterson said, the county already had invested about \$23 million in renovations to Ed Smith Stadium, where the Baltimore Orioles hold Spring Training games, and about \$20 million in Nathan Benderson Park, which is attracting international attention in its effort to win the 2017 World Rowing Championships bid.

Patterson added of Benderson Park, “If push comes to shove and the money isn’t there for the last [structures in the planned complex], somehow we’re going to figure ... out [how to pay for them].”

Finally, Patterson said, “It’s not that I don’t buy into Commissioner Barbetta’s theory.” However, she said, she would spend money on new athletic fields before she would approve putting funds toward the BMX facility renovations. 



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*The City Commission will meet on Monday, June 17. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **PLANNING ISSUES DOMINATE THE CITY COMMISSION'S JUNE 17 AGENDA, INCLUDING THE LAWSUIT OVER THE RINGLING SHOPPING CENTER PROPERTY AND PLANNING BOARD VACANCIES**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

The city's response to the so-called "Walmart lawsuit," a new Planning Board member, how to upgrade the zoning code and more issues are on the Sarasota City Commission agenda for Monday, June 17.

With a Friday, June 14, deadline looming, City Attorney Bob Fournier has prepared a 50-page response to a lawsuit filed by the Doyle Family Trust asking a circuit court judge to force the city to revisit its denial of the plan for a Walmart supercenter at the site of the old Ringling Shopping Center.

The nearly 9-acre property is owned by two California families. After the commission vote in March, the owners erected a chain-link fence separating the neighborhood from their property and then filed suit in the 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court in April, starting an initiative to reverse the 3-2 City Commission decision.

That commission vote followed two evenings of evidence and testimony, none of it offered by a representative of the landowning trust. At press time, Fournier's response had not been filed at the courthouse, but he said it was on the way.

The landowners must first prove they have the right to sue the city. They were not a party to Walmart's deliberations before the Planning Board and City Commission. The vote did not change the existing zoning of the property.

## **NEW PLANNING BOARD MEMBER**

With the election of former Planning Board Member Susan Chapman to the City Commission, a vacancy needs to be filled. Four people have stepped forward to serve on the voluntary board. One is a former member seeking to return to service, and three are also active in civic affairs.

Bob Lindsey is the person asking to go back on the Planning Board. He served on and off between 1984 and 2009, and he was chairman five times. His terms covered the times

of major changes to downtown planning, including the RUDAT — Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team analysis, which resulted in a focus on historic preservation — in the mid-1980s and The Duany Plan in the mid-2000s. Andres Duany is a nationally known proponent of New Urbanism, focusing on making downtowns more walkable and convenient for residents. Lindsey has lived in Sarasota for 63 years.

Cathy Antunes is also seeking to fill the vacancy. She was a candidate for the Sarasota County Commission in 2010 and is active in the Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations and the Sarasota County Coalition of Neighborhood Associations. "In recent years I have devoted significant time advocating for citizen interests," she wrote in her letter of



*The Ringling Shopping Center site is the subject of a lawsuit in the 12th Judicial Circuit Court. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

application. “I know we all want to see development that brings enhanced economic opportunity and quality of life to our city.” She came to Sarasota in 2002.

Tony Souza Jr. is another well-known local name; he sits on the Community Redevelopment Advisory Board and is chairman of the Downtown Sarasota Alliance. “I have more than 30 years professional experience in all areas of real estate and building construction, zoning and neighborhood development,” he wrote in his application. He came to Sarasota in 2005 from New Bedford, CN, where he directed the restoration of the city’s historic waterfront.

Dale Parks is a local architect. His resume says “he has been active in public sector is-

sues as a City of Sarasota advisory board member for over 15 years — establishing himself as a well respected public voice on design issues and the importance of architecture in the community.”

## NEW ZONING CODE

Following a workshop on May 29, commissioners will decide if they want to move forward to develop a new “form-based” zoning code to replace the current “Euclidian zoning.”

To synthesize the difference between the two: Euclidian zoning is more concerned with what happens *inside* a building, while a form-based code is more concerned with the *exterior* of the building and how it integrates into the surrounding neighborhood(s).



*When the owners of the Ringling Shopping Center first tried to erect a chain link fence around the property this spring, vandalism ensued. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

Staff recommends hiring two full-time contract employees for what is expected to be a two-year effort to rehabilitate the city's zoning code. During the late May workshop, the city commissioners received a briefing from Karin Murphy and Andrew Georgiadis, who would lead the effort. They and staff propose an in-house "Urban Design Studio" instead of the city's retaining outside consultants.

The go-ahead decision is split into two parts. Under "Old Business" the commission will vote on the concept and approach. Under "New Business" later in the meeting, the commissioners are expected to approve a \$300,000 shift in the existing budget to get the work started next month.

The downtown area already uses a form-based code, which employs "administrative approval" of projects meeting the requirements. Expansion of administrative approval to other areas in the city has been tried before, but it has met serious neighborhood opposition. The alternative is public hearings before the Planning Board and possibly the City Commission.

If the commissioners approve of the code overhaul, the work would be finished by Sept. 30, 2016.

## **SPD PICKS UP SRO DUTIES**

Sarasota County Sheriff's Office deputies will no longer serve as School Resource Officers inside the city limits. The city police will pick up the slack, if a School Board-city agreement is inked on Monday.


The city police would handle responsibilities at the two high schools — Booker and Sarasota — and at Brookside Middle School.



*Andres Duany. Photo courtesy of the University of Georgia*

The Sheriff's Office and School Board split the half-million dollar cost down the middle for the resource officers, but Sheriff Tom Knight announced he felt the city police should handle the responsibilities because the schools are in its jurisdiction.

The city proposes to replace them with three police officers, plus the cost of half of a supervisor's time. The city originally wanted \$352,000 for the service, or about \$92,000 more than was paid under the School Board's deal with the sheriff.

After negotiations with City Administrator Tom Barwin, the School Board's share was dropped to \$312,000, with the flexibility that the officers may not necessarily be at each school five days every week. 



## BRAKES ON THE BRT

*The bus rapid transit system in Eugene, OR, is considered one of the best in the nation. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

### **THE COUNTY COMMISSION IS SEEKING MORE CITY AND PRIVATE SUPPORT FOR A BUS RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM – AND PARING ITS PLAN TO A SHORTER FIRST CORRIDOR IF IT FORGES AHEAD**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**

*Editor*

The Sarasota County Commission took some braking action June 10 on its proposed bus rapid transit (BRT) system, saying it wants a firm commitment from the Sarasota City Commission on either funding support and/or a greater land-use density for the U.S. 41 preferred route.

Otherwise, the commissioners agreed unanimously, they are not certain they will proceed with even the first of three phases of a BRT system, as suggested by county staff during a board workshop.

“*It’s just like Monopoly money for them, and why should they care?*”

Christine Robinson  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County

“If they think we’re going to shoulder the whole burden on our own,” Commissioner

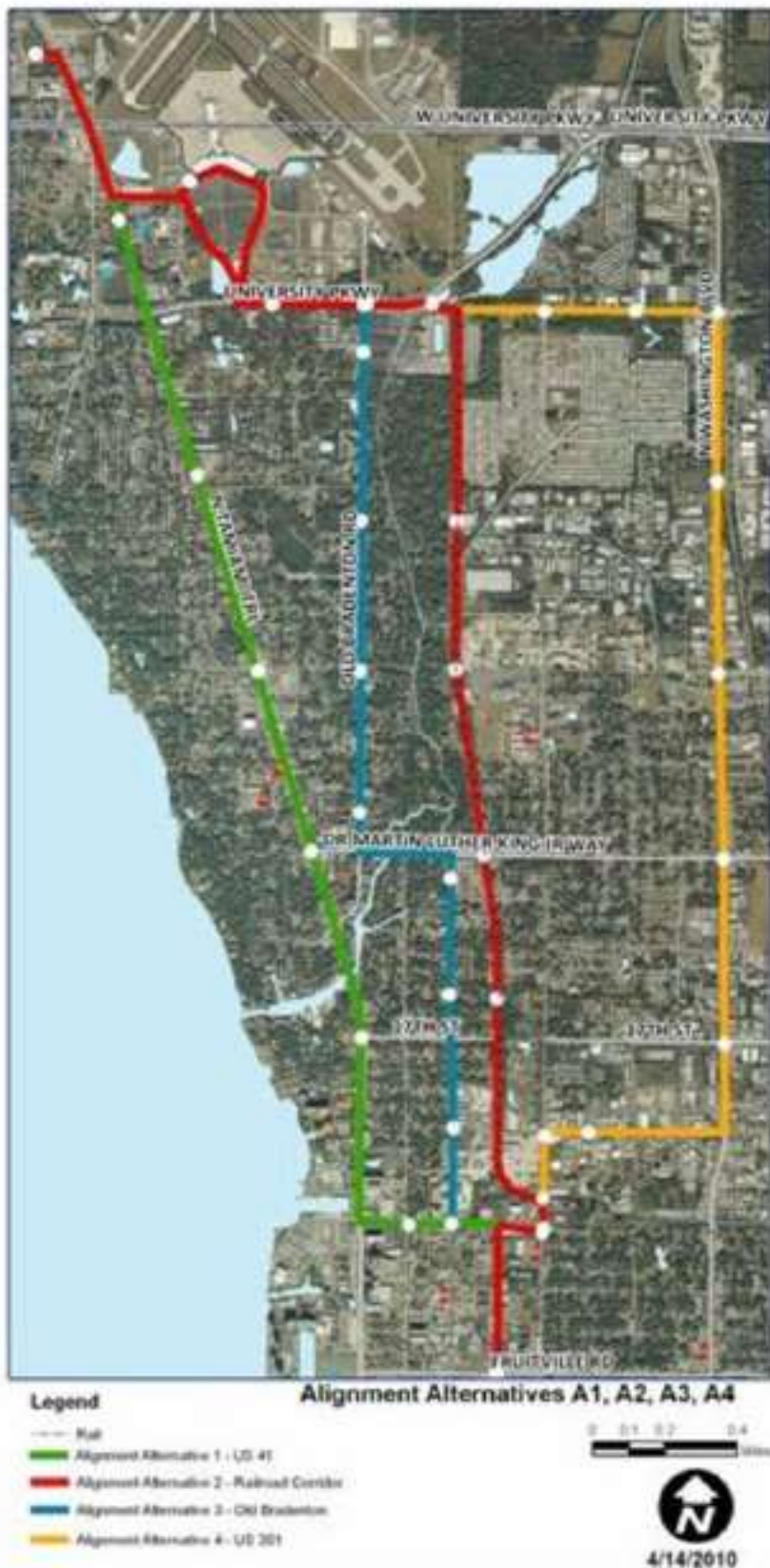
Christine Robinson said of the city commissioners, “then that’s going to be a different conversation for me” about the BRT’s future.

“I believe that’s definitely a question we would ask the City Commission,” Jonathan B. Paul, the county’s interim transportation planning director, responded.

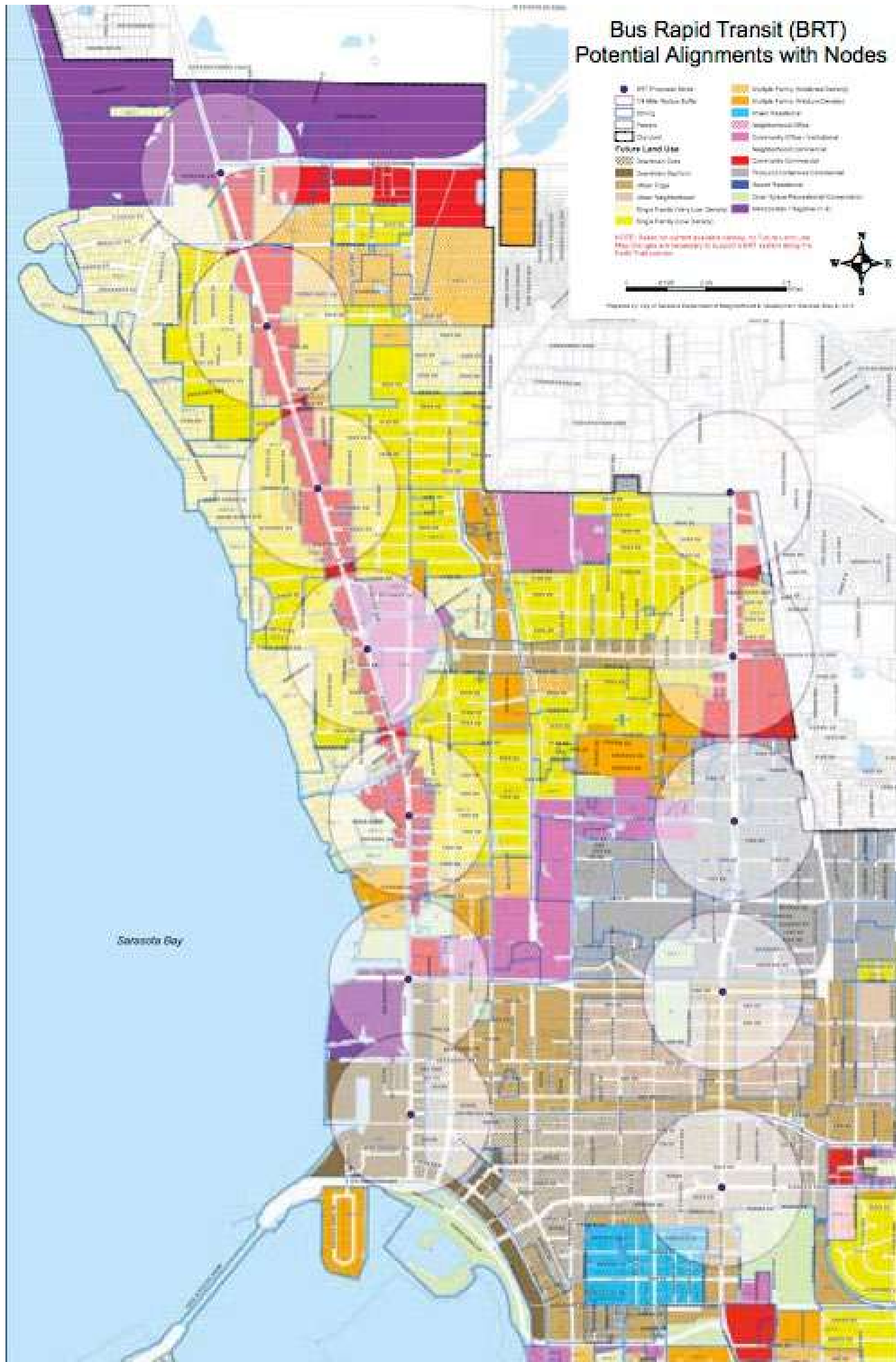
In his motion, Commissioner Joe Barbetta asked County Administrator Randall Reid

to direct staff to complete the process it has been pursuing in earnest since January: to determine whether the county should apply for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding for BRT infrastructure along U.S. 41.

Paul said he would appear before the County Commission again in August to update them on further discussions with City of Sarasota staff and the City Commission. He noted that



Graphics prepared for a January presentation show proposed BRT system corridors along U.S. 41, U.S. 301 and Old Bradenton Road. Images courtesy Sarasota County



A graphic shows 'nodes,' or potential BRT transit stops, along U.S. 41 and U.S. 301. Image courtesy Sarasota County

if the county wants to improve its chances of winning FTA approval for a BRT system, he also believes a number of entities along U.S. 41 — the colleges and hotels among them — need to demonstrate their support for the project through letters at the very least.

Additionally, the commissioners concurred with Paul and the City Commission that the best option for a local BRT system — if it gains sufficient city and other support — is to pursue its development in three phases, with the first extending from Sarasota Memorial Hospital to the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, which is near the intersection of Boulevard of the Arts and U.S. 41. Of the three phases, it has the highest percentage of land uses already in place, Paul told the County Commission.

One BRT corridor phase would cost about \$750,000 in annual operating expenses, Paul explained, compared to a range between \$2.5 million and \$2.7 million for the whole 9-mile corridor from Westfield Southgate Mall to Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport — the option the county and city commissions settled on during a joint meeting in early February.

During a joint meeting on April 16 of the Manatee and Sarasota county commissions, the Manatee board concurred with the Sarasota city and county commissions on the advantages of the U.S. 41 BRT corridor; Manatee commissioners suggested the service could extend as far as Palmetto one day.

“Seven hundred fifty thousand dollars is something I believe the county could at least

get its hands around,” Paul said of the first phase’s expense.

Paul also noted in a June 10 memo to the County Commission that it would cost about \$850,000 to provide an updated project justification analysis to the FTA. Within five years of federal approval, the memo continues, “the BRT project would have to be completed and operational in order to meet FTA requirements.”

He said earlier this year that that new application to the FTA would be due in September 2014.

In response to a question from Commissioner Nora Patterson, Paul said that if the county accepted federal funding for a BRT system, the county would be committed to keeping the system in place for 10 to 20 years. If the county eschewed federal financing, Paul pointed out, the county could proceed with whatever type of pilot project it wanted, to determine the potential for the system’s success.

When he appears before the board again in August, Paul said, he will have an estimate of the infrastructure costs for the first phase of the system.

## DENSITY AND DETAILS

In his June 10 presentation to the Sarasota County commissioners, Paul reminded them that a BRT system provides reliable bus service to users every 10 minutes at peak travel times, with waits no longer than 15 minutes at other times. “It’s quick; it’s simple; it’s convenient; it’s predictable,” he added of the transportation method’s virtues.



Although discussions in 2012 and earlier between the County and City commissions had identified the CSX Railroad right of way and U.S. 301 as possible BRT corridors, Paul again emphasized that U.S. 41 has the density deemed desirable to make the system workable; the other options do not.

“It is fairly low-density, commercial land use along 301,” he said.

With most of the U.S. 41 corridor, he noted, 15 to 20 dwelling units per acre are permissible,

and the average density is 18.6 units per acre. “The closer you get to downtown [Sarasota], that density goes up fairly significantly,” he added — to as much as 50 units per acre.

During his discussion with the City Commission, Paul pointed out, that board recognized the possibility that it could increase density further along U.S. 41, even though the current level would be sufficient to satisfy FTA guidelines.



## Phase BRT Corridor

- **Phase 1 – Hospital to Van Wezel**
  - Land Use in Place
  - Reuse existing roads for possible dedicated lane
  - Coordination with downtown circulator
- **Phase 2 – Van Wezel to SRQ airport**
  - Land Use transit supportive
  - Ringling College, SRQ, New College, Ringling Museum, USF
- **Phase 3 – Hospital to Southgate Mall**
  - Land Use less transit supportive
  - Six lane arterial not pedestrian friendly
  - Limited opportunity for transit pull outs / preemption

Regarding the BRT corridor phases, Paul proposed the second one extend from the Van Wezel to the airport. That would encompass stops at Ringling College of Art and Design, New College, the University of South Florida and the Ringling Museum complex, he noted.

“The least supportive of transit of those three corridors would be the hospital to the mall,” Paul added. That section has six lanes of traffic with land uses further from the road, he noted.

Moreover, Paul said of the estimated annual operating expenses for all three phases, “I don’t believe this county could support \$2.5 million to go from the mall to the airport today.”

Combining the county’s existing operation of the Sarasota County Area Transit bus system with the funding of a BRT system, Paul pointed out, is “a significant commitment to transit.”

Regarding other community partners, Paul said he had found documentation suggesting a meeting had been planned in December 2012 for county staff to talk with representatives of the colleges and the hotels along U.S. 41, as well as representatives from The Ringling Museum, the hospital, the mall and the airport to determine their level of support for a BRT corridor along that route; that workshop never was held.

Although he had copies of letters those entities had sent the county expressing support, Paul continued, he felt some firmer commitment would be essential to winning FTA funding for the project.

“I think, somewhat, people have had BRT fatigue,” Paul said, referring to the years-long discussion of the project, noting it first had been proposed in 2002.

## **CITY COMMITMENT**

When Commissioner Joe Barbetta asked whether the City Commission and staff had looked at the possibility of implementing new development guidelines that would allow for the payment of a transit fee to secure more density — one means of helping fund the BRT and circulator systems — Paul said, “I don’t believe they’ve examined it.” He planned to have further discussions with them on that issue, he added.

If the city and county boards decide to renew the Community Redevelopment Agency for the city, which is set to expire in 2016, a percentage of the ad valorem tax revenue set aside for use in that district could be designated for the transit systems, Reid told the County Commission.

An 11-member committee appointed by both the city and county boards is about to begin exploring whether the CRA should be renewed, Reid noted.

“I’m trying to get more of the private contribution to this,” Barbetta said.

Robinson voiced a desire to see the city more involved in the process. “I think [the City Commission needs] a financial stake in this game as far as downtown,” she said. If the County Commission put up all the funding for operations, she added, “it’s just like Monopoly money for them, and why should they care?”

Further, Robinson said, if the City Commission demonstrated its support of the system by committing funding to it, that would encourage entities in the southern part of the county to take a greater interest and consider the possibilities for extending the BRT system to Venice and North Port in the future.

## CIRCULATOR OPTIONS

One other aspect of the proposed BRT system is connecting it to the downtown “circulator” city staff and the City Commission have envisioned, Paul explained.

As part of a mobility study, the city is considering putting down rails for a streetcar route in and around downtown. However, a bus system could be used instead, according to earlier discussions.

Paul said city staff is looking at three corridors for the circulator. “I think there are some great opportunities, some great synergies possible, to combine both the downtown circulator study and the bus rapid transit [analysis],” he added.

“It seems to me ... the ‘no-brainer’ is somehow linking the Ritz-Carlton, the Hyatt and someday, someday, the Quay property ... which ... will be quite a hub,” Patterson said.

The Quay property near the Hyatt and the Ritz was slated for major development before the recession began. Following the recent settlement of a lawsuit over financing and ownership of the parcel, local government officials and developers have speculated it will be back on the market soon. 

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# PULLING THE PLUGS

*Five Points Park in downtown Sarasota lost its benches more than a year ago. Now it has also lost its nighttime light show. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## THE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT BOARD DECIDES TO EXTINGUISH THE FIVE POINTS PARK LIGHTS INSTEAD OF FACING ONGOING HIGH EXPENSES

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

After struggling for years with the ornamental lights in the trees of Five Points Park, the Downtown Improvement District admitted defeat and decided Tuesday, June 11, to turn them off.

“I think we should shut it down,” said DID board member Tom Mannausa of the operation.

The lights were wrapped around the upper limbs of 27 trees in the park; they

could be programmed to change colors, adding a sense of gaiety to the green space in the center of downtown Sarasota. While the intentions of the DID board members were good, the trees did not cooperate. Tree limb growth led to broken wires, so city staffers advised the DID board to scrap the lights and start over.

“*I think we should shut it down.*”

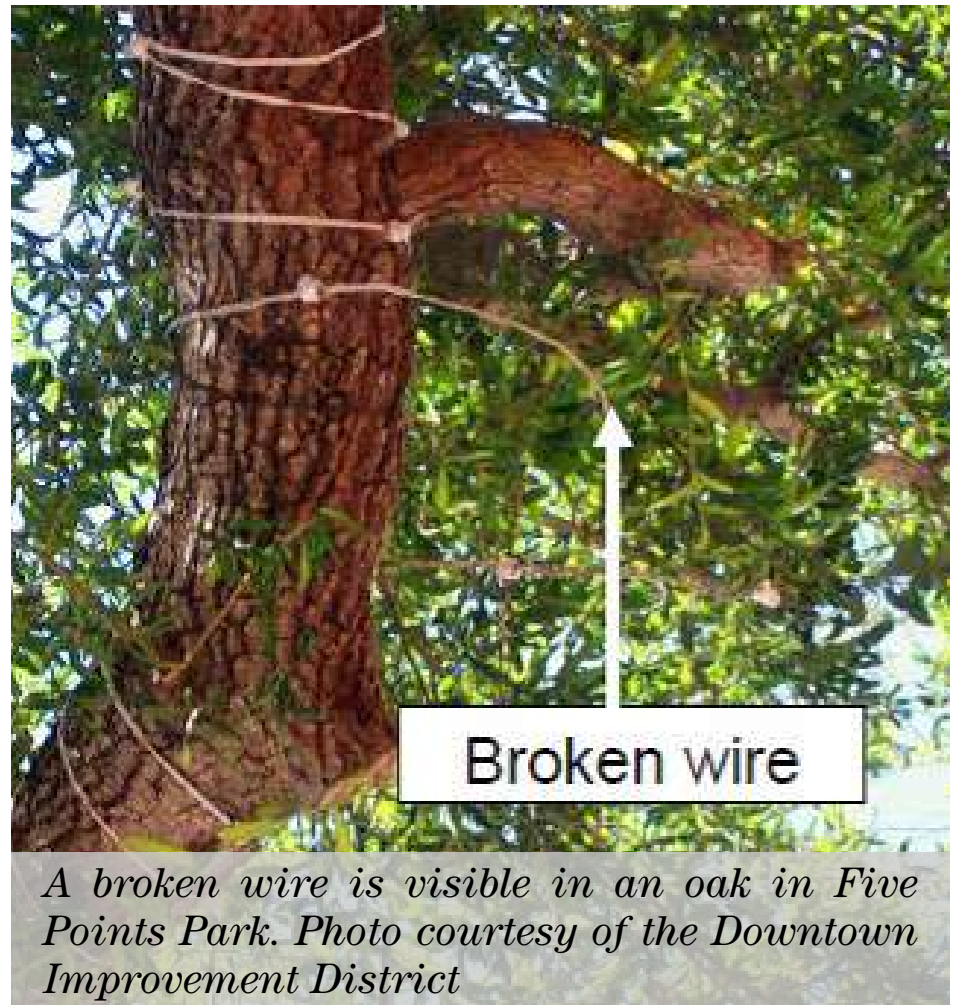
Tom Mannausa  
Board Member  
Downtown Improvement District

“The current system is not feasible,” said Purchasing Manager Mary Tucker. She stood

ready at the DID meeting to write up a solicitation process for new ideas and approaches.

“As we looked at this, the pricing you’re looking at — \$30,000 to \$40,000 to fix them — and then \$20,000 to \$40,000 in annual maintenance, you’d be paying the replacement costs every two years,” said Senior Planner Steve Stancel. “We think it may be time to go out to bid with a [request for proposals (RFP)] for an entirely new system. And this time we include the maintenance contract as part of the RFP.”

The district levies a property tax separate from normal city taxes to create a revenue stream to pay for improvements to the down-



*The lights in Five Point Parks were programmed to change colors at night. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

town area. This is also separate from the funding for the Community Redevelopment Agency, which uses a different property tax mechanism to improve the downtown area.

Over the past several months, the DID struggled to keep the Five Points Park lighting system from failure. In May, it asked the original contractor, Synergy Lighting of Bradenton, to return with a bid for annual “guaranteed” maintenance.

Matt Craig with Synergy was prepared to do that on June 11, but he was preempted by Tucker’s proposal to seek bids on a new system. Craig warned the DID to stay focused on the issue and not get caught up in style. “You guys are missing the problem,” he said. “The

problem is lights in the trees. You’re still going to have a constant maintenance problem. Be prepared to pay \$15,000 to \$20,000 in annual maintenance.”

Mannausa then moved to “turn off what we have now.” The motion passed unanimously.

Afterward, DID Member Dr. Mark Kaufman moved to instruct Tucker to “send out an RFP, looking for lighting in the park.” It, too, was approved unanimously.

Lights-gone-bad is another blow to Sarasota’s downtown park. After homeless people and vagrants began sleeping there, the city’s Public Works staff removed all the park benches in an “experiment” that became permanent.

Now the lights are off. 

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## CEMENTING HER POSITION

*Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino (far right) addresses the eight men and women she is about to promote to higher ranks. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

### **ANALYSIS: THE CITY'S CHIEF OF POLICE NAMES NEW SENIOR STAFF**

**By Stan Zimmerman**

*City Editor*

It has been a perilous first six months for Sarasota's new chief of police. This city is seven times larger than the department she led previously in Ocean City, MD. She arrived hardly knowing a soul in town.

She faced a restive force, unionized but lacking a contract for many months. Two civilian advisory boards were peering into police strategies and misdeeds. And an unprecedented number of senior officers were poised on the lip of retirement.

Bernadette DiPino, the city's first female chief, entered a largely white male bastion determined to change its culture and modernize its outlook. Whether she succeeds remains

to be seen, but she has found her bearings, and on Wednesday, June 12, she introduced the senior staff she has handpicked to watch her back.

“*I'm excited about the way the department's headed.*”

Johnathan Todd  
Sergeant  
Sarasota Police Department

### **THE NEW ADMINISTRATION**

The promotion ceremony on Wednesday was unprecedented. Seven men and one woman in the space of a few minutes were elevated

to higher ranks — one to colonel, two to captain, two to lieutenant and three to sergeant. The promotions to captain were remarkable. Corinne Stannish became the department's first female ever to hold that title, and Patrick Robinson's promotion was almost as noteworthy: He skipped a rank, jumping up from sergeant to captain.

Two of the newly promoted senior officers will work in administration. Stannish will be the administrative captain, and Lt. Philip DeNiro will be the assistant commander of administrative services and support. "You can trust me in this assignment," he said during remarks to the standing-room-only crowd.

The man promoted to colonel was previously selected as DiPino's deputy chief. Stephen Moyer recently completed his credentials as a Florida sworn officer after a career in the Maryland State Police, where he coordinated with his new boss. He joked about being part of the "Maryland mafia" taking over the Sarasota Police Department. He fills a job left vacant for the past six years.

A fourth member of the new circle of administration also made her public debut at the ceremony. She is Genevieve Judge, officially titled the "partnership policing communications coordinator." Judge grew up locally and attended high school in Bradenton. She is a 10-year veteran of television news; she now serves as the department's public information officer.

## LINE OFFICERS PROMOTED

It was not just the command circle that moved up in pay and responsibilities this week. James Rieser became a detective lieutenant




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

as the assistant commander of the criminal investigations division. "If you're dealing drugs, you'd better stop, because here we come," he said.

Three officers received their sergeant's stripes. Michael Schwieterman, Johnathan Todd and Rex Troche all were bumped up to the first rung of management.

"I'm excited about the way the department's headed," said Todd.

All eight of those promoted received a new badge, the oval "shield" that is proof of their position of responsibility. The new shields were pinned on by wives, a husband, a father and, in the case of Col. Moyer, by former Sarasota Police Chief John Lewis.

The Sarasota Police Department has 175 sworn officers and 44 civilians. 





## ONLY PART OF THE PROBLEM

*Popular with tourists, St. Armands nonetheless has its share of parking headaches. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **ISSUES SPECIFIC TO ST. ARMANDS – INCLUDING POTENTIAL PLACEMENT OF A GARAGE – ARE AMONG NUMEROUS PARKING MATTERS THE CITY OF SARASOTA IS TRYING TO RESOLVE**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

As the St. Armands Business Improvement District (BID) sweats its second election this year to extend its term, it will be putting virtually all of its remaining cash into a parking feasibility study.

On Tuesday, June 11, the district board instructed City of Sarasota Purchasing Director Mary Tucker to seek a company with the ability to look at

situations specific to the shopping center and offer some ideas on how to handle them.

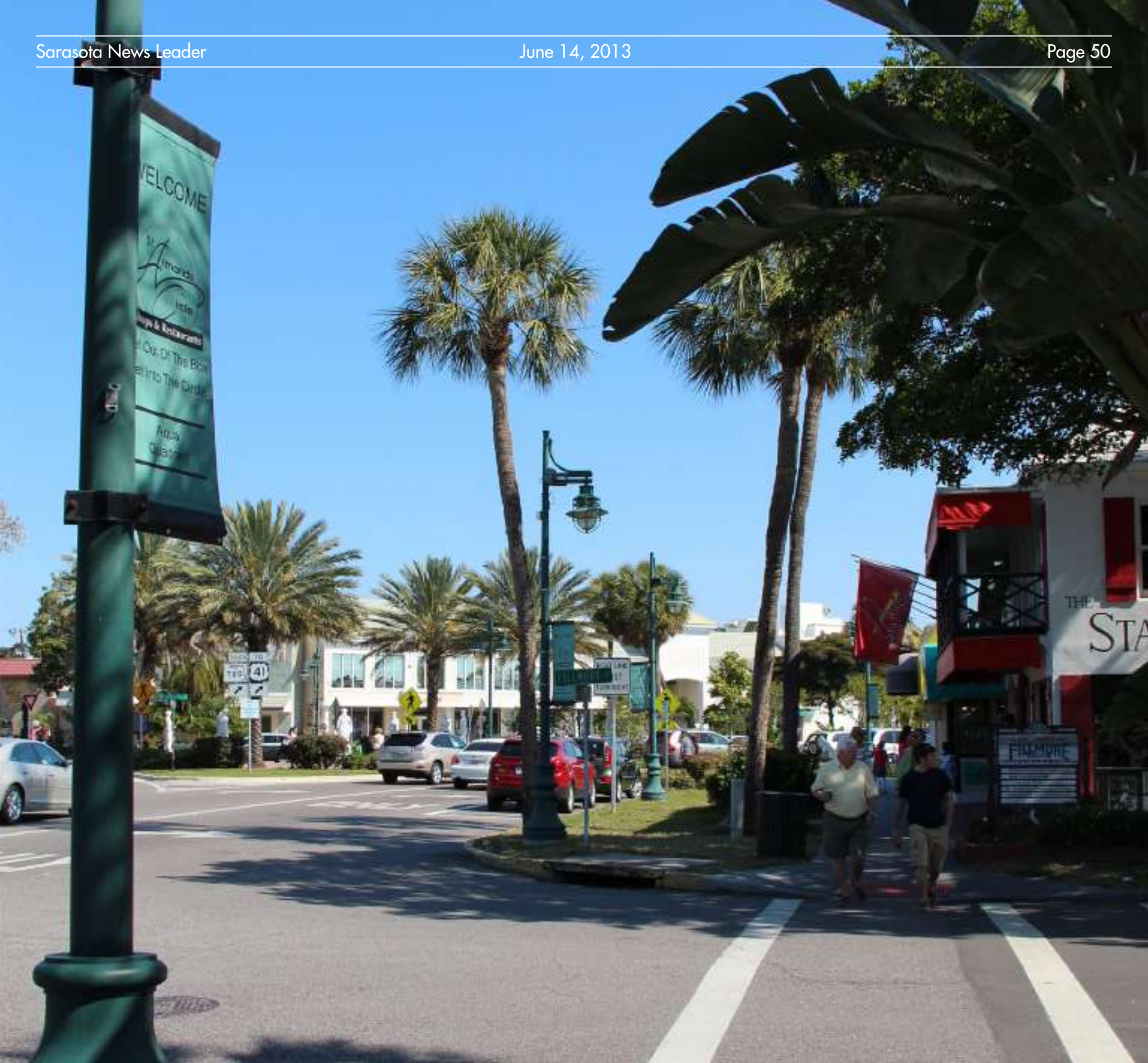
Sarasota Parking Manager Mark Lyons, who

also attended the meeting, said data he already has received from a citywide parking study indicates St. Armands is not the only area of the municipality with parking problems.

“*One big gap is \$500,000 in the parking fund, including garages and their maintenance. We have to begin again looking at revenue enhancements and strategies.*”

Tom Barwin  
Manager  
City of Sarasota





“The preliminary results show a severe shortage of spaces of all types,” said Lyons. “There’s a lot of parkers out there, and a few spaces.”

As for St. Armands’ circumstances, Lyons suggested that if the city were to build one or more parking garages for patrons, “Where would they be and what would they look

like?” There are two possible sites: the northern lot, located near the fire station, and the large southeastern lot for the Circle.

“How does it look? How does it blend with neighborhoods and businesses? Does it give good accessibility? Is it the best use of the footprint?” asked Lyons about a garage.

“Would there be alternate programs or construction that we could use?”

Any parking facility built on the northern lot would need to cantilever out over existing businesses, he pointed out. And the southeastern lot would require protection of the neighborhoods on two sides.

## THE STUDY WILL BE STUDIED

Lyons called the BID “gracious” for being willing to fund an analysis of the shopping area’s parking needs. Results of any feasibility study, he said, would be shared with the so-called “LMR” organization representing the interests of landowners, merchants and residents around the Circle.

Advertising for a consulting firm to undertake the work is expected to begin later this month. Firms will have 30 days to respond. Marty Rappaport, chairman of the BID, said the study could begin in October.

Meanwhile, the future of the district remains up in the air. An earlier vote by landowners failed to approve a 10-year extension of the BID, which levies a 2-mill tax on commercial property to pay for local improvements. The measure was defeated by an almost 2:1 margin.

Undeterred, Rappaport and the district circulated another petition, successfully demanding a second vote on the issue. The results of that poll will not be known until mid-September.

If the vote swings the other way this time and the BID is continued for another decade, the city will try to get the tax bills printed on time for the property owners.



*Sarasota City Manager Tom Barwin. Photo by Norman Schimmel*


## PARKING'S BUDGETARY BLACK HOLE

The cost of parking enforcement is of increasing concern as staffers develop next year’s City of Sarasota budget, City Manager Tom Barwin told the board of another self-taxing district, the Downtown Improvement District (DID), the same morning the BID met. “We’re developing the 2014 annual budget to be presented in July,” he said.

“One big gap is \$500,000 in the parking fund, including garages and their maintenance. We have to begin again looking at revenue enhancements and strategies,” Barwin pointed out. “We want to start small and incrementally.”

Ernie Ritz, chairman of the DID, told Barwin merchants previously were able to buy a \$40 monthly parking sticker for each of their employees. The sticker allowed workers to park in the city’s garages and not tie up precious spaces along downtown streets.

“These are people who want to pay,” said Ritz.

Barwin replied that he would pass along the idea to Parking Manager Lyons. 



# THE PAST AND FUTURE OF DESIGN

*The Sarasota School of Architecture building at 261 S. Orange Ave. in downtown Sarasota will become the home of the University of Florida's master's program in architecture. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **A UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA GRADUATE PROGRAM IN ARCHITECTURE HAS WON COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVAL TO MAKE ITS HOME IN A HISTORIC STRUCTURE IN DOWNTOWN SARASOTA**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

It is the last Sarasota County structure designed by nationally known architect William Rupp that has not been “altered beyond recognition.”

Thanks to a unanimous Sarasota County Commission vote on June 5, the Sarasota School of Architecture-style building will be transformed from the county's central mail center and print shop to the home of

the Citylab-Sarasota University of Florida Master of Architecture Program.

Located at 261 S. Orange Ave. in downtown Sarasota — a short distance from the County

Administration Center on Ringling Boulevard — the structure made its debut in 1960 as a furniture showroom, Guy Peterson, an award-winning Sarasota architect, explained to the County Commission on June 5.

“*To bring the flagship university into Sarasota County is amazing. ... I never would have thought to have seen that in my lifetime here.*”

Christine Robinson  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



Peterson's wife, Cynthia, who is heading up the effort to raise the estimated \$150,000 in restoration and rehabilitation expenses, explained its uniqueness among Rupp's local designs in having maintained its original look. "It is extremely important that we preserve this building," she pointed out.

Rupp came to Sarasota in 1952 and worked for internationally renowned architect Paul Rudolph — later chairman of Yale University's School of Architecture — for a couple of years, Guy Peterson continued.

Rudolph is known as one of the originators of a style of modern design called the Sarasota School of Architecture.

Although Sarasota has "just a treasure trove of historic ... modern buildings that people come



Map courtesy of Google.



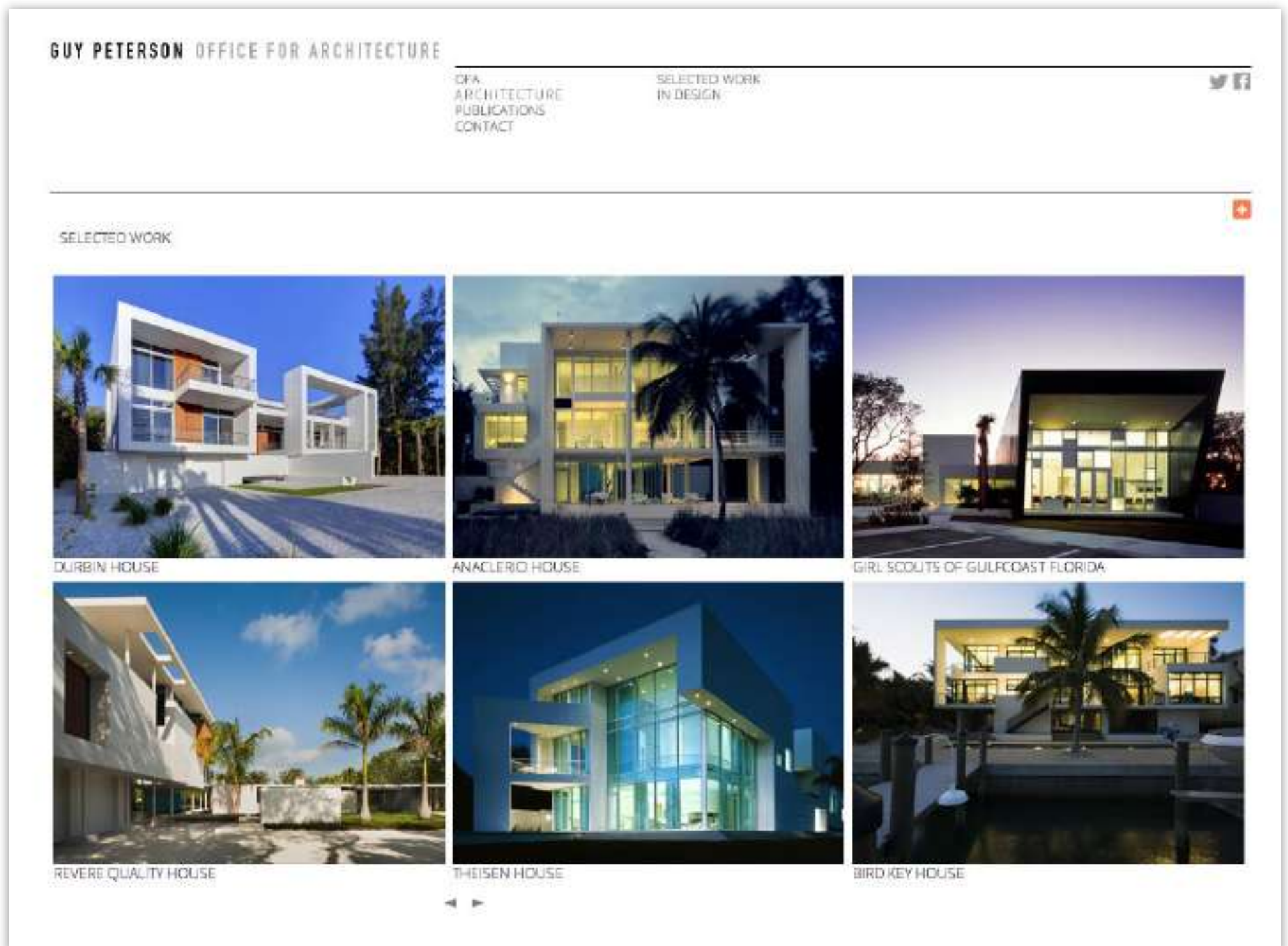
Residents of the Laurel Park neighborhood in downtown Sarasota say they look forward to welcoming University of Florida architecture students who will be studying in the Rupp building on Orange Avenue. Photo by Norman Schimmel

to look at and learn from,” Peterson continued, the city nonetheless has lost many of its important architectural structures. “This is the time and a great opportunity to put advocacy in action and repurpose the building ... And what greater learning environment for students and for the community ...”

Martin Gold, director of the University of Florida’s School of Architecture, said he anticipated the graduate program could have up to 53 students in the future, though plans call for about 40 when it opens in the Rupp building in the fall of 2014.

On June 5, the County Commission agreed to lease the Rupp structure to the University of Florida for 10 years at a cost of \$10, or \$1 per year. The lease goes into effect on Feb. 1, 2014; it can be renewed at a fee to be determined in the future, according to the resolution approved by the board.

While she is a graduate of the University of Miami law school, Commissioner Christine Robinson told Gold and the Petersons, her husband is a Gator. As Eric Robinson would say, she continued, “To bring the flagship university into Sarasota County is amazing. ... I



never would have thought to have seen that in my lifetime here ...”

“We think this is a historic event for us as well,” Gold responded.

“I’m personally a big fan of the Sarasota School of Architecture,” Commissioner Nora Patterson added. “And it is my hope and assumption that your presence here will bring much more consciousness of the value of the many structures that have been destroyed or bastardized in Sarasota County, with people not realizing the value of what they had — including our public institutions and, most especially and unfortunately, our school system.”

The Sarasota County School Board generated international criticism in 2006 for voting to demolish the original, 1957 Riverview High School building Paul Rudolph designed, citing its structural deterioration and a number of other concerns. The board did give the [Sarasota Architectural Foundation](#) an opportunity to preserve the building by raising funds to make it suitable for another purpose on the campus. However, the fundraising initiative was unsuccessful in the time frame the board allowed.

Peterson pointed out to the County Commission on June 5 that Rupp designed a house built in 1952 in Oyster Bay, NY, that was subse-



*Martin Gold participates in a University of Florida event in Orlando. Photo courtesy University of Florida*

quently recognized by the American Institute of Architects as one of the 20 most important houses in the United States.

“So he’s a significant architect,” Peterson added.

Cynthia Peterson told the County Commission, “We’re very confident” of meeting the fundraising goal.

Chuckling, Commissioner Joe Barbetta said he would plead with all the Gator alumni he knows “to cough up some money.”

## **MOVING AND LOOKING AHEAD**

Ed Gable, the county’s director of facilities services, explained to the commission that, “believe it or not,” the county mail center and print shop housed in the Rupp building “is a pretty significant operation” with a number of people who would have to be relocated.

“They need to be within a mile or two miles of [the County Administration Center on Ringling Boulevard],” he added, “to operate as efficiently as possible.”

Gable estimated the cost of leasing space for those workers and the equipment at \$45,000 per year. Renovations of space for the operations could run as much as \$160,000, he added, because of the specialized equipment involved. The moving costs themselves would be about \$35,000, Gable noted.

In response to the renovations estimate, Barbetta told Gable, “I’m a little concerned when we come up with numbers [like those] when we may find a building” where the operations could be moved without paying renovation expenses.

“I hope we can do that,” Gable responded. “We will definitely come back to you with a plan that identifies exactly where we would be going.”

“For me, to bring in this program to Sarasota, I’m more than willing to put up with the costs of this,” Robinson said.

## **THE PROGRAM AND THE COMMUNITY**

Gold estimated the Master of Architecture program would entail annual expenses of up to \$750,000, with four full-time faculty members who most likely would live in the county.

In-state students will pay slightly higher tuition than they would if the program were in Gainesville, Gold continued, but the cost for out-of-state and international students would be lower. Therefore, he said, university officials anticipate a greater diversity of students, with up to 40 percent coming from beyond Florida’s borders.

When Barbetta asked about collaboration with colleges in Sarasota County, Gold replied, “We think that’s a fantastic possibility for our students.”

University officials also anticipate offering a three-year Master of Architecture program for non-traditional architecture students, he pointed out. Sarasota County students with bachelor’s degrees in interior design, art and even sociology, for example, would be candidates for that option, Gold said.

Residents of Laurel Park — which is close to the building — are excited about having architecture students become part of their neighborhood, Peterson noted, and Chairwoman Carolyn Mason pointed out they would be able to walk to classes and a number of downtown destinations. 





*Residents are encouraged to vote for Sarasota County as the 2013 All-America City. Video provided by Sarasota County via YouTube*

## ALL-AMERICA CITY YOUTUBE VIDEO VOTING UNDER WAY

Sarasota County Government is encouraging area residents to watch and vote for the county's YouTube video entry, [Sarasota Transcends](#), which is part of the county's effort to be named the 2013 All-America City.

Voting for the best video ends on June 15, County Administrator Randall Reid reminded county supporters this week. The winner of the All-America City competition will be announced in Denver, CO, on June 16.

The All-America Stories video contest features 10 entries, an All-America City news release says. The video with the most likes will be the 2013 All-America Stories winner.

However, the release adds, if the video with the most views is not the same as the one voted most liked, the organization will present certificates to both winners. The honorees

also will be announced at the All-America City celebration on June 16.

In April, Sarasota County was named one of 20 finalists for the All-America City Awards, a nationwide contest established by the National Civic League that recognizes communities demonstrating innovation, civic engagement and cross-sector collaboration, a county news release notes.

Sarasota County won the award in 2006.

This year's All-America City finalists were selected based on efforts that honor and benefit military veterans and their families, the news release points out. Sarasota County's submission focused on the first-of-a-kind partnership between The Patterson Foundation and the National Cemetery Administration, which resulted in the following:

- Patriot Plaza, a ceremonial amphitheater at Sarasota National Cemetery.
- Legacy of Valor, a community-connecting campaign to honor veterans and their families.
- Other community-driven projects focused on veterans.

More than 600 communities have won the All-America City award, according to the National Civic League — some as many as five times. “All-Ameri-



ca Cities have shown the ability to innovate in such areas as job creation, neighborhood revitalization, crime reduction, new housing for low income people, improving education, and engaging youth,” the website says.

The award program was founded in 1949 when a newspaper reporter approached the National Civic League (then known as the National Municipal League) with the idea of naming the 10 best-governed cities each year. Instead, the league created a program that recognized cities for civic achievements, the website points out.

## CITY EMPLOYEE HONORED WITH NAACP YOUTH AWARD

“For his extraordinary service toward the development of youth and families in the Sarasota community, Arthur Larkins, a supervisor at the Robert L. Taylor Community Complex (RLTCC), will be honored as one of the 2013 Men of Valor by the Sarasota County Branch NAACP Youth Council,” the City of Sarasota has announced.

Larkins will be recognized during the Third Annual Men of Valor breakfast on Saturday, June 15, at 8 a.m. at the Robert L. Taylor Community Complex, 1845 34<sup>th</sup> St.

Larkins coordinates all youth and adult athletics at the RLTCC, including basketball and volleyball leagues, tournaments and camps, and he interacts with the youth and families at the facility on a daily basis, a city news release notes. He has been an employee with the City of Sarasota since October 2011, it adds.

“Larkins is much more than a recreation facilities supervisor. He’s a mentor and a role model,” Jerry Fogle, RLTCC manager, noted in the release. “We all look up to him here.



*Arthur Larkins/Contributed photo*

When the kids have any kind of an issue, he’s the one they go to. He’s truly an exceptional person. We’re proud he’s being recognized for his dedication to the youth of our community.”

For more information regarding the breakfast ceremony, including ticket prices, call 355-2097.

## SARASOTA COUNTY REPORTS LIMITED DAMAGE FROM TROPICAL STORM

Only one house suffered major structural damage as a result of winds and rain associated with Tropical Storm Andrea, Emergency Management staff for Sarasota County reported to the County Commission late last week after a preliminary damage assessment on June 7.

Eight homes had minor structural damage, and three homeowners reported minor property damage, Emergency Management Chief Ed McCrane notified the commissioners.

A large oak fell on a house on Citrus Road in south Venice, McCrane wrote, damaging the roof and necessitating the family evacuate the house.

Staff listed a total of 11 downed power lines and poles and six fallen trees — again, primarily in the south Venice area.

According to Natural Resources Department staff, Andrea did not cause significant damage to county beaches or dunes. Dune erosion of less than 5 feet was documented on south Siesta Key, the middle portion of Casey Key and south Manasota Key.

“No coastal flooding, property damages, loss of dune walk-over and trees were found,” the report says.

More than 5 feet of erosion did occur where dunes previously had been restored at 2007 Casey Key Road and 7560 Manasota Key Road, the report notes. Replanted dune vegetation and sand under the wooden decks were washed away at both locations, the report says.

Other properties on the north end of Manasota Key suffered similar problems.



*Tropical Storm Andrea did new damage to the property at 2007 Casey Key Road, which suffered erosion during Tropical Storm Debby in 2012 (shown). Image courtesy Sarasota County*

Last year, Tropical Storm Debby — also a June storm — produced considerable erosion on south Siesta Key and parts of Casey and Manasota keys.

No loss of sea turtle nests was seen, the report notes.

The Centennial Park Boat Ramp near downtown Sarasota suffered only minor damage — contrary to earlier news media reports, McCrane noted.

The boat ramp at Blackburn Point Park was washed out, McCrane wrote, adding, “Figures. We had just recently repaired it.” Additionally, rocks at the end of the Caspersen Beach boardwalks were exposed again, making those walkways unusable, the report says. Boards and caution tape were put up at the latter location to warn people away from the boardwalks, the report adds.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

## ALMOST 250 GRADUATING SENIORS WIN FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

Nearly 250 graduating high school seniors from Sarasota, Manatee and Charlotte counties have received scholarships from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, totaling \$481,950 in funding, the foundation has announced.

The awards were celebrated at the annual Scholarship Reception at the Community Foundation last week, attended by select college winners, scholarship committee members

and donors who make these financial awards possible.

“For many of our donors, there is no greater joy than knowing bright local students will have the ability to make their mark in the world — leaving our community a better and brighter place — because of the choices open to them through a college education,” said Roxie Jerde, president and CEO of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, in a news release.



*Scholarship winners gather during the annual Scholarship Reception at the Community Foundation of Sarasota County. They are joined by CFSC's grants and scholarships coordinator, Earl Young (center, back row). Contributed photos by Sharon Kunkel of the Community Foundation*

Each of the more than 65 unique scholarship funds at the Community Foundation recognizes a donor's dream of making higher education possible for deserving students, the release notes. The distributions from the specific funds for the scholarships awarded this year ranged from \$500 to more than \$128,000, the release notes.

Each year, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County also awards scholarships to adult learners — people returning to college or vocational school after being out of high school for a number of years. To learn more about these opportunities, call Earl Young, scholarship coordinator, at 556-7156 or visit the Community Foundation online at [www.CFSarasota.org](http://www.CFSarasota.org).



*Scholarship recipient Ashley Manning with Scholarship Committee member Dr. Donna Simmons.*



*JoAnne Coplan (left) and Saul H. Coplan (right) congratulate the Saul H. and JoAnne Coplan Scholarship winners, Jeremiah Jackson II and Katya Young.*

## CITY DEBUTS NEW EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

The City of Sarasota has a new system in place to contact residents and business owners directly via landline, cellular telephone, SMS text message or email in cases of emergency notification, the city has announced.

The Rapid Notify system will enable Sarasota city officials to contact residents with ongoing information in the event of an important or emergency situation, a news release says. Sarasota will be utilizing Rapid Notify's geographic mapping capability to send targeted alerts based on location and proximity to such situations, the release adds.

"The use of this technology enables the City of Sarasota to contact a large number of residents in a very short period of time," it notes. "The Rapid Notify system has proven worthwhile in providing critical emergency information during events such as hurricanes, flooding, other severe weather occurrences and water service outages in other communities

throughout the country," the release points out. The system utilizes commercial phone data to contact residents. Residents who have terminated their landlines and use only cellular phones might not be included in the calling list, the release adds.

"Rapid Notify provides us with the advanced communication tools we need to communicate quickly and easily with our citizens," said Mitt Tidwell, director of utilities for the city, in the release. "The system enables us to prepare messages for use before, during and after events, which frees up valuable resources in the event of an emergency situation."

Residents may sign up to receive emergency alert notifications at the online community [self-registration portal](#). The sign up for Rapid Notify is free, the release notes. However, "you may be charged by your cell phone provider for incoming calls and/or data," it notes.



*The information you provide will be used for official purposes only. Please keep in mind that under Florida Law, e-mail addresses and phone numbers are all public records. If you do not want your e-mail address and or phone number released in a response to a public-records request, do not provide this information.*

## City of Sarasota Self Registration List

## 'MR. DOWNTOWN' AND THE LONGTIME SECRETARY FOR THE CITY'S POLICE CHIEFS WIN RECOGNITION

Two indefatigable supporters of the city are being honored separately for their contributions.

Paul Thorpe — known to many as “Mr. Downtown” — is proposed for recognition on a brass plaque to be placed at the new roundabout planned for Main Street and Orange Avenue. He has been an organizer and promoter of downtown Sarasota for decades, through countless upheavals, organizational changes, City and County commissions changes and a myriad of here-and-gone personalities.

Thorpe stayed and worked tirelessly to unite the city and its downtown with parades, celebrations, parties, concerts, fairs and much more. The Downtown Improvement District is asking the Sarasota City Commission for approval to install the bronze plaque.

Meanwhile, at the other end of downtown, the most critical woman in Sarasota law enforcement history received a surprise when her photo was unveiled in the police chief's conference room, along with photos of all the city's chiefs of police.

Yvonne Shumway has been the secretary to seven Sarasota chiefs, including the current one, Bernadette DiPino. Shumway is famous for keeping her chiefs on their schedules. During the reception, DiPino noted it was appropriate the photo would hang under the clock.

Two previous city police chiefs — Peter Abbott and John Lewis — were there for the unveilings.

*Stan Zimmerman*



*Chief Bernadette DiPino. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*Yvonne Shumway. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota*

## SARASOTA COUNTY AIMS TO GET YOUTH READY BY 21

Leaders from six Florida communities have accepted a challenge from a national nonprofit to build new ways to get their young people “ready by 21” for college, work and life, Community Youth Development has announced.

The Washington-based Forum for Youth Investment has selected Sarasota County, Orlando, Pinellas County/St. Petersburg, Hillsborough County/Tampa, Palm Beach County and Broward County to participate in the Florida Community Challenge, “which provides training on how to fundamentally improve youth services and supports through the collective impact of organizations that work with young people,” a news release says.

Teams of leaders from each community — including mayors, city council members, department heads, program providers, United Way representatives and business leaders — will participate in a two-day training institute in Tampa June 19-20 and in an interactive webinar, the release adds. The teams “will receive ongoing technical assistance as they assess the state of their services for children and youth, then build their capacity to deliver a single, cohesive set of community-wide supports for children and families,” the release adds.


“That cohesive effort is a dramatic shift from the way most counties and municipalities provide services and programs,” said Elizabeth

Gaines, the Forum’s vice president for policy solutions, in the release.

“We here in Sarasota County face many challenges in trying to make lasting change for children and youth,” added Katie Knight, Sarasota area president for United Way Suncoast. “But we will overcome those challenges through innovation solutions, using better data and getting full participation from all stakeholders.”

“The leaders will use the Forum’s Ready by 21® strategies to focus on forming lasting coalitions of stakeholders; setting bigger goals across a range of developmental areas (social, emotional, cognitive, physical, cultural and civic); using key indicators to track goals more efficiently; making better decisions based on comprehensive data; improving the quality of their programs for children and families; and aligning policies and resources to maximize their impact,” the release continues.

The Forum will provide the training at no cost as part of its mission, the release notes. It has carried out similar challenges in Tennessee and Virginia.

“The Forum for Youth Investment ([www.forumfyi.org](http://www.forumfyi.org)) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan action tank dedicated to helping communities and the nation make sure all young people are ready by 21 — ready for college, work and life, the release says. 

**The Sarasota News Leader**  
**No-Nonsense Reporting**



# OPINION



## FOR SALE: THE PUBLIC TRUST?

### EDITORIAL

We always have found comfort in Sarasota County's Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program, which seeks to conserve pristine lands in their natural state. The idea of buying up such lands for preservation in perpetual conservation serves the citizens of the county well, and it also assures future generations that the unique nature of large swaths of our county will not be drained, filled, paved over and otherwise despoiled.

The county has buttressed that commitment by creating the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Oversight Committee, or ESLOC, whose charter is to

both monitor acquired lands and recommend future acquisitions to the County Commission.

So it is understandable when we concede that we always have feared the entire notion of “transfer of development rights” — TDR for short — for undeveloped lands to developers who, as is their wont, love to drain, fill, pave over and otherwise despoil.

Frankly, environmentally sensitive lands, once conserved, would be presumed by a reasonable person to be removed from the development milieu. Otherwise, what would be the point of buying and preserving those lands in the first place?

“*Frankly, environmentally sensitive lands, once conserved, would be presumed by a reasonable person to be removed from the development milieu. Otherwise, what would be the point of buying and preserving those lands in the first place?*”

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# OPINION

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Those lands become part of the larger fabric of prudent development under the county's comprehensive land use plan.

Why then would the County Commission use a "bank" of undeveloped lands, especially those in the ESLP, as a catalyst for overdevelopment elsewhere in the county? Why would it confer on preserved wilderness some sort of unused "development right" that could then be sold to a developer otherwise chafing under the "burden" of compliance with the county's zoning laws?

This brings us to the ancient biblical admonition, "Money is the root of all evil."

The Great Recession brought the "development express" — and the considerable revenue flowing into public coffers that accompanied it — to a grinding halt, both here and across much of the nation.

In the intervening years, the County Commission has fretted about this reality ... too little, we believe, out of an altruistic concern for the economic well being of the county and too much out of concern for some of the biggest players in the county's political landscape.

All development — from a tar-paper fishing shack to a planned community with 20,000 residents — has an impact on the rest of the county, and it has been public policy that developers must share in the financial cost of dealing with that impact, especially the creation of essential infrastructure that additional development necessitates: roads and bridges, schools and libraries and water and sewer services, to name just a few.

But with the stalling of the "development express," the County Commission has been paring the developers' share of the impact from any new development. For example, the transportation impact fee was halved in the depths of the Great Recession, despite the fact that the creation of transportation infrastructure has continued to increase in cost. Moreover, in a move we deplored at the time, the County Commission recently extended that considerable gift to developers for the foreseeable future, agreeing only to "revisit" the matter as time goes by.

Thus, it appears, the concept of TDRs is only one more gambit by the County Commission to encourage developers to resume with renewed vigor their draining, filling, paving over and otherwise despoiling. Obviously, in the commissioners' view, the poor benighted developers teeter on the edge of economic ruin, and only generous concessions by the taxpayers of Sarasota County will save them — concessions, it should be pointed out, which will be paid for by those taxpayers for generations to come.

When the matter of setting a sale price on TDRs was raised again this spring by county staff, the ESLOC had not even been consulted. Only after members of the ESLOC plaintively begged the commission to defer any decision until they had had an opportunity to review the matter did the commission delay its action.

Unfortunately, the ESLOC, like many others in the county, has determined that the sale by the county of TDRs is a foregone conclusion; that

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# OPINION

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developers will be able to fudge their compliance with density requirements by buying “rights” from pristine lands that never were planned for development. The question then becomes, “How much should we charge developers for these TDRs?”

The county staff recommended a price that was 10 percent of the median home price in Sarasota County. The ESLOC countered that the price should be 10 percent of the median *new* home price in the county, arguing that lumping the sale of distressed properties and foreclosures in with home sales more comparable with new development skewed the value of the TDR too low. Regardless of which base price proposal was used, an arbitrary value was placed on TDRs.

Slow-growth advocates rejected this notion, pointing out that the marketplace should determine what these TDRs are worth. If developers truly are interested in enhancing their projects and TDRs would provide the mechanism whereby they could create additional density, then a healthy competition for those TDRs would assure the county of receiving an optimal value for those rights.


That, of course, would put the burden on developers to actually make offers for those TDRs, potentially bidding up the price. To the pro-development faction on the County Commission, this would not do. It made more sense to entice developers to avail themselves of these TDRs by offering them at bargain-basement prices.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta figuratively tossed the staff’s recommendation into the dustbin

by suggesting instead that the first 100 TDRs be offered for sale at *one-fourth* the price recommended by staff. Although it was immediately pointed out that such a price would not even cover the county’s acquisition costs for the lands in question, Barbetta, joined by fellow developer advocate Charles Hines, was adamant.

So the first unfortunate precedent was the notion that undeveloped lands, especially county-owned environmentally sensitive lands, should somehow be considered to have development “rights” that could be transferred to a development elsewhere in the county. The second unfortunate precedent was the arbitrary assignment of a value on TDRs — whether 10 percent of the median sale price of all homes or 10 percent of the median sale price of new homes — rather than allowing demand by developers for these rights to set a competitive price.

But the precedent set by Barbetta’s reckless “fire sale” pricing for the first 100 TDRs is a fearful one indeed. And we are not comforted by the higher staff-recommended asking price for the remainder of the TDRs in the pilot program, since Barbetta added the caveat, “We’ll consider any offers.”

It appears that the “development express” had not expired at all; it was only dormant. And now, with Barbetta’s coddling, it soon will roar to life. Unfortunately, it ultimately will steamroll the county’s comprehensive plan, the county’s investment in its Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program and the pocketbooks of every taxpayer in Sarasota County. 

# OPINION

## ENJOY SUMMER AT THE SARASOTA COUNTY LIBRARIES



By Karen Eastmoore  
*Contributing Writer*

### COMMENTARY

Ahhhh, summer in Florida: that wonderful time of year when the pace of life slows down, the kids are out of school and there is time to try new things. What a perfect time to explore your award-winning Sarasota County Library!

The Sarasota County Library system was named the 2012 Library of the Year by the Florida Library Association. If you have not been to one of our nine libraries recently, you are in for a treat. You will still find shelves of books, CDs and DVDs — and a willing librarian to help you.

You will also find hundreds of e-books to download to your e-reader. The e-book is yours for several weeks and then magically it is gone. You do not even have to worry about returning it!

Adults can find many resources at our libraries. Are you challenged by a new smartphone or tablet? The Venice Library has classes to help you get started or learn more. Are you struggling with your plants? Master Gardener classes are offered at the Elsie Quirk, Jacaranda and other libraries. The North Sarasota Library offers career help in partnership with Goodwill Industries. There are book clubs

at most locations, including a Spanish book club at the Selby Library. A *Downton Abbey* “support group” is forming at the North Port Library for fans of the PBS series. And, what could be better than rocking and reading on the Osprey Library back porch?

The library is also a great place for your kids this summer. How many times have you heard, “There’s nothing to do?” Your county library has the answer to that. There are dozens of activities for toddlers and teens, and everyone in between. Your teenager can enjoy the Teen Program at the Fruitville Library. There are Anime/Manga clubs and Lego building groups at Gulf Gate and other libraries. There is even Wii Fun at Jacaranda and X-Box gaming nights for “tweens” at the Venice Library.

For families, there are movie nights, board games and family crafts.

For every child from birth to age 18, there is the Summer Reading Program to build and keep reading skills sharp over the summer. Sign up began June 1. Research shows that during summer vacation, many students lose one to three months’ worth of what they learned in the prior school year. By encouraging reading achievement, this program can

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help your child retain skills and read to explore personal interests.

Literally, there is something for everyone at your Sarasota County Library System this summer. And best of all, these resources and activities are all *free* to you as library cardholders.

The library system is funded by your tax dollars — and by the generosity of individuals, businesses and foundations that complement tax dollars with gifts to the Library Foundation for Sarasota County. Just one year old, the Library Foundation has contributed more than \$50,000 to library programs since its inception and created an endowment to secure the future of the Sarasota County Library System.

Check us out at [www.sclibs.net](http://www.sclibs.net). Take the time to learn and enjoy something new this summer — visit your Sarasota County Library!

*Karen Eastmoore is a member of the Board of Directors of the Library Foundation for Sarasota County.* 



## 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*.

“Having children makes you no more a parent than having a piano makes you a pianist.” — *Michael Levine*

### Someone you know needs Planned Parenthood

- Lifesaving cancer screenings
- Parent & teen education
- Annual GYN exams
- Birth control



# Sarasota Leisure

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**A 'GRAND' PLAN**

**SIESTA SEEN**

*Inside*

# A 'GRAND' PLAN



# INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN AERIALIST NIK WALLEENDA DRAWS THE CROWDS AS HE TRAINS AT BENDERSON PARK FOR HIS NEXT BIG FEAT AT THE GRAND CANYON

*Staff Reports*

Sarasota County's hometown high-wire daredevil, Nik Wallenda, has been training at Nathan Benderson Park in Sarasota County for his untethered walk across the Grand Canyon on June 23.

Crowds have gathered to watch his morning and evening crossings on a cable stretched between cranes at the facility just off University Parkway.

Wallenda's walk at the Grand Canyon will take place June 23 at 8 p.m. Eastern Standard Time; it will air live exclusively on the Discovery Channel's worldwide network in 217 countries, a Visit Sarasota County news release says.

"His training further celebrates the area's rich circus legacy, highlighting that the spirit of the circus is still alive and thriving in Sarasota County," the release adds.





Wallenda's training at Benderson Park will continue Tuesday through Saturday for an hour in the morning — 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. — and again at 6 p.m.; on Sunday, the training starts at 3 p.m.

Wallenda's cable, which is approximately 25 feet in the air, stretches 1,200 feet across the western edge of Regatta Island at Nathan Benderson Park, the release notes. "His training will essentially ... recreate the distance of his walk across the Grand Canyon but will be optimal for local viewers," the release adds.

*All photos are by Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel.* 















# 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.*

**SarasotaNewsLeader.com • Old school journalism. 21st century delivery.**

# *Siesta Seen*

## **HIT-AND-RUN DRIVER STILL BEING SOUGHT; COUNTY STAFF PROVIDES AN UPDATE ON BUYING A BENCH FOR BIG OLAF'S; ADOPT-A-ROAD QUARTERLY EFFORT DRAWS 16 VOLUNTEERS**



**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Glen Cappetta has spent a lot of hours pursuing detective work on his own to try to find the vehicle — and driver — that struck one of his pedicabs on Midnight Pass Road in the early morning hours of May 18.

The owner of Sun Ride Pedicab wants very much to see justice done in the hit-and-run incident that injured two passengers and one of his drivers about 2:15 a.m. that day in the 6300 block of Midnight Pass Road.



*Glen Cappetta drives a couple on Siesta Key in one of his Sun Ride Pedicabs. Image courtesy of Sun Ride Pedicab via [Facebook](#).*



# Siesta Seen

The Florida Highway Patrol told Cappetta about a week after the incident that it had determined the vehicle that struck his pedicab was a 2004/2005 midnight blue Scion TC. That Scion would have suffered extensive damage from the center of the hood to the area around the right front fender (quarter panel) and the door on that side, according to the FHP investigation. The vehicle also lost its mirror assembly and front air dam, the FHP told him.

He had searched junkyards from Fort Myers to south of St. Petersburg, he said just before the start of the Siesta Key Village Association meeting on June 4. He had even called car dealerships to determine whether any vehicle matching the FHP's description had been brought in for repairs. Surprisingly, Cappetta added, he received some rather nasty retorts from people at the dealerships.

He was just very, very thankful, he told me, that none of the injuries was serious — no broken bones.

Anyone with information about the incident on Saturday, May 18, is urged to call Cappetta at his office, 343-3400, or on his cell phone, 586-4553. You also are welcome to leave a message on the [Sun Ride Pedicab Facebook page](#).

## BIG OLAF'S AND THE BENCH

Regular readers will recall that Sarasota County Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on the key, raised the point with her fellow commissioners on April 24 that representatives of Siesta organizations had inquired about putting a bench in front of Big Olaf's ice cream shop.



*Mark Smith addresses the Siesta Key Association earlier this year. File photo*

Located at 5208 Ocean Blvd. in Siesta Village, the shop is so popular, Patterson pointed out, that patrons spilling over into the grassy area in front of it have prevented the landscaping from flourishing. That is why the bench had been requested.

The problem, she said, is what is and is not allowed according to the ordinance that governs upkeep of the Village.

After staff had a chance to weigh in with some observations about that ordinance, Patterson won unanimous support for a formal motion on May 7 that called for staff to “do what’s necessary to facilitate a bench in front of Big Olaf’s.”

Commissioner Christine Robinson, who seconded the motion, pointed out that architect Mark Smith, chairman of the Siesta Key Village

# Siesta Seen

Maintenance Corp. — which supervises the upkeep — had explained to her the “chicken and egg” aspects of the whole ordeal: whether the ordinance had to be amended before a permit could be sought to put in the bench, or vice versa.

“Let’s just make it happen ’cause they’re stuck right now,” Patterson said of Smith and then-Siesta Key Village Association President Russell Matthes.

On May 29, James K. Harriott Jr., the county engineer, sent a memo to the County Com-

mission pointing out that the purpose of the Siesta Key Village Public Improvement District, which was established in 2006, “is to levy assessments on commercial properties within the Village, and to use the funds collected ... for ongoing maintenance of Village infrastructure that was improved as part of the Village Beautification Project [which was completed in March 2009].”

The “Governing Body” for the district, the memo continues, “may from time to time determine [other expenditures of funds] to be in the best interest of the District.”



*Big Olaf is across from Beach Bazaar on Ocean Boulevard in Siesta Village. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

# Siesta Seen

The County Commission is the Governing Body, Harriott noted, so since it had approved the purchase of the bench to be in the best interest of the district, staff would use district assessment revenue to buy and install the bench.

Still, one problem remained to be resolved, he pointed out: “[C]ontinued maintenance of the new bench must be addressed. Maintenance of the infrastructure and amenities constructed as part of the Village Beautification Project is provided by Championship Landscaping LLC, under a term contract [with the county].”

Adding a new bench would expand the number of benches to be maintained as part of that contract, the memo says, so “the contractor is entitled to a contract amendment. However, the contractor has agreed to maintain one additional bench under the current work scope without an amendment.”

Because further requests for “expansion of amenities” are anticipated for the Public Improvement District, the memo notes, staff recommends that those requests be processed as follows:

- Staff receives the request from the District Contracting Agent, as defined in the ordinance. Sarasota County Ordinance 110-623(5) says that agent is “the nonprofit legal entity established by property owners of the District with the authority to administer District Project Maintenance activities.” [It currently means Mark Smith.]
- Staff reviews the request and prepares either a Consent Agenda or discussion item for the County Commission, which will include cost estimates and any contract amendment information.
- Staff would then act on the Commission’s direction.

There you have it. No word yet on when the new bench will be installed.

## BAGGING THE TRASH

Michael Shay, vice president of the Siesta Key Association and organizer of the quarterly Adopt-A-Road cleanup on the key, offered me this summary of the June 1 event: “great turnout, great weather, great food, great people! What more could you ask for?”

In a more formal email to volunteers, Shay thanked the 16 people who gathered up the garbage as well as Tom and Kay Kouvatsos and their staff at the Village Café, “who supported us with a great [free] breakfast” before the cleanup crew went to work.

Shay added that he was impressed with the turnout, especially “considering we are in the off season.”

The volunteers covered all of Ocean Boulevard from Beach Road to Higel Avenue as well as Higel itself and Siesta Drive all the way to the north bridge, collecting “22 bags of junk,” Shay told the Village Association on June 4.

# Siesta Seen

## ANOTHER LIFE SAVED

Although Sarasota County lifeguards are on the beaches to keep people safe, they still deserve enormous credit when they rescue someone.

Around noon on June 10, a lifeguard on Siesta Beach — who has not been identified — saved a middle-aged man who began experiencing problems in the water.

Mike Tobias, the county's fire and emergency services chief, reported to the County Commission in an email that once the lifeguard had the man out of the water, the lifeguard began administering CPR.

Tobias continued, "The Fire/EMS crews from the Siesta Key [fire] station arrived and began Advanced Life Support measures. The patient

regained pulses and was speaking with the crews en route to the hospital. It is not known what caused his distress at this time. When we learn more we will pass it on to you."

Scott Montgomery, manager of lifeguard operations for the county, told me on June 11, "Last I knew, [the rescued man] was in stable condition."

Because of healthcare privacy laws, he added, he could not provide any details.

Although there was a "slight chop" to the Gulf of Mexico on Monday, he said, the water conditions did not appear to be a factor in the incident.

He understood some family members were also present, Montgomery said, "and that helped out a lot."



County lifeguards are vigilant in watching out for swimmers and others in the Gulf of Mexico. File photo

# Siesta Seen

## A FOURTH REMINDER

The Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce is continuing to spread the news about the 23rd Annual Siesta Key Fourth of July Community Fireworks Celebration & VIP Party, from 5 to 9 p.m.

“With no direct taxpayer funding used to continue this local tradition, the celebration is fully funded by generous community support,” a news release notes. “The vast majority of the [approximately \$35,000] cost is covered by sales of our hugely popular VIP packages, so please make sure to sign up early in order to secure your package and help us continue to produce this event.”

Each \$150 VIP package includes the following:

- Convenient, reserved on-site parking at Siesta Beach.
- On-site catered picnic dinner for two.
- Beer, wine and soft drinks.
- Live musical entertainment.
- Preferred viewing area for the 25-minute fireworks display.
- Acknowledgment in event advertising and on-site signage.

To purchase a VIP package, stop by the Chamber office in Davidson Plaza in Siesta Village or call 349-3800. 



*Siesta Chamber VIP ticket holders enjoy a picnic-style dinner at Siesta Public Beach on July 4, 2012. Photo by Rachel Levey-Baker*



Wade Turner with his teacher, Jeff Cornwell, and Wade's artwork, *It's All Up to You Now*. Contributed photo

## BOOKER HIGH STUDENT WINS PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD IN EXHIBIT

*It's All Up to You Now*, Booker High School student Wade Turner's depiction of an older person passing the world and a paintbrush to his young apprentice, has won the People's Choice Award for the 2013 Embracing Our Differences annual outdoor juried art exhibit, Embracing Our Differences has announced.

A cash award of \$1,000 was recently presented to Booker's Visual and Performing Arts program in recognition of Wade's achievement, a news release says.

"Nothing lasts forever," writes Wade in his artist's statement for the work. "Even in our complex society some things need assistance to continue. Like the master and apprentice in my painting, everything the master has learned for himself will be bestowed to the child so he can grow, learn and present to the next generation of the world."

Michael Shelton, executive director of Embracing Our Differences, says in the news release that more than 1,000 people complet-

ed an exhibit survey, which includes ballots for visitors to choose their favorite artwork. “This award is especially meaningful because it’s determined by exhibit goers choosing the artwork that has moved and captivated them the most,” he adds in the release.

Wade, 18, will be entering the 11<sup>th</sup> grade next year at Booker High. “Thrilled to receive this honor, he’s quick to thank his art teacher, Jeff Cornwell, for encouraging him,” the release notes. “He’s been an excellent mentor,” says Wade. “He understands that young artists can’t just rely on skill and talent — we need a strong work ethic to pursue a career in the arts.”

“Our [Visual and Performing Arts] program is strong in all areas, including drawing, painting, sculpture, photography and visual design,” Rachel Shelley, Booker High’s principal, points out in the release, adding that the school has

been actively involved with Embracing Our Differences for five years.

“For 10 years, Embracing Our Differences has drawn on the passion and perception of artists, children and others to create powerful statements of diversity and acceptance in its annual outdoor public art exhibition consisting of 39 billboard-sized works of art and accompanying quotes,” the release notes. This year, the organization received 4,419 total artworks and statements from people representing 52 countries and 41 states. Students from 128 elementary, junior and high schools contributed 60 percent of the submissions, it adds. This year’s exhibitions — one at Island Park in Sarasota and one in Manatee County — closed on June 2; they saw a record number of visitors, the release notes.

For more information about this exhibit or Embracing Our Differences, visit [www.embracingourdifferences.org](http://www.embracingourdifferences.org).

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## **ART UPTOWN GALLERY SEEKING ENTRIES FOR DOG DAYS JURIED SHOW**

Sarasota’s Art Uptown gallery is inviting area artists to enter its fifth annual Dog Days Art Show and display their work in a special month-long exhibition.

The juried show will run from July 27 to Aug. 23, the gallery has announced. An opening reception will be held on Friday, Aug. 2, from 6 to 9 p.m.

The gallery, located at 1367 Main St. between Palm and Pineapple avenues, will also exhibit the works of Art Uptown’s 28 member-artists during the Dog Days special exhibition, a news release says. Owned by its members, Art Uptown has been continuously operating

in its current location for 33 years, according to Janine Hoffman, gallery president.

“We expect this year’s Dog Days art competition to be bigger and better than ever,” she said in the release, noting that each year the event has grown. Last year’s competition drew entries from 87 local artists, added Hoffman.

Original works on all subjects in 2D and 3D media are eligible to enter the competition, the release continues. Judges will select three winning entries in both categories to be prominently displayed in the gallery’s Main Street window for two weeks; then, the works will be moved into the gallery, the release notes.

Other selected entries will be on display in the gallery.

Artists age 21 and older can submit two 2D works or two 3D works in any media. Works must be for sale and priced, the release points out. The artist will receive 75 percent of the sales price, while the gallery will retain the other 25 percent as a commission on sales.

The receiving date for entries is Saturday, July 27, the release adds. Artists are asked to bring their works to the gallery and fill out entry forms between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. that day. The entry fee is \$20 per item, the release

notes. Overall size for 2D is limited to 30 inches by 30 inches, including the frame. Works must be wired for hanging; Plexiglas only. For 3D, the maximum size is 12 inches by 12 inches by 24 inches.

Rejected work pickup will be on Tuesday, July 30, between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., the release says. The final pickup of work in the exhibit will be Friday, Aug. 23, between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m.

For more information, call 955-5409 or email [artuptown@artuptown.comcastbiz.net](mailto:artuptown@artuptown.comcastbiz.net).



*Art Uptown is located in downtown Sarasota. Contributed photo*



## ADVENTURES IN PHOTOGRAPHY FEATURED AT BRADENTON MUSEUM

Workers carry away baskets full of dirt in a stark, almost surreal landscape at Nippur in Iraq in 1899. A Mapidian man shoots fish with a bow and arrow at the edge of a river in the Amazon rain forest of Guyana in 1914. A woman washing newly unearthed artifacts pauses to look into the face of an ancient marble head of a Roman female in Minturnae, Italy, in the early 1930s. Temple I, cleared of clinging vines and partially restored, soars above the Guatemalan jungle, the focal point of Tikal, in 1959.

Those are just four of the more than 60 black and white images — places, people and moments captured in time — in *Adventures in Photography: Expeditions of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and*

*Anthropology*, on display in the South Florida Museum's East Gallery through Sept. 9, the museum has announced.

Brynne Anne Besio, executive director of the South Florida Museum, said in a release, "This exhibition puts a personal and artistic touch on the same types of archaeological and anthropological information that we share with our visitors every day through the permanent exhibits at South Florida Museum. We are able to observe the faces of diverse people as they engage in cultural activities which have slipped away even in the historically short period of time since the photos were taken. We are able to peek into the very sites where human history has been discovered. This research contributes to our understanding of



*The South Florida Museum is located in Bradenton. Photo by Ebaybe via Wikimedia Commons*

Florida's history, of the world's history — and of our own past.”

The exhibition is included in regular museum admission to the museum, the release notes. General admission is \$15.95 for adults, \$13.95 for seniors (65 and over) and \$11.95 for children ages 4-12. Children ages 3 and younger are admitted free when accompanied by a paying adult.

*Adventures in Photography* “offers a kaleidoscopic view of a sampling of the nearly 400 field projects in the Penn Museum's 110-plus years of archaeological and ethnographic re-

search around the world,” the release continues. To prepare the exhibition, Alessandro Pezzati, Penn Museum archivist, selected images from the tens of thousands of expedition photographs in the archives, the release adds. Included are images from famous expeditions to the Amazon (1913-1916); Memphis, Egypt (1915-1923); Ur, Iraq (1922-34); Tikal, Guatemala (1956-1970); and Gordion, Turkey, where the museum continues fieldwork it began in 1950.

The South Florida Museum is located at 201 10<sup>th</sup> St. West, Bradenton. For more information, visit [www.southfloridamuseum.org](http://www.southfloridamuseum.org).

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## STATE AWARDS \$25,000 GRANT TO PERLMAN MUSIC PROGRAM

The Florida Department of State's Division of Cultural Affairs has awarded The Perlman Music Program/Suncoast (PMP/Suncoast) a \$25,000 grant to fund a chamber music concert with renowned violinist Itzhak Perlman performing with Perlman Music Program (PMP) alumni, the PMP/Suncoast has announced.

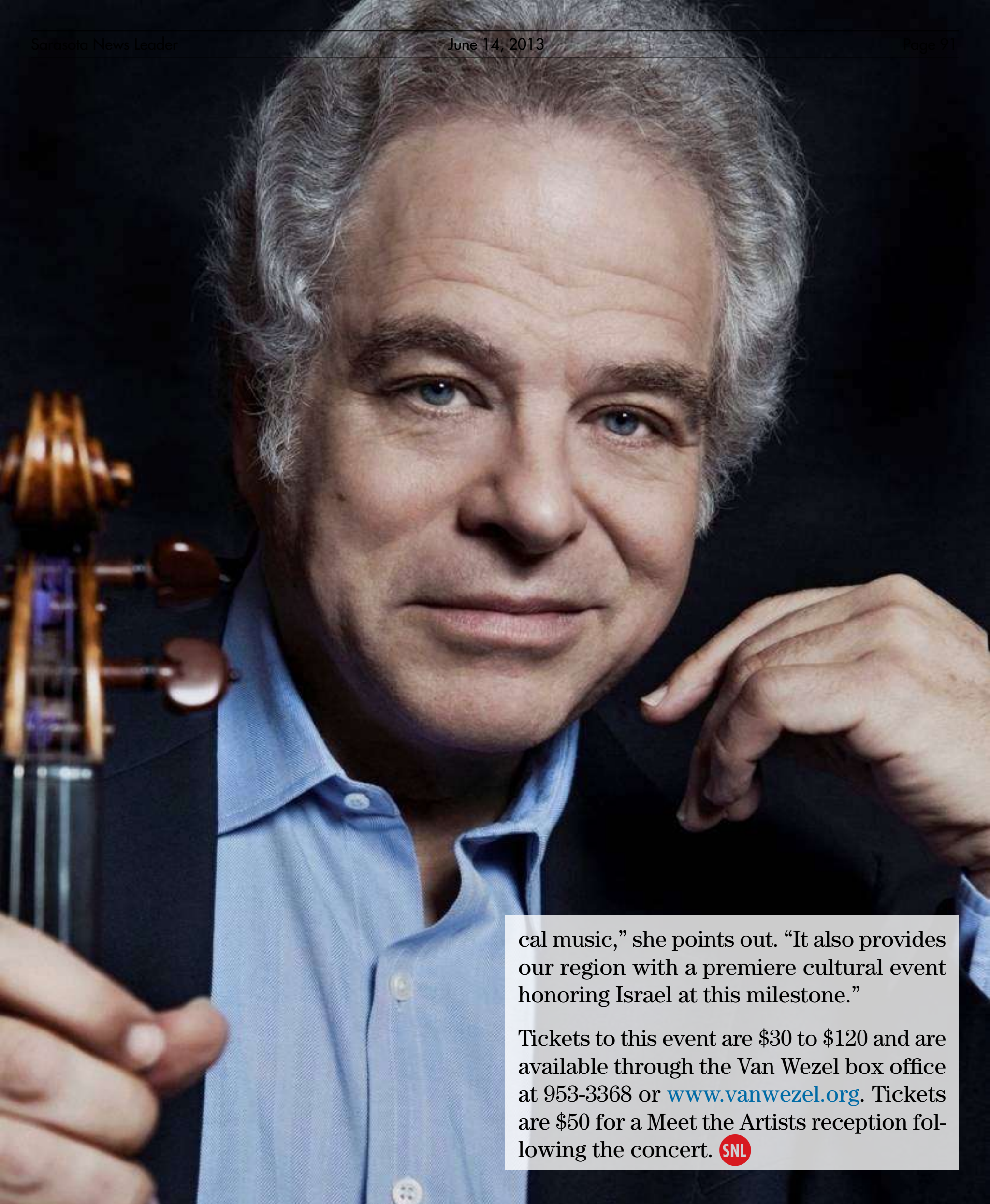
The concert, presented in partnership with The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee, will celebrate the 65th anniversary of the state of Israel and the 10th anniversary of the PMP Sarasota Winter Residency, a news release notes. It will be held on Nov. 6 at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall in Sarasota.

A dual citizen of Israel and the United States, “Perlman is recognized around the world for his arts education advocacy and his passion for bringing classical music experiences to people from all backgrounds,” the release adds.


“These funds help PMP/Suncoast fulfill its mission to make world-class cultural programming easily accessible to a wide diversity of people in southwest Florida,” says Elizabeth Power, executive director of PMP/Suncoast, the annual presenter of the PMP Sarasota Winter Residency, in the release. Power adds that 100 free tickets will be offered for use by local churches and synagogues.

“An ongoing priority of PMP/Suncoast is to provide accessibility to all people, regardless of their socio-economic background,” she notes in the release.

Fran Lambert, board chairman of PMP/Suncoast, says in the release that an event of this kind has never before been held in Sarasota. “It provides the community an opportunity to hear Mr. Perlman perform with acclaimed PMP alumni who represent the next generation of concert artists and the future of classi-



cal music,” she points out. “It also provides our region with a premiere cultural event honoring Israel at this milestone.”

Tickets to this event are \$30 to \$120 and are available through the Van Wezel box office at 953-3368 or [www.vanwezel.org](http://www.vanwezel.org). Tickets are \$50 for a Meet the Artists reception following the concert. 



## RELIGION BRIEFS

*Offering a thumbs up after their installation and blessing June 7 are new Temple Emanu-El board members (front row, from left) Ethel Gross, Dr. Neil Warren, Ken Marsh, Michael Richker, Gloria Weed, Kim Sheintal, (second row, from left) Neil Klaber, Marsha Powell, Harry Lifsec, Sharon Kunkel, Marian Raupp, Dan Carter, (top row, from left) Jim Germer and Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman. Contributed photo*

### TEMPLE EMANU-EL HONORS OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS

Outstanding volunteers at Temple Emanu-El were feted after Shabbat services Friday evening, June 7, at the congregation's annual Awards Dinner, the Temple has announced.

More than 100 Temple members and guests gathered in the synagogue's social hall after worship services to share a Shabbat meal and honor the five Volunteers of the Year as well as the four Recognition Awards winners. Named as Volunteers of the Year were Jeanie Sorgen for her exceptional commitment to Temple Emanu-El Religious School; Dorothy Kirsner, who spent more than 400 hours annually assisting in the Temple office; Diane Browne-Sterdt, who, with her husband, Phil, makes weekly visits to every homebound Temple member; Dan Barwick, who chaired the Temple's Rick Recht concert last spring; and Rabbi Allan Schwartzman, who volunteered for five years as Temple Emanu-El's spiritu-

al leader whenever Rabbi Brenner Glickman was out of town, a news release says.

Receiving Recognition Awards were Bruce Zalkin, Ethel Gross, Marsha Powell and Dan Carter.

The evening also featured the formal installation of Temple Emanu-El's new board members, who were called to the pulpit for a special blessing from Rabbi Glickman, and remarks on the state of the Temple by President Michael Richker, the release notes.

"We are truly in this together," Richker said. "The year that passed presented challenges that were met by the help of hundreds of volunteers and a dedicated board of trustees and officers. And as we face the challenges ahead, your board, your officers and I pledge to keep Emanu-El the best temple in Florida!"

The Awards Dinner was chaired by Annabelle Wolter, herself a past Volunteer of the Year, the news release adds.



*(From left) Dan Barwick, Rabbi Allan Schwartzman, Dorothy Kirsner, Jeannie Sorgen and Diane Browne-Sterdt were honored as Volunteers of the Year at Temple Emanu-El's Awards Dinner on June 7. Contributed photo*



*Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman (left) and President Michael Richker (center) congratulated Recognition Awards winners Dan Carter, Ethel Gross, Bruce Zalkin and Marsha Powell at Temple Emanu-El's Awards Dinner on June 7. Contributed photo*

## SUMMER SHABBAT CELEBRATIONS CONTINUE AT TEMPLE EMANU-EL

Summer Shabbat observance continues at Temple Emanu-El, 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota, every Friday at 5:30 p.m. with a friendly *kiddush* reception of wine, cheese, fruit, sweets and challah, the Temple has announced.

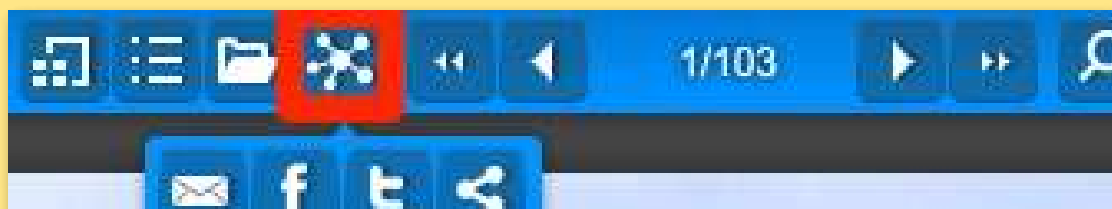
“Worship services, which follow at 6 p.m., are briefer and more informal than in the fall months, with familiar prayers and spirited music,” a news release notes. “The celebra-

tion continues after services end, as attendees join together to share Shabbat dinner in local restaurants,” it adds.

“The evenings allow new and old friends to build community by sharing Shabbat; they also ensure that no one feels lonely on Shabbat or has to eat Shabbat dinner alone. All are invited,” the release points out.

For more information, call 371-2788. 

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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**14+**  
JUNE

### **Noah Racey's *Pulse***

Through June 16 (times vary), FSU Performing Arts Center, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail. Tickets: \$20 to \$72. Information: 351-8000 or [Asolo.org](http://Asolo.org).

**14+**  
JUNE

### **Florida Studio Theatre presents *The World Goes 'Round***

Through June 23 (times vary), Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave. Tickets: \$18 to \$42. Information: 366-9000 or [FloridaStudioTheatre.org](http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org).

**14+**  
JUNE

### **Dabbert Gallery presents *Summer Showcase***

Through Sept. 30, 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Admission: free. Information: 955-1315 or [DabbertGallery.com](http://DabbertGallery.com).

**14**  
JUNE

### **Club Scene for Teens in Grades 6-8**

June 14, 7-11 p.m., teens will be able to dance to a DJ, play in the game room or just hang out with their friends at the Lee Wetherington Boys & Girls Club, 3100 Fruitville Road, Sarasota. Refreshments will be served. Event presented by Community Youth Development and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota County. For more information, call 366-7940.

**21**  
JUNE

### **Friday Fest at the Van Wezel, featuring *Yesterdayze***

June 21, 5 p.m., Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail. Admission: Free. Information: 953-3368 or [VanWezel.org](http://VanWezel.org).

**22**  
JUNE

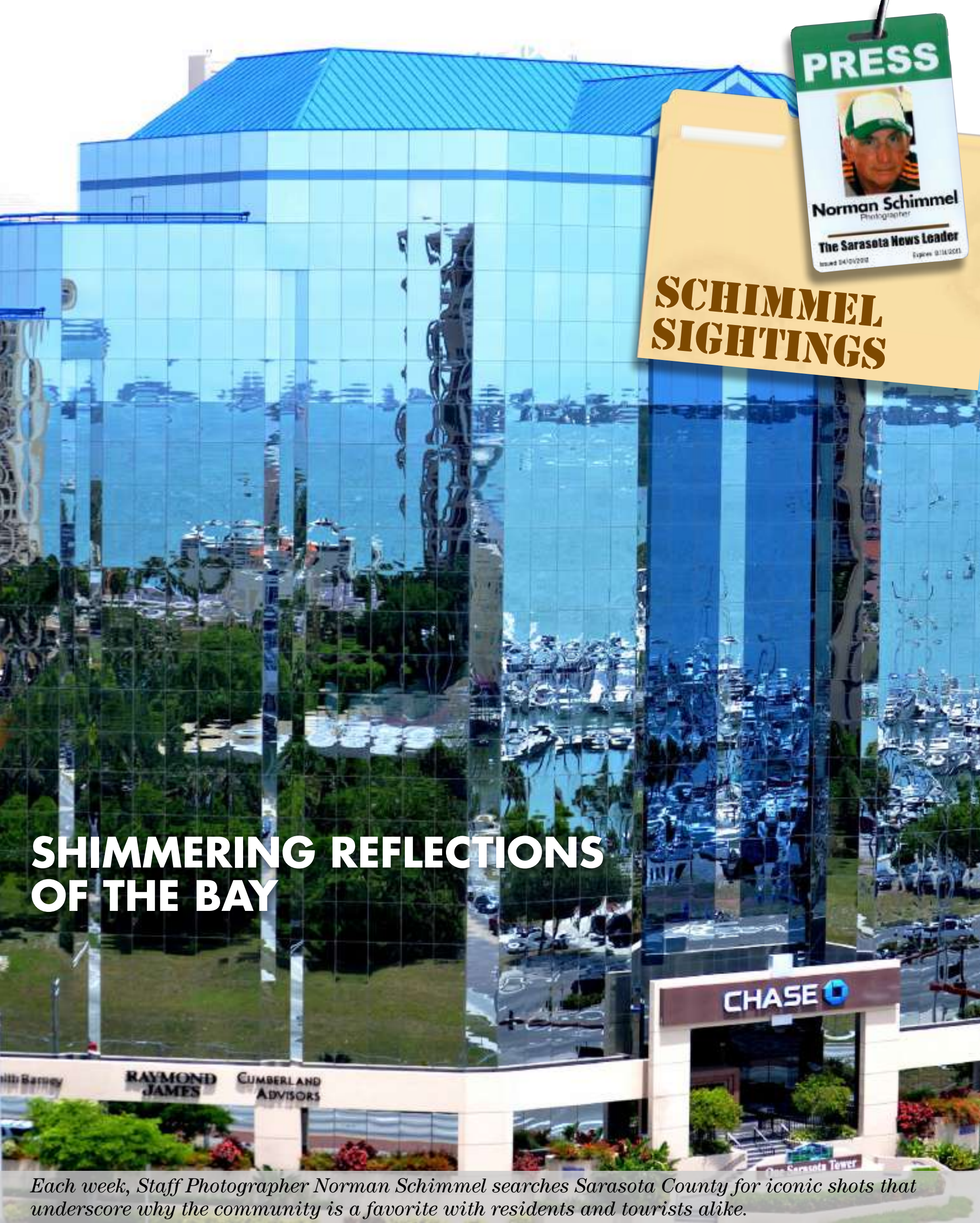
### **WSLR presents Ben Prestage's *One Man Band***

June 22, 8:30 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court. Admission: \$10 in advance or \$12 at door. Information: 894-6469 or [WSLR.org](http://WSLR.org).

*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:*



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SARASOTA'S MASTER CALENDAR



**PRESS**



**Norman Schimmel**  
Photographer

**The Sarasota News Leader**

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**SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS**

**SHIMMERING REFLECTIONS OF THE BAY**

*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.*