

“Democracy is not a spectator sport.”

Critical Times

Fostering
Community Dialogue
and Participation

Volume 2

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FREE



Illustration by Robin Bloom

Save the Celery Fields

Editorial by ADRIEN LUCAS

In the mid-90s Sarasota County began the process of buying former farm lands to begin constructing what is now known as the “Celery Fields Regional Stormwater Facility.” It was originally built to provide a needed storm water collection system to reduce flooding of the Phillipi Creek area and filter water downstream that flows into both Sarasota Bay and Roberts Bay North

One of the county’s better plans was developed by accident at first. Restoration of original natural wetlands created an eco-opportunity that brought in birds by the droves. This exciting accident drew many local bird watchers. Now, our Celery Fields is part of the Great Florida Birding Trail, with the Sarasota Audubon Society operating a million dollar facility on-site.

On any given day you can see endangered and threatened birds, songbirds, butterflies, and fish thriving in the retention ponds. The giant mound was created from fill dirt dug to create the Celery Field water retention ponds and with looping trails to enjoy; it’s one of the best county plans executed in decades.

Unfortunately, County Administrator Thomas Harmer, the Planning Board and County

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19% Turnout in City Elections

STAFF REPORT

With eight candidates running in the March election for two at-large Sarasota City Commission seats, no candidate received a majority of the vote. Therefore, the top three vote-getters will face off in the **May 9th runoff** - Jennifer Ahearn-Koch (38%), Hagen Brody (35%) and Martin Hyde (26%). Incumbent Commissioner Susan Chapman narrowly missed the top three, finishing fourth, 55 votes behind Martin Hyde.

Turnout was 19% with 7,186 voters casting ballots. A significant number of voters choose to vote for only one candidate, thereby increasing the power of their vote. Ahearn-Koch won precincts 111, 123, 209, 213, 215, and 401 showing good support throughout the City with her largest margin of victory in her neighborhood precinct 109. Hyde won precincts 207 (downtown), 131 (around Fairgrounds) and 217 (East side of the City) by narrow margins. Brody won in precincts 125, 129, 225 with his strongest showing in Precinct 223. Fredd Atkins dominated in his home precinct (115) but was not able to gain wide enough support in other areas of the City.



Hagen Brody

enhancing public participation were two of the key issues in her campaign.

Hagen Brody, a former prosecutor in the State Attorney’s office, argued that the existing process of city staff review within the context of the zoning code was sufficient and that citizens concerned about overdevelopment should focus on amending the zoning code instead. Brody prioritized the issue of homelessness claiming that his credibility with the law enforcement community would enable him to navigate the difficult politics of community control policing and the construction of appropriate housing for the chronically homeless.

Third place finisher Martin Hyde was the only Republican running in what is technically a non-partisan election. He ran a very vocal and aggressive campaign and was thought by some to be the most likely candidate to come in first based on a united Republican voting block. Hyde may have alienated some voters with his aggressive attacks on Commissioner Chapman and City Manager Tom Barwin. He also criticized Police Chief Bernadette DiPino over police staffing practices and called for expanding the size of the force and increasing the funding for Police and Firefighter pensions.

Examining their contribution reports, Martin Hyde raised \$56,434 and spent \$53,625. His campaign was largely self-funded with Hyde contributing \$41,000 of the total and loaning the campaign an additional \$6100. The remaining funds were raised from 67 individual contributors and the Police and Firefighters PACs. Hagen Brody raised \$22,240 and spent \$15,738 in his second place finish. He loaned the campaign \$2000; and spent \$1400 in-kind. He raised \$13,985 from 166 individuals with many local attorneys making contributions. Ahearn-Koch raised \$19,933 and spent \$15,259 to make the

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Jennifer Ahearn-Koch

Precincts with the highest turnout were 203 (Downtown - 37% voting) and 213 (Bird Key - 35% voting). Precincts with a turnout of 10% or less include 111 (North Bayou Oaks), 115 (Newtown), 123 (Park East) and 207 (Central/Cocoanut Neighborhood).

Jennifer Ahearn-Koch is new to electoral politics. Her strong performance is credited to an excellent grassroots campaign and her strong personal relationships throughout the community. As one of the organizers of the community group STOP!, promoting quality development and

UPCOMING MARCHES

“Show Us Your Taxes” March

SATURDAY, APRIL 15

Meet at 12pm – Bayfront Park

More Info: Page 8

March for Science

SATURDAY, APRIL 22

Meet at 10:30am – Five Pts Park

More info: Page 10

Climate Rally

SATURDAY, APRIL 29

Meet at 10am – Bayfront Park

More info: Page 3

When Can A Rezoning Application Be Denied?

BY RALF BROOKES, Attorney

RalfBrookes@gmail.com

What is the correct Legal Standard for Rezoning?

The Florida Supreme Court established a two-step standard for review of a rezoning application by local government board in *Brevard County v. Snyder*, 627 So.2d 469 (Fla. 1993):

"we hold that [1] a landowner seeking to rezone property has the burden of proving that the proposal is consistent with the comprehensive plan and complies with all procedural requirements of the zoning ordinance. [2] At this point, the burden shifts to the governmental board to demonstrate that maintaining the existing zoning classification with respect to the property accomplishes a legitimate public purpose."

Under the standard for rezonings, a local government can deny a rezoning request if there is any legitimate public purpose supporting the denial.

Under the first prong of the analysis Section 163.3194(3), Florida Statutes (1991), explains consistency as follows:

"A development order or land development regulation shall be consistent with the comprehensive plan if the land uses, densities or intensities, and other aspects of development permitted by such order or regulation are compatible with and further the objectives, policies, land uses, and densities or intensities in the comprehensive plan and if it meets all other criteria enumerated by the local government."

But the Florida Supreme Court recognized and explained that a "comprehensive plan only establishes a long-range maximum limit on the

possible intensity of land use; a plan does not simultaneously establish an immediate minimum limit on the possible intensity of land use. The present use of land may, by zoning ordinance, continue to be more limited than the future use contemplated by the comprehensive plan. Even where a denial of a zoning application would be inconsistent with the plan, the local government should have the discretion to decide that the maximum development density should not be allowed provided the governmental body approves some development that is consistent with the plan and the government's decision is supported by substantial, competent evidence."

This leads to the second prong of the analysis, and what is a legitimate public purpose? A "legitimate public purpose" can include general public health, safety and welfare issues such as traffic safety issues, neighborhood compatibility, burdens on infrastructure, impacts to the local environment, and impacts to the public health and welfare, but does not include a denial based on race, sex, religion or national origin of the applicant or any other distinction prohibited by the constitution.

The Florida Supreme Court also explained that "the local government will have the burden of showing that the refusal to rezone the property is not arbitrary, discriminatory, or unreasonable. If the board carries its burden, the application should be denied."

What is competent substantial evidence?

This related question has also been answered by the Florida Supreme Court as "the evidence relied upon to sustain the ultimate finding [for denial or approval] should be sufficiently relevant and material that a reasonable mind would accept it as adequate to support the conclusion reached." *De Groot v. Sheffield*, 95 So.2d 912 (Fla., 1957). Under this standard, even

layperson, or non-expert testimony in a zoning case is perfectly permissible and can constitute substantial competent evidence, if it is fact-based. This can include eyewitness observation testimony about relevant facts and documentary evidence including photographs, aerials and maps. However, "mere generalized statements of opposition are to be disregarded, but fact-based testimony is not to be disregarded and can be competent, substantial evidence." *Metropolitan Dade County v. Blumenthal* 675 S.2d 598 (Fla. Dist. App. 3d 1996).

What are the Private Property Rights of the Applicant?

The applicant is entitled to some reasonable economic use of their land under the Constitution, which only requires that the property retain some use and economic value, but does not guarantee a specific use. For example, agricultural land purchased at agricultural land prices retains value and use for agricultural purposes and satisfies the applicant's reasonable investment backed expectations. The court will also look at other lands owned by the Applicant and look at all possible uses on all of the parcel(s), particularly adjoining parcels of land, which are viewed as a whole. In private property rights cases the courts will look at what was allowed and what was not allowed under the existing zoning when the applicant purchased the property. For example, if you bought a swamp, you got a swamp and the applicant has no constitutional right to fill the swamp.

Florida's Bert Harris Act awards landowners damages for a mere diminution in value caused by a "downzoning" of property occurring after 1995, but the Bert Harris Act does not award damages for the failure to rezone property, especially to another use of the property that was not allowed by the zoning code in 1995.



Critical Times is a publication of the Peace Education and Action Center.

MISSION:

The Peace Education and Action Center connects and empowers people to build a socially just, non-violent and sustainable community and world.

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Let Local Government Make Local Decisions

BY MATT SURRENCY

The political environment we face today is more divisive than I ever remember. We have lost the ability to disagree through civil discourse. We see more control or authority moving further up the political chain away from the people that the decisions affect the most.

I agree with historian John Lothrop Motley, who once wrote that "Local self-government ... is the life-blood of liberty." The government closest to the people is most representative of constituents and repeatedly has the highest approval ratings out of all levels of government. This is because local leaders are more accessible and the decisions they make are more representative of those they serve.

This legislative session we find numerous bills that threaten our local communities' ability to self-govern. I am amazed by state leaders that argue against federal preemption and mandates tend to use those very tactics toward local governments. The most notorious is HB 17, which would take local regulation decisions away from local leaders and send them to the state Legislature. This would require businesses, citizens and local governments to wait until the 60-day legislative session each year before being able to make any proposals for changes through the rigorous committee process.

I had the opportunity to attend a committee hearing on this very bill and was unable to speak due to time constraints by the committee, as many more were just read out "for" or "against."

If this happens on this bill, imagine the workload that these committees are going to have from 412 municipalities, 67 counties and all the special districts if these bills continue through the process.

From my service as president of the Florida League of Cities, I was honored to travel the state and appreciate the uniqueness of our 412 cities, towns and villages. Many of these cities are taking steps to address regional and national issues such as the Indian River Lagoon. The local regulations that these cities have collaborated to develop on a regional basis are what is going to restore the lagoon to its natural habitat.

I ask our state Senate and state House to make their job easier by letting local leaders make the decisions that are best for our communities. There is much to be done at the state level for improving our pre-K-12 education system, criminal justice reform, protecting our environment, improving an economy that works for all of us, expanding health-care access to everyone that wants it and many more statewide issues.

Restore our liberty and return the power of government closer to the people that it affects the most.

—Matt Surrency is mayor of the city of Hawthorne. He served as president of the Florida League of Cities from 2015-16.



Ready for 100

READY FOR 100 is a movement of people working to inspire our leaders to embrace a vision of healthier communities powered by 100% clean energy. We are asking mayors, CEOs, pastors, principals, civic and community leaders, parents and students to commit to solutions that help us achieve 100% clean, renewable energy across the United States by the year 2050.

Last November the City of St. Petersburg became the first city in the state of Florida to commit to 100% clean renewable energy. Now the Manatee-Sarasota Sierra Group is working with a number of local organizations and the City of Sarasota to realize a 100% renewable goal for the city of Sarasota. To learn more about the Sierra national campaign "Ready for 100" and learn how you can help our community commit to becoming 100% renewable contact: Lynn at lynnsierra@nilssen.us

Our goal is to accelerate a transition to 100% clean, renewable energy for all!

New Climate Coalition Seeks Local Solutions

BY SEAN SELLERS

On March 9th, Scott Pruitt, Trump's newly confirmed EPA Administrator, made headlines for falsely claiming that carbon dioxide is not a "primary contributor" to global warming. Pruitt offered no evidence for his position, which flies in the face of an overwhelming, decades-old scientific consensus. Pruitt comes to the EPA with deep fossil-fuel industry ties after serving as Oklahoma's Attorney General, where he focused on fighting the federal agency he now leads.

Such is the grim political reality for climate issues in 2017. The new Administration has pledged to roll back the Clean Power Plan and withdraw from the 2016 Paris Agreement, a global framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Pitched defensive battles must be fought at the federal level to preserve the incremental gains made under the previous regime. But where are the opportunities for offense in the fight against climate change?

Increasingly, organizers are turning their focus to state and local governments. California, the world's seventh largest economy, made history in 2012 with a landmark cap-and-trade program to reduce carbon emissions. In New York, the Climate and Community Protection Act passed the state Assembly last spring. The bill would set a 100% renewable energy mandate for 2050, with 40% of investments specifically targeted for environmentally vulnerable low income communities. A similar campaign is being planned

for Washington state.

Closer to home, in November, St. Petersburg became the first city in Florida and the 20th city in the U.S. to commit to 100% clean energy. Notably, this goal is not only for City operations but rather



for the entire community. In another vein, many municipalities across the country have divested their finances from the fossil fuel industry, an approach that has also gained traction on many college campuses and with the impact investment community.

To capitalize on this bottom-up momentum, nearly two dozen community, faith and student groups came together in early 2017 to form the Sarasota Climate Justice Coalition. The Coalition exists to provide an information clearinghouse

for members to exchange information about their activities as well as to provide a platform for joint campaigns and actions.

The Coalition recently committed to develop a 100% clean energy campaign for the City of Sarasota and is also exploring fossil fuel divestment opportunities for local institutions, including governments and colleges. Additionally, the Coalition is organizing a Climate Justice contingent for the **April 22nd Sarasota March for Science** as well as an event on **April 29th at the Bayfront to coincide with the People's Climate Mobilization** in Washington, DC.

As a coastal community, Sarasota stands to lose severely from climate change and its intensifying effects, including sea-level rise and dangerous superstorms. Low-income, elderly and other vulnerable residents will be disproportionately impacted. Fortunately, the City of Sarasota has already demonstrated a willingness to act and is striving for a 35% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 2003 levels by 2025. This goal is laudable and provides a critical entry point for further action. Much more needs to be done, both within the City of Sarasota as well as the greater Sarasota-Manatee area. The Climate Justice Coalition seeks to help this vision become reality.

For more information, contact rssellers@gmail.com.

Time to Act Against Gun Violence



BY CAROL CONYNE RESCIGNO

Every time someone dies because a child came upon an unsecured weapon, or someone got caught up in road rage, or an angry person walked into a church or movie theater or school with an assault weapon, we shake our heads and wonder why somebody hasn't stopped such senseless violence.

You are that somebody. I am that somebody. And it's time to act.

The Sarasota chapter of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence is hosting a forum on April 3rd at the Selby Library that will take a look at the multitude of gun bills in Florida as the Legislature marks the halfway point of its 2017 session.

Mark Barden, co-founder of Sandy Hook Promise, will be a featured speaker at the forum. Barden, whose 7-year-old son, Daniel, was killed during the 2012 massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School, created his organization with other parents to work for the prevention of gun-related deaths. Barden will join speakers Patti Brigham of the League of Women Voters Gun Safety Committee and Cristen Rescigno, another Barden family member, to discuss the ways we can reduce the senseless gun deaths that continue to plague our communities.

There is no charge for the **April 3** event, which will take place from **1:30 to 3 pm**.

Note: Mark and his family are among those featured in the film "Newtown," which the LWVF gun safety action committee will be showing at Fogartyville on April 24th.

Our Brady chapter continues to gather at the Bayfront every Thursday from 4 to 5 pm -- fall, winter, and spring -- showing passersby our signs that promote gun safety. On March 2, other organizations and individuals were invited to join us, and about 80 people showed Sarasota what they thought of the more-than-30 gun bills being pushed in our state this year.

According to the CDC, there were 36,252 gun deaths in the United States in 2015. Last year's statistics aren't out yet, but do we want to continue this trend? Please support the Brady chapter -- on the Bayfront and at the forum -- and learn how we can fight this scourge together. Be a part of the solution.

For more information, email Sarasota@BradyMail.org.

Florida Legislature Now in Session

This year's Florida Legislative session could change a lot about how will we live in the Sunshine State. Where can we carry guns? How do we fund our schools? How do we care for our health? How much do we pay in taxes? Where can we gamble?

Gov. Rick Scott's recommended budget calls for \$83.5 billion in spending, a \$1.2 billion increase over last year. Much of that increase could go to K-12 schools and higher Medicaid costs. Scott also is pushing for \$618 million in tax cuts.

Gun rights and gun control will be the subject of much debate this year as Rep. Steube, R-Sarasota is pushing bills that would legalize open carry in the state and end restrictions on carrying concealed weapons on college campuses, in government meetings and airport terminals. On the other side, Democrats have filed bills to ban the sale of assault weapons and require firearms to be stored in lockboxes or have trigger locks.

The perennial fight over funding for charter schools and traditional public schools is back.



Republicans have filed bills to require school districts to share a portion of their revenues with charter schools and to allow local school districts to vote to increase property taxes slightly

Voters legalized medical marijuana by passing a ballot initiative in November, now it's up to the Legislature to figure out how to implement the new medical marijuana industry. Once the Legislature passes laws regulating medical marijuana, it will be up to the Florida Department of Health to put those laws into place and come up with rules and regulations by July.

Even the Republicans are divided on some issues. House Speaker Richard Corcoran, R-Land 'O Lakes wants to strip taxpayer money from Enterprise Florida and other tax incentive programs, but the Governor is a big supporter.

In response to severe algal blooms in South Florida, Senate President Joe Negron, R-Stuart, has offered an ambitious \$2.4 billion plan to purchase land south of Lake Okeechobee to develop a reservoir to help treat water before

it enters the Everglades. The plan is supported by a number of environmental groups but is not getting support from fellow Republicans.

These are just some of the issues to keep an eye on this spring. Both the Senate and the House have Bill Trackers on their websites that allow users to identify and track specific bills and committees throughout the legislative process. Pay attention to Tallahassee and be sure to weigh in to let your representatives know where you stand (see contact information below).

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVES

Name	Position	District	Party	Committee Assignments	Phone	Email
Jim Boyd	State Rep	District 71	R	Ways And Means (Chair); Commerce; Rules & Policy	(941) 708-4968	Jim.Boyd@myfloridahouse.gov
Julio Gonzalez	State Rep	District 74	R	Children, Families & Seniors (Vice Chair); Criminal Justice (Vice Chair); Careers Competition; Higher Education Appropriations; Judiciary	(941) 480-3560	Julio.Gonzalez@myfloridahouse.gov
Joe Gruters	State Rep	District 73	R	Careers & Competition; Commerce; Energy & Utilities; Joint Legislative Auditing; Justice Appropriations; Tourism & Gaming Control	(941) 378-6309	Joe.Gruters@myfloridahouse.gov
Alex Miller	State Rep	District 72	R	Careers & Competition; Health & Human Services; Health Quality; Higher Education Appropriations; Tourism & Gaming; Joint Committee on Public Counsel Oversight	(941) 955-8077	Alex.Miller@Myfloridahouse.Gov
Wengay M "Newt" Newton Sr.	State Rep	District 70	D	Government Accountability; Health Quality; Joint Select Committee On Collective Bargaining; Pre-K-12 Appropriations	(727) 892-2468	Wengay.Newton@myfloridahouse.gov
Greg Steube	Senator	District 23	R	Banking And Insurance (Vice Chair); Judiciary (Chair); Agriculture; Regulated Industries; Appropriations Subcommittee On Finance And Tax; Joint Committee On Public Counsel Oversight	(941) 342-9162	Steube.Greg@flsenate.gov
Bill Galvano	Senator	District 21	R	Appropriations Subcommittee On Higher Education (Chair); Appropriations; Education; Governmental Oversight And Accountability; Rules; Joint Legislative Budget Commission	(941) 741-3401	Galvano.Bill@flsenate.gov

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MONDAY, APR 3 – Gun Safety w/ Patti Brigham, 1st VP of the League of Women Voters of Florida, 1:30-3pm @ Selby Library Auditorium.

TUESDAY, APR 4 – Stand Up Fight Back SRQ Monthly Meeting – Focus on Climate Change, 6pm Potluck; 6:30pm Program @ Fogartyville, 525 Kumquat Court

THURSDAY, APR 6 – The Nation Discussion Group, 10am @ The Selby Library, 2nd floor conference room.

THURSDAY, APR 6 – Gun Control Weekly Rally – Sarasota Bayfront 4-5pm

THURSDAY, APR 6 – Ask the ACLU – Women's Rights, 6:30-7:30pm @ UU Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road

FRIDAY, APR 7 – Free Thinkers Speaker Series – "ISIS & the Middle East: What's it all about?" Tom Boeke, Poli Sci Professor SCF Manatee-Sarasota. 10am @ UU Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road

FRIDAY, APR 7 – The Prison Experience: The Social and Psychological Impact of Imprisonment and Implications for Reentry – 11:30am-1pm @ The Francis. \$30 includes lunch. Sponsored by Project 180.

SATURDAY, APR 8 – Tropical Fruit Tree and Herb Sale – 9am-1pm @ UU Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road

SATURDAY, APR 8 – Citizens Climate Lobby Meeting, 12:30-1:30pm, North Sarasota Public Library, 2801 Newtown Blvd

SUNDAY, APR 9 - Banner Making Event for the Climate Justice Mobilization. 12-3pm @ Fogartyville.

SUNDAY, APR 9 - Ranked Choice Voting/Election Reform Meeting 3-5pm @ Fogartyville. Sponsored by Progressive Sarasota.

TUESDAY, APR 11 – Constitution Seminar, Part 1, 6:30pm @ Fogartyville. Three part series; prior reading required. RSVP to Sarasota@MoveToAmend.org for details.

WEDNESDAY, APR 12 - Local Responses to Climate Change w/ local Audubon leaders. 5:45pm-7:30pm, Fruitville Public Library, 100 Coburn Rd

THURSDAY, APR 13 – Manatee/Sarasota General Meeting – Topic: Ready for 100 Campaign for Renewable Energy – 7pm @ Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Blvd of the Arts.

THURSDAY, APR 13 – 'Love Thy Neighbor' Vigil for Human Rights – 7:30-8:30pm @ Vern Buchanan's office, 111 S. Orange Avenue. Sponsored by All of Us Sarasota.

SATURDAY, APR 15 – Show us Your Taxes March, Sponsored by Suncoast Action Together. Meet 12pm on the Bayfront to march over the Ringling Bridge.

TUESDAY, APR 18 - Solar Co-op Info Session. 5:30-7pm. North County Library, 280 Newtown Blvd.

TUESDAY, APR 18 – Suncoast Climate Change Symposium, 5-7:30pm, USF, 8350 N Tamiami Trail.

TUESDAY, APR 18 - Save the Celery Fields Potluck 6-9pm at Fogartyville. Preparing for the public hearing on April 26th

WEDNESDAY, APR 19 – League of Women Voters Annual Meeting @ Libby's. 10:30am – 1pm. Speaker: Dr. Susan A. MacManus, Professor at USF in the Dept of Govt and Int'l Affairs

THURSDAY, APR 20 – Florida Veterans for Common Sense General Meeting, 7pm @ Waldemere Fire Station.

FRIDAY, APR 21 – All Power to the Imagination Conference, New College. An annual conference to connect theory to practice.

SATURDAY, APR 22 – Sarasota March for Science. Meet at Five Points Park, downtown. 10am-12pm

SUNDAY, APR 23 – Pachamama Alliance Awakening the Dreamer Symposium, UU Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road.

MONDAY, APR 24 – Newtown Film Screening and Panel Discussion. Sponsored by the LWV. 6-9pm @ Fogartyville, 525 Kumquat Ct.

TUESDAY, APR 25 - What the Proposed New Health Care Law Means for You with Becky Martin, Advocacy Director, National Physicians Alliance. 6:30pm @ Fogartyville.

THURSDAY, APR 27 – Gun Control Weekly Rally – 4-5pm on the Sarasota Bayfront.

SATURDAY, APR 29 – Climate Mobilization Rally – 10am -12pm on Sarasota Bayfront.

SATURDAY, APR 29 - Careless Prescriptions: ReThinking our Use of Psychiatric Drugs. 1pm at the Selby Public Library, 1331 1st St. Sponsored by ManaSota-88.

SATURDAY, APR 29 – Benefit Performance of the Exonerated to raise funds for The Innocence Project of Florida. 7pm @ Florida Studio Theatre. Call 941-388-7636 for tickets.

TUESDAY, MAY 2 – Improvisational Theatre for Social Change. 6:30pm @ Fogartyville. Presented by the PEACenter and CRT.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3 – Stand Up Fight Back General Meeting. Topic: Fight for \$15, 6pm – Potluck; 6:30pm – Program @ Fogartyville.

THURSDAY, MAY 4 – The Nation Discussion Group, 10am @ Selby Library

THURSDAY, MAY 4 – Ask the ACLU: Protection of LGBT Rights – 6:30pm @ UU Sarasota.

FRIDAY, MAY 5 – In Their Own Words: The Prison Experience. 11:30am-1pm @ The Francis, 1289 N Palm Ave. \$30 includes lunch. Sponsored by Project 180.

FRIDAY, MAY 5 – Free Thinkers Series. "Mental Health Services" Rev. Rick Howell, Executive Director, Samaritan Counseling Services of the Gulf Coast. UU Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road.

SATURDAY, MAY 6 - Bicycle Awareness Ride - 10AM-12:PM. Call 941-536-5900.

TUESDAY, MAY 9 - Constitution Seminar, Part 2, 6:30pm @ Fogartyville. Three part series; prior reading required. RSVP to Sarasota@MoveToAmend.org for details.

THURSDAY, MAY 11 – Sierra Club

General Meeting, 7pm @ Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Blvd. of the Arts. Bring a snack to share.

SATURDAY, MAY 13 – Citizens Climate Lobby, 12:30-1:30pm at North Sarasota Library, 2801 Newtown Blvd.

TUESDAY, MAY 16TH - Florida Legislative Wrap-Up with Rep. Wengay Newton. Sponsored by Newtown Nation and Progressive Sarasota.

TUESDAY, MAY 16 - Florida Legislative Wrap-Up with Rep. Wengay Newton. Sponsored by Newtown Nation and Progressive Sarasota. 6:30pm @ Fogartyville.

THURSDAY, MAY 18 – Florida Veterans for Common Sense General Meeting, 7pm @ Waldemere Fire Station.

FRIDAY, MAY 19 – Citizens Climate Lobby, UU Church of Venice, 1971 Pinebrook Road. 1:30-2:30pm.

TUESDAY, MAY 23 - Advocacy Skills for Progressive Change with Becky Martin, Advocacy Director, National Physicians Alliance. 6:30pm @ Fogartyville.

THURSDAY, JUN 1 - The Nation Discussion Group, 10am @ Selby Library, 2nd floor.

THURSDAY, JUN 1 – Ask the ACLU: Police and Community Relations. 6:30-7:30pm @ UU Sarasota.

FRIDAY, JUN 2 – Imprisoned While Innocent -11:30am-1pm @ The Francis, 1289 N Palm Ave. \$30 includes lunch. Sponsored by Project 180.

TUESDAY, JUN 6 - Disability Rights and Social Justice. 6:30-8pm. Presented by Center for Religious Tolerance.

WEDNESDAY, JUN 7 - Plastic Bag Ban. 6pm - Potluck; 6:30pm Program. Sponsored by Stand Up Fight Back SRQ

THURSDAY, JUN 8 - Sierra Club General Meeting, 7pm @ Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Blvd. of the Arts. Bring a snack to share.

SATURDAY, JUN 10 - Citizens Climate Lobby Meeting. 12:30-1:30pm, North County Library, 2801 Newtown Blvd.

TUESDAY, JUN 13 - Constitution Seminar, Part 3, 6:30pm @ Fogartyville. Three part series; prior reading required. RSVP to Sarasota@MoveToAmend.org for details.

THURSDAY, JUN 15 - Florida Veterans for Common Sense General Meeting, 7pm @ Waldemere Fire Station.

TUESDAY, JUN 20 - Looking Ahead to 2018. 6:30pm @ Fogartyville. Sponsored by Progressive Sarasota.

TUESDAY, JUN 27 – Gun Violence and Public Health with Becky Martin, Advocacy Director, National Physicians Alliance. 6:30pm @ Fogartyville.

For more information on any of these events, visit the Activist Calendar at www.CriticalTimes.org/activist-calendar.



Community Media & Arts Center
Fogartyville
West Entrance

Food and beverages are available at most of our shows, call for individual show menus

525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota
941-894-6469

7pm • Sunday, April 2
\$10 Adv./ \$12 Day of show



Step back in time with **Dean Johanesen and the 24 Hour Men** as they re-create the spirit of the 1920s Speakeasy.

4/2

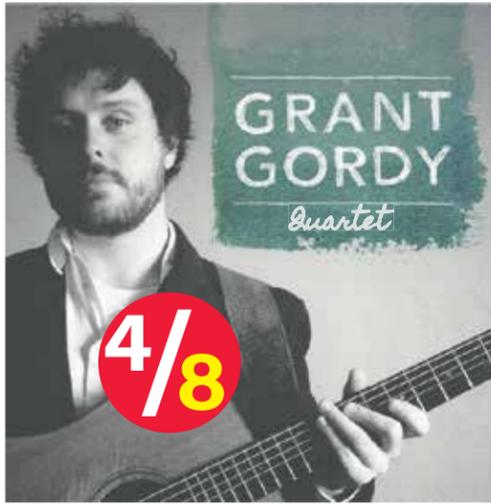
Asheville NC's, **Resonant Rogues** is the lovechild Sparrow & Keith Smith. Their instrumentation includes guitar, accordion, suitcase, washboard, banjo, violin, piano, and musical saw.



As a special treat the emerging artist **Rolf Hellem** will be painting live.

8pm • Saturday, April 8th
\$12 Adv./ \$15 Day of show

A relatively young-gun on the American "acoustic music" scene. He held the guitar chair in the legendary **David Grisman Quintet** for six years, he's also worked alongside such musical luminaries as **Edgar Meyer, Darol Anger** and **Steve Martin**. His music has been heard on **NPR's Morning Edition, All Things Considered** and **Tiny Desk Concerts**. Grant has performed all over from Carnegie Hall to Montreal Jazz Festival; Jazz at Lincoln Center to Bonnaroo.



4/8

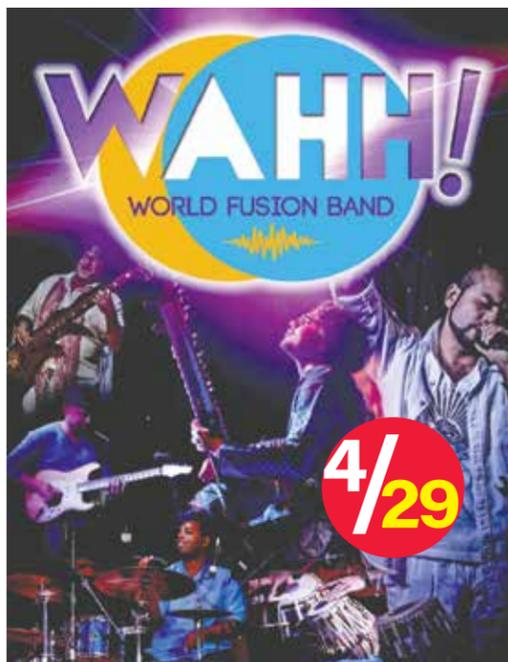


SIDELINE BLUEGRASS BAND

4/22

8pm • Saturday, April 22nd
\$15 Adv./\$20 Day of show

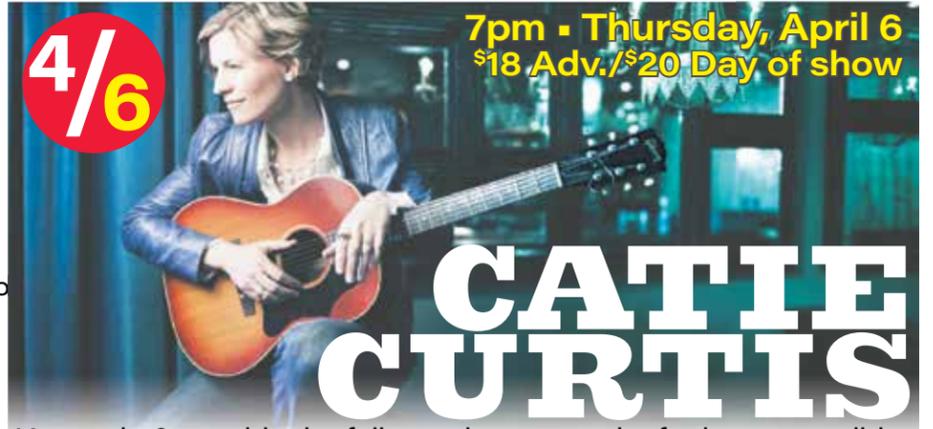
Bluegrass tunes some are classics, some are destined to be; and all of them are performed in a way that makes audiences understand why these pickers and singers are A-tier bluegrass players, loved and adored by fans the world over.



8pm • Saturday, April 29th
\$12 Adv./\$15 Day of show

'**Wahh!**' in India is a popular word that expresses 'Great Inner Joy and Appreciation!.. **WAHH!** the Tampa band is a spectacular blend of East meets West in Fusion Music. They're back with a whole new show! For those who haven't seen them yet; they are like a reincarnation of the great **Mahavishnu Orchestra**, complete with tablas, sitar, guitars and drums they are a real treat for your soul!

4/29



7pm • Thursday, April 6
\$18 Adv./\$20 Day of show

CATIE CURTIS

Known in & outside the folk-music community for her accessible, socially conscious songwriting and gorgeous voice, Catie always brings her typical mix of insightful wit and pitch-perfect vocals. Her song **My Dad's Yard** got a lot of air-play. She is dubbing this tour as "**The Final Outing**" eluding to her retiring?



4/15

8pm • Saturday, April 15th
\$10 Adv./ \$12 Day of show

From Sarasota-local roots, this Berklee College of Music educated artist was involved in the Nashville opera before she decided to try her hand at rock-

n-roll music, so you can imagine her range. **The Hydromatic** co-billed, describe their sound as stripped down Soul with Soul. You'll be feelin' it, when it goes down.

7pm • Sunday, April 23rd
\$10 Adv./\$12 Day of show

NEXXLEVEL PRINCE TRIBUTE

4/23

Prince was a man bursting with music — a wildly prolific songwriter, a virtuoso on guitars, keyboards and drums and a master architect of funk, rock, R&B and pop, even as his music defied genres. In this tribute concert, the **NexxLevel Band** and special guests will pay tribute to the man and his music.



8pm • Friday, June 9th
\$10 Adv./\$12 Day of show

MEAN MARY AND FRANK JAMES



6/9

This Florida gal is known internationally for lightning-fast fingers, haunting vocals, & intricate story/songs, spanning the genres of Americana, folk-rock, bluegrass, and blues. Mary is accomplished on 11 instruments! She is joined by her long-time collaborator and brother Frank on guitar and vocals.

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SARASOTA FILM FESTIVAL
March 31 - April 9

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WEEKLY PROGRAM GUIDE

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Freeform · Eclectic
Rock · Punk · Jam · Indie · Pop
News · Public Affairs
World · Spiritual

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
12 mid.	Global Village Syndicated	Beats, Rhymes & Life Radio DJ Cellus	Lumpytunes! Definitely Difficult Listening The Head Lump	Coffee and Donuts Ryan Larranaga	New Radio New College Becca, Noah, Gerina, Abigail	Open A.I.R. Matt Dakan	
1 a.m.							New Radio New College Becca, Noah, Gerina, Abigail
2 a.m.	MUSIC Automated playlist	Midnight Special Syndicated	Strange Currency Syndicated	Upfront Soul Syndicated	Trance on the Porch Syndicated		
3 a.m.							
4 a.m.		Union Edge Syndicated	Truthdig Radio Syndicated	A Way With Words Syndicated	Economic Update Syndicated	MUSIC automated playlist	
5 a.m.	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated		MUSIC Automated playlist
6 a.m.							
7 a.m.							
8 a.m.	All Things Rock Gary O.	Soul School Troy Nichols	Blues to Bluegrass John Dickman	Eclectic Blender Dave Pedersen	The Breakfast Bar William Stoner	Celtic Dew Dave Wertman	A Love Supreme John Haupt
9 a.m.			Music with a Purpose Pat Monahan				Wings of the Heart Salima Rael & Carol Rosenbaum
10 a.m.	Rootstock Radio Public Affairs	Stratosphere Sarasota Paola Baez-Perez	Florida Caribe Frankie Piniro	Peace & Justice Report Tom Walker & Bob Connors	The Detail Syndicated	Surreal News Low Lorini & Steve Norris	Alternative Radio Syndicated
11 a.m.	Music of the World Marco Ciceron	Latin Alternative Syndicated	Afro Cuban Jazz Frankie Piniro	Vibrational Journeys Perette Cannady	The Global Groove Pam Marwede	Complex Waveforms Mark Zampella	Law and Disorder Syndicated
NOON							Folk Alley Syndicated
1 p.m.	Democracy Now! Syndicated	Democracy Now! Syndicated	Democracy Now! Syndicated	Democracy Now! Syndicated	Democracy Now! Syndicated	Democracy Now! Syndicated	Break-Beat Max & Jonah
2 p.m.	Ralph Nader Radio Hour Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Syndicated	The Monitor Syndicated	Background Briefing Ian Masters	Economic Update Richard Wolff	De Mush Doctor's Caribbean Rhythms De Mush Doctor	Dadee-O's Collector Corner Dadee-O
3 p.m.	Organic Grooves Ian	Second Wind Sean Green	Back Alley Blues Steve Arvey	Progressive Palace Phil G	Music Museum Ed Foster	Play It Again Marshvitz David Smash	Eclectricity Susan Runyan
4 p.m.							
5 p.m.	From the Mountains & Beyond Tracy Hostettler, Annie	Tuesday Drive Home David Young	Hawaii Bob and Company	Dave's Day Off David Beaton	Ted's Head Ted	Friday Happy Hour Bartender Tommy D.	
6 p.m.	Capitol Update State News	Micro-Macro-Enviro-Radio	Talk Nation	Guns & Butter or Letters To Washington	Jumping Mullet Report		All Mixed Up Syndicated
7 p.m.	Short Wave Report	Jumping Mullet Report	TUC Radio		Counter Spin		Louisiana Gumbo Show Kid Red
8 p.m.	Yesterday's Dead Today Mark Binder	Lost in the Root Cellar Roger & Peter	Aerial Boundaries Rich LaPenna	New & Blue Session Gary Inganamort	Adventures in Jazzland Mike Finly	Ripper's Rarities Russ Yodice	INI Radio Haile Burke
9 p.m.							Metropics Carlos Pagan
10 p.m.	Indigenous Sounds White Horse	Alternative Reality Alex & Steph	Global Village Syndicated	Indie Files Joel Jaffe	Spirit of Punk Jill Hoffman-Kowal	Velvet Radio Elissa Bello	Dirty Ice Cream Truck Luke Rosebaro
11 p.m.							Indie-licious Shelia Siegel alt Vin J Whitman
12 mid.	Beats, Rhymes & Life Radio DJ Cellus	Lumpytunes! Definitely Difficult Listening The Head Lump	Coffee and Donuts Ryan Larranaga	New Radio New College Becca, Noah, Gerina, Abigail	Open A.I.R. Matt Dakan	New Radio New College Becca, Noah, Gerina, Abigail	Global Village Syndicated

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Indivisible Movement

BY ARDELL CRITE OTTEN

Sarasota, like many cities and towns around the country, is engaged and actively participating in the Indivisible Movement. The Movement is a coordinated effort among citizens to constructively engage and communicate with elected leaders.

Almost immediately after the election of President Donald Trump the Indivisible Guide appeared online. Created by a group of former congressional staffers, the guide was developed as a tool “to help mobilize citizens” to stand up and fight against an agenda that might negatively affect environmental, social, economic progress and racial justice.

The ex-staffers had “witnessed firsthand how the tea party rose to power and convinced their members of Congress to reject President Obama’s Agenda.” Relying on their experiences, they created the Indivisible Guide as a step-by-step manual on how to engage elected representatives in face-to-face meetings or local public events; how to make coordinated phone calls; and how to maximize Town Hall Meetings.

Some of the recent actions of local Indivisible



Local Indivisible Groups successfully called for Rep. Buchanan and Rooney to hold town hall meetings.

Movement groups include rallying outside of State Senator Greg Steube’s Sarasota Office to speak out against his pro-gun legislation; presenting letters to Congressman Vern Buchanan requesting that he seek President Trump’s income tax returns; successfully pressed Congressman Tom Rooney (CD17) to host a Town Hall Meeting in Englewood; and coordinating phone calls and

postcard messaging on issues including Russian sanctions, Citizens United, among others.

Indivisible groups in Congressional Districts 16 (Rep. Buchanan) and Congressional District 17 (Rep. Rooney) have started a website at www.fl17indivisible.com to help them coordinate their efforts. Visit the website to find the group closest to you and get involved with future actions.

Still Marching! Action Together Suncoast



Over 10,000 showed up to support the Sarasota March in Solidarity with the Women's March on January 21st.

Photo Credit: Norman Schimmel

BY DIANNE K. PERRY, PH.D.

dperry06@tampabay.rr.com

Action Together Suncoast (ATS) is a grassroots political action organization born from the need to stand together in solidarity to protect our human rights and civil rights in the Suncoast area of Florida and beyond.

The network started with the Sarasota Solidarity March on January 21, 2017. From this March, which had an attendance of over 10,000, the group continues to work on the local, state, and federal level to hold elected representatives accountable for their decisions through protests, phone calls, letters, and more. ATS conducts surveys to help determine the community’s

needs, like for example, leadership training.

On April 15th they will again unite the community for The Truth Matters/Show Us Your Taxes march, gathering on the Bayfront at 12:00 PM to march across the bridge.

“We’ve created this march because it’s important to keep coming together. It re-energizes people, and it connects them with the organizations they wish to support”, commented Cathy Bryant, Vice President of Action Suncoast Together.

Although popular, marches aren’t the only way the ATS lets its voice be heard.

ATS members have joined with Indivisible Groups at protests at Rep. Vern Buchanan’s

offices both in Sarasota and Bradenton. They meet weekly at the Islamic Society for Prayer Protection of area Muslims. Action Together Suncoast joined protests at Senator Greg Steube’s office to oppose his proposed gun bills, and they support the weekly rallies organized by the local Brady Chapter to Prevent Gun Violence.

If you are interested in getting involved, there is a place for you with ATS. Be a part of the solution. To join Action Together Suncoast on Facebook, go to: <https://www.facebook.com/actiontogethersuncoast/> or www.actiontogethersuncoast.com for information about events and Calls to Action.

Why STOP! Now?

BY MIKE LASCHE



Projects like The Vue have spurred the growth of STOP!

STOP! is a civic group organized in 2016 to advocate for specific changes in the City of Sarasota's zoning code.

STOP! was formed in the summer of 2016 by local citizens of Sarasota concerned about the type of development in the city as a result of a new zoning code established in 2003. The downtown project "The Vue" crystallized concerns of many citizens that development in the city was heading in the wrong direction.

Specific concerns include:

- A development process that excludes the public. Most downtown buildings are approved with Administrative Approval. This process means that the people involved in the decision making are the developer and city staff. The Planning Board, the City Commission, and the residents have no voice. Neighborhoods and City residents are unaware at the time the approval discussion is happening and usually don't know the project is approved until construction begins, making it too late for residents to present their concerns.

- Buildings placed too close to the road leave little room to create safe, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and create the impression of walking through unattractive concrete canyons.

- Traffic studies are limited to satisfying narrow legal requirements without providing clear information on the real traffic impact from the development. The broader impact of cumulative developments being constructed or proposed is not being addressed. It is clear that the City has approved much new construction but does not have the infrastructure to handle the resulting traffic.

STOP!'s proposal is to:

1. End Administrative Approval for large projects in downtown Sarasota, and to prevent the expansion of Administrative Approval under the new form-based code that the City is developing.
2. Change City Code to require broad sidewalks with attractive, tree-lined streets
3. Improve traffic studies so that citizens and planners know the real impacts of traffic, which will enable the city to engage in better planning for the future.

STOP! has received the endorsement of many neighborhood and condo associations. We are actively searching for opportunities to speak and would be happy to make a presentation to your group about STOP's goals and activities. For more information, please email [STOP.aa.2016@gmail.com](mailto:aa.2016@gmail.com) or visit our website at ForQualityProgress.com.

We firmly believe that citizens, working together, can help ensure Sarasota maintains the high quality of life that we all value.

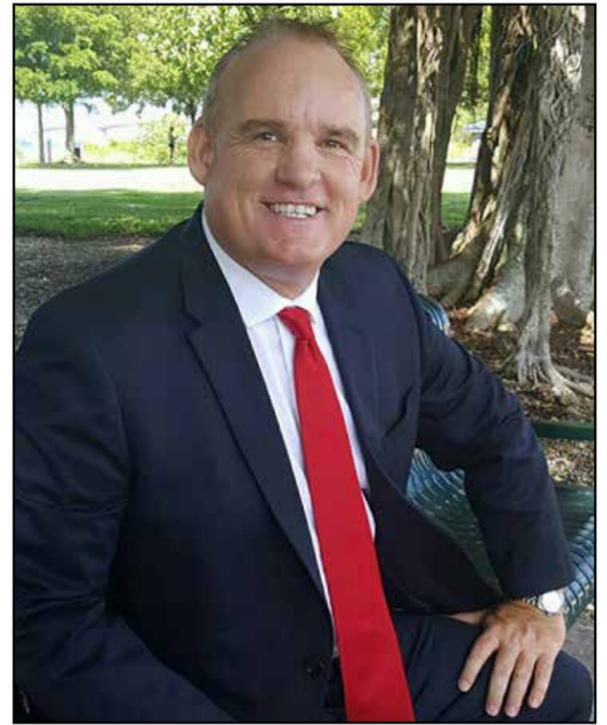
Election Results Pg 1 (cont.)

run-off. She loaned the campaign \$150 to open the account and raised the remainder from 151 individual contributions with many former elected officials throwing their support her way including Elmer Berkel, Kelly Kirschner, Dick Clapp and Terry Turner.

LONGBOAT KEY ELECTIONS

Article II, Section 22 of the Longboat Key Charter provides that "present density limitations provided in the existing comprehensive plan as adopted March 12, 1984, shall not be increased without the referendum approval of the electors of Longboat Key". Therefore, residents got to vote on two proposed projects in March. Voters overwhelmingly rejected a request for additional residential units at the Colony Beach and Tennis Resort (88%-12%). They also rejected a proposal to convert the Mote Scientific Foundation property from commercial to residential (59%-41%). Former Mayor Jim and incumbent Jack Daly handily won their elections to the Longboat Key Commission.

NORTH PORT ELECTIONS



Martin Hyde

In the special election for the District 4 seat on the North Port City Commission, no candidate received a majority, so candidates Pete Emrich and Jill Luke will participate in the runoff election on May 9th.

Celery Fields Editorial Pg 1 (cont.)

Commissioners' all seem hell-bent in advancing what I consider to be the county's biggest environmental and community blunder ever.

In 2014 the County quietly sold surplus county-owned land adjacent to the Celery Fields to James Gabbert for a waste-transfer facility.

The county's "Surplus Land Codes" describes surplus land as "real property that serves no future use for the county and may be declared surplus and sold." Surplus land is determined 'useless' only by a recommendation from County Administrator Thomas Harmer.

Had any of us known about the first sale of surplus land in 2014 to Mr. Gabbert, a lot of us would have had skin in this game from the get go. (This points to the necessity of closely monitoring County meetings.) We must be overbearing in our insistence to be part of the conversation before reckless things like this occur.

In March at a public hearing on the rezoning of the parcel from rural to light industrial, the applicant's land use Attorney was unable

to comply with Sarasota County's Charter disclosure requirements and the decision was delayed for 30 days. The charter requires any institution applying for rezoning to disclose its "true ownership interests."

Join us for round two of Restaurant Depot's public hearing where we will learn if the Sarasota Charter has been satisfied in relation to revealing every investor who has a stake in the Restaurant Depot Purchase. The rescheduled hearing will take place on **April 26th at 1:30 p.m.** at 1660 Ringling Boulevard.

Ultimately, I hope to see our County Commission follow and respect Sarasota County's zoning mission statement that states: "Zoning's fundamental purpose is to protect a community's health, safety and welfare."

Learn more at <http://celeryfields.org>.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Restaurant Depot (JMDH Real Estate of Sarasota, LLC) cancelled their contract for purchase of the property at the March 20 Board of County Commissioners meeting.



Residents oppose the sale of surplus lands adjacent to the Celery Fields on February 25.

A Farm to Help Veterans Heal

BY GENE JONES

Green Path Veterans and Friends operates an ongoing urban farm project that helps veterans. The projects' ultimate goal is to develop self-sustaining urban farms that train and employ veterans in urban agriculture, business management, and associated skills while providing the therapeutic benefits of gardening. (Agri-therapy)

As most people know, many veterans of recent conflicts have had to face challenges unique to warfare in the 21st century. Due to medical advances, modern warfare tends to yield more survivors but with severe injuries. Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is one of the most insidious of these injuries whose effects range from a mild concussion to amnesia and distressing neurological damage.

In addition to brain injury, large numbers of returning troops suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

A significant difference between Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and previous wars was a greater dependence on reservists and repeat deployments. Up to 80% of troops initially deployed were part of the National Guard, and Reserve and about 40% of them repeatedly. Not being as "steeped in military culture" the troops had



repeated, stressful transitions into military life. **The increased redeployment rate meant more upheaval, more uncertainty, longer terms, and shorter dwell times. These factors increased the resulting numbers of troops dealing with PTSD.**

More than 231,000 veterans from Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom claim the Sunshine State as their home, and many suffer from PTSD and TBI. The statistics about homelessness, divorce, substance abuse and systemic failure to provide services from the institutions such as the military and the VA are mind-boggling and depressing. There is no "one size fits all" solution to this myriad of problems, yet Green Path Veterans and Friends chips away

at the mountain of challenges on a continuous basis.

The high incidence of PTSD among veterans is a prime motivation for our farming project.

Gardening has a therapeutic effect for some veterans, and they enjoy the camaraderie and sense of accomplishment that comes with working with our volunteers and projects. Of note, the U.S. Senate recently passed a bill funding research to verify the effectiveness of agri-therapy.

Currently, the project operates as partners with Easter Seals of Southwest Florida. The project is under the tutelage of the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS). Robert Kluson, PhD., Sarasota County Agricultural Extension Agent, provides onsite expertise and consultation. Participants are taught the methodology of organic, urban farming and also other skills such as sales and business management.

All of the food raised is sold locally or donated to people living in the community near the gardens.

In addition to funding, the project always can use more volunteers, particularly gardeners. You do not have to be a veteran to work with us. *If you'd like to volunteer, please contact Camille Van Sant at cam@greengardenchef.com and visit our page on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/greenthropveteransfarms/>.*

API! Returns to New College



A transformative justice workshop at last year's API conference.

BY JAMES BIRMINGHAM

The Tenth Annual All Power to the Imagination! (API!) Conference will be held at New College of Florida from **April 21st to the 23rd, 2017**. API! was created by three anarchist students of color (Jackie Wang, Kotu Bajaj, and James Birmingham) at New College of Florida in the Fall of 2007 and inspired by the now defunct National Conference for Organized Resistance held at American University in Washington D.C.

It began as a small student organized class on conference organization sponsored by Sarah Hernandez, a sociology professor. Now, it has become one of the longest running leftist radical conferences in the country and is a focal event for anarchists in Florida and throughout the Southeast.

API! has hosted speakers from Ireland to Serbia and from New York to California, but never forgetting about the local and regional organizing and concerns. This year's talks and workshops will include topics such as radical pedagogy, labor organizing, progressive game design, police brutality, and reproductive justice. If you wish to attend or get involved, please visit www.allpowertotheimagination.com.

Sarasota March For Science April 22nd

BY BLAISE DEFRANCO and MARIELI DE JESUS

The national March for Science is a response to the current administration's war on scientific research and publication, specifically the increased restrictions faced by federal agencies such as the EPA, Department of Energy, and the Department of Health and Human Services.

It is a nonpartisan, international demonstration that will uphold the importance of publicly funded and accessible scientific research. Some of the primary goals include: upholding science and evidence-based policy that serves the common good, promoting diversity and inclusion in STEM, and providing open and honest science and inclusive public outreach.

The Sarasota March will begin at **10:30 am at Five Points Park** in the downtown area. The core organizers have focused their efforts on outreach and education and are collaborating with local organizations such as the Sierra Club and the Sarasota Climate Justice Coalition.

The Sarasota March has officially partnered with Stand Up Fight Back SRQ and is taking place under the umbrella of the PEACenter. Organizers of the March believe that facts are important, inarguable, and should not be a political issue. The emphasis is on the importance of all sciences, including social science.

Please join in and support this important effort. For more information, visit the official Facebook page, "[March for Science-Sarasota, Florida](https://www.facebook.com/marchforscience-sarasota-florida)", or follow us on Twitter [@srqscience](https://twitter.com/srqscience) or email srqscience@gmail.com. The local website is at www.srqsciencemarch.com

The official national website is www.marchforscience.com

Local Group Calls for Ban on Plastic Bags

ManaSota-88 is recommending that the City of Sarasota take action to reduce or eliminate plastic grocery bags. These bags are having a significantly detrimental effect on our waterways, landfills and pocket books. There are also findings that suggest that plastics are having a damaging impact on the marine life in the Gulf of Mexico.

Plastic grocery bags create a litter problem for Sarasota's streets, beaches, sewer system and the marine environment. There's a financial implication here: The bags are difficult and costly to recycle or compost, they increase the costs to taxpayers by reducing the value of recycled and composted materials, and they also increase costs associated with the City's street cleaning and stormwater maintenance programs.

Estimates are that plastic makes up 80% of the volume of litter on roads, parks, and beaches and 90% of floating litter in the ocean.

The issue of plastic grocery bags is not just one of aesthetics and money. A graduate student at the University of South Alabama, Caitlin Wessel, has been studying microplastics in the Gulf of Mexico. She found that they were "ubiquitous throughout the area" and at levels many times higher than expected in the open ocean. These findings raise concerns about the effect these particles might have on the marine life that ingest them, and the humans who eat the seafood fished from contaminated food chains.

According to the Worldwatch Institute, nationally only 0.6 percent of plastic bags are recycled, and Americans throw away about 100 billion plastic bags annually. The Environmental Protection Agency sites that plastic bags endanger wildlife by polluting land and water, and it takes more than 1,000 years for a plastic bag to break down in a landfill.

The damage caused by plastic bags is significant. The taxpayer is subsidizing the production and clean-up of an unnecessary and noxious waste product. Most objections to banning plastic bags involve issues of convenience. **Stand Up Fight Back SRQ will sponsor a meeting to explore this issue on Wednesday, June 7 at Fogartyville.**

Ranked Choice Voting: A Better Way to Choose our Elected Leaders

RANK CANDIDATES IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE.
FILL IN ONE CIRCLE PER CANDIDATE AND ONE CIRCLE PER CHOICE.

	1ST CHOICE	2ND CHOICE	3RD CHOICE
CANDIDATE A	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CANDIDATE B	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CANDIDATE C	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

BY JOHN SEVERINI

If you are like me, and millions of other Americans, you were appalled in the extremely low popularity ratings of both of our major party choices for President, and embarrassed by the lack of civility during this election cycle. Reflecting that widespread voter dissatisfaction, neither one won a majority of the popular vote.

In the same election, and for the same reasons within their state elections, Maine voters approved a system called ranked choice voting (RCV) for state elections, also referred to as instant runoff voting. Florida and the rest of the country would be well-served to do the same.

RCV is a simple, common-sense change to our voting system that puts power back in the hands of voters to restore majority rule and makes politicians more accountable to us. It allows voters to rank as many candidates as they want in order of choice—first, second, third, and so on. All first choices are counted, and if a candidate has a simple majority, 50% + 1 of votes cast, then they win just like in any other election. However, if nobody has a majority, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and those voters have their ballot instantly count for their next choice. As FairVote, a national non-profit advocating for ranked choice voting notes, “This process continues until a candidate has more than half of the active votes or only two candidates remain. The candidate with a majority among the active candidates is declared the winner.”

Since 2004, RCV has been used in various US cities demonstrating that it is politically viable and impactful in practice. Cities using RCV include Minneapolis (MN), St. Paul (MN), Oakland (CA),

San Francisco (CA), San Leandro (CA), Takoma Park (MD), Telluride (CO), and Portland (ME), while Cambridge (MA) has used a proportional form of RCV to elect its city council and school board for decades. Cities awaiting implementation after voter approval include Memphis (TN), Santa Fe (NM), and Sarasota (FL). Internationally, RCV has been used for years to elect Ireland’s president, Australia’s House of Representatives, and the mayors of London and Wellington, New Zealand. With recommendations by procedural guides like Robert’s Rules of Order, RCV is widely used in nongovernmental organization elections, ranging from major private associations like the American Chemical Society and American Psychiatric Association to nearly every major party in Australia, Canada, Scotland, and the United Kingdom, as well as Republican and Democratic parties in Iowa, Maine, Texas, Utah, and Virginia.

RCV helps create a richer and more civil dialogue on the issues, while increasing the diversity of views available for voters to consider by freeing up candidates from outside the two major parties to compete. It has been proven to reduce negative campaigning because candidates need to appeal to a broader range of voters to earn a place in the rankings on their ballots to build a majority of support. Studies show that ranked choice voting encourages candidates to run more positive campaigns, focus on the issues, and reach out beyond their base.

Notably, it opens up elections to more candidates both inside and outside the two major parties. With ranked choice voting, more than two candidates can run without fear of someone being elected without a majority (50% +1) of the vote. Even better, voters can vote for their favorite

candidate—even an underdog—without fear of helping to elect their least favorite candidate.

In 2007, the City of Sarasota held a referendum on ranked choice voting (referred to as “instant runoff voting” in those days) which passed by a decisive 77% in favor vote becoming the first in Florida to adopt it. However, the county, which provides voting equipment, did not own compatible voting machines and the ordinance is contingent upon their availability. In 2015 the county purchased new machines which are, coincidentally, already built compatible for ranked choice voting. However, the Florida Secretary of State’s Division of Elections has yet to certify third party tabulation equipment for automatic counting of the ballots in a ranked choice voting election. The local government and the local supervisor of elections must request this process as well. If implemented, it would save the city tens of thousands of dollars by eliminating low-turnout second round runoff elections currently required to determine majority winners.

If you were as disappointed as I was in this past election cycle, maybe you will help try to spread the word. Your voice is your greatest asset. Join me and millions of other Americans in this momentous opportunity. I encourage you to educate yourselves, your friends and your families about a better way of voting, and to learn more at www.fairvote.org and at www.rankedchoicevoting.org. Contact your elected representatives and educate them about ranked choice voting, how it works, and why it would be good for your city, county, and state. Pay attention to the 2017-2018 Florida Constitution Revision Commission (www.revisefl.com), a process that takes place once every 20 years. Participate in the hearings and engage in outreach to the commissioners who will determine what reforms to the state constitution, like ranked choice voting, will go before voters for referendum.

With so many Americans feeling voiceless in our democracy, it is time we improved our elections to allow for more choices and to give voters a stronger voice on Election Day. If this resonates with you, and you have ties to civic organizations, please reach out to them or myself, to spread the word about ranked choice voting.

LEARN MORE ABOUT RANKED CHOICE VOTING
Sunday, April 9, 3pm @ Fogartyville
Jeanne Massey, Ex. Dir. of FairVote Minnesota, will join local activists John Severini and Tony Stefan to update you on the campaign for RCV in Sarasota and the state of Florida.

Support a Bikeable, Walkable Community

BY MIKE LASCHE

Bicycle/Pedestrian Advocates work to improve the rights, safety, and ease of biking and walking in our area. The group officially formed in 2006 when they launched a successful campaign to hire a bicycle/pedestrian coordinator in Sarasota County.

Since that time, they have weighed in on many projects that make Sarasota a safer and more bike-friendly city, such as:

- Passing a change in the City of Sarasota zoning code to require secure bicycle parking in the form of a locked room, chain link enclosure,

or bicycle lockers in all new City parking garages. This zoning change also required on-street bike parking.

- Changing the design of several streets to include bike lanes and sidewalks.
- Constructing the Alderman Street Trail, from Orange Avenue to US 301, which will be the downtown connector for the future extension of the Legacy Trail to Fruitville Road.
- Improving education about bicycle and pedestrian safety in the Sarasota County School System using Florida’s statewide nationally recognized program.

Advocates are passionate about these projects

because they believe that walkable, bikeable neighborhoods and cities are better places to live, and are better for the environment.

Unfortunately, walking and biking infrastructures have historically been neglected by the powers that be. For example, Sarasota County City Planners are currently trying to remove bike lanes on Fruitville Road as developers want to increase their development along that corridor. We need your support to try to stop that from happening.

If you would like to help make Sarasota/Bradenton better for walking and biking, email mike@floridawalksandbikes.org.

The CRC: Shaping Florida's Future

BY FRANK ALCOCK

Shortly after the 2017 state legislative session ends, an important process will kick into high gear: the third convening of Florida's Constitution Revision Commission (CRC).

The potential impact of these meetings cannot be overstated. The CRC is a constitutionally mandated body that meets once every twenty years to review our state Constitution and propose amendments that go directly before Florida's voters.

The CRC consists of 37 members: fifteen appointed by the Governor, nine by both the Senate President and Speaker of the House, and three by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The Attorney General serves as the 37th member.

The first meeting of the CRC occurred ten years after our current constitution was adopted in 1968. Democrats controlled the appointment process at the time. The 1977-78 CRC placed eight amendments on the ballot, but none were approved by voters. However, their work did have an impact that extended beyond the CRC, as many of their proposed changes were ultimately made through legislative statute or a future constitutional amendment.

The 1997-98 CRC reflected a bipartisan appointment process and a collaborative political environment. There were nine amendments proposed, and eight of them were approved by voters. The 2017-2018 CRC reflects a moment of Republican dominance in a hyper-partisan political environment.

Most Floridians have little awareness of the power vested in this body and the lack of checks and balances present in the CRC system, beyond

the need for a supermajority of voters (60%) to approve proposed amendments in 2018. Past CRC amendments only required 50% approval, but the threshold for amendments to pass was changed to 60% in 2006.

The two most frequently used mechanisms to change the Florida Constitution are citizens' initiatives and joint resolutions from the legislature. Citizens' initiatives require a substantial, statewide petition effort and are subject to both a single topic rule (two substantive changes cannot be combined with a single amendment) and judicial review. Joint resolutions require 60% approval from both chambers of the Florida legislature and are subject to judicial review, but they need not comply with a single topic rule (multiple changes can be combined into a single amendment). CRC amendments are not subject to a single topic rule or judicial review. Thus, the CRC can word and package constitutional changes however they want.

The CRC will spend much of the summer and fall touring the state and hearing from voters. There will likely be a lot of backroom dealing and horse trading because normal Sunshine rules do

Issues to Watch

School Choice & Vouchers

A near supermajority of the appointees are school choice advocates. Both Negron and Corcoran have expressed interest in overturning the 2006 Bush v. Holmes decision, which held that the state's use of taxpayer-financed vouchers to send students to private schools violated a provision in the state Constitution.

Redistricting

Expect the CRC to focus on overhauling the redistricting process created by the Fair Districts Amendments, passed by voters in 2010.

Re-Structuring the Cabinet

The 1998 CRC shrunk the Florida Cabinet to three positions (CFO, Attorney General & Agriculture Commissioner). There has been talk of adding a tie-breaking member to the Cabinet.

Weakening the Judiciary

Corcoran wants to impose 12-year term limits on Supreme Court justices. Gov. Scott would also like to reduce the power of the judicial branch.

not apply. The CRC will determine its process for developing, reviewing and internally approving proposed amendments under the leadership of its Chair, Carlos Beruff. Once its slate is finalized, the CRC will once again tour the state during the summer and fall of 2018 to promote their proposed amendments.

So what might we expect from the 2017-2018 CRC? The appointments suggest that it will be a very conservative body that will push the preferences of the men that appointed them, most notably Governor Scott and Speaker Corcoran. It is important for the citizens of Florida to engage the process in 2017 to shape the proposals as best they can. More importantly, it will be imperative that they understand what's on their ballot in 2018 and mobilize accordingly.

The CRC has launched a website at www.FLCRC.gov and has its first organizational meeting on Monday, March 20th.

Three Ideas for Florida's Constitution

BY T.J. PYCHE, *Gainesville*

Florida college students gathered at the University of Florida for three days last month to participate in the Bob Graham Center for Public Service's Future of Florida Summit. The summit focused on the upcoming Constitution Revision Commission, a 37-member body appointed every 20 years with the unique power to place constitutional amendments on the ballot.

Participants worked with panelists to come up with amendment ideas, and three were chosen for submission to the Constitution Revision Commission:

- Increase the mandatory retirement age for judges to 75;
- Eliminate the write-in loophole in elections, which allows write-in candidates to "close" primaries that would otherwise be open and allow all registered voters to participate; and
- Change elected constitutional officer positions in non-charter counties to nonpartisan.

The groups' proposals were judged based on the clarity of the amendment and ballot summary text, the plausibility it would receive the required 60 percent approval, the amendment's constitutional worthiness and the quality of the presentation. The three amendment ideas that will be forwarded represent common sense improvements to the state's Constitution.

Name	Profession	Location	Party
Appointed By Governor Rick Scott			
Carlos Beruff, Chair	Developer	Bradenton	R
Dr. Jose "Pepe" Armas	Physician And Healthcare Executive	Miami	R
Lisa Carlton	Attorney/Fmr State Senator	Sarasota	R
Timothy Cerio	Attorney	Tallahassee	R
Emery Gainey	Law Enforcement	Tallahassee	R
Brecht Heuchan	Lobbyist/Political Consultant	Tallahassee	R
Marva Johnson	Chr, Fl State Board Of Education	Winter Gardens	R
Darlene Jordan	Charity Foundation Director	Palm Beach	R
Fred Karlinsky	Insurance Lobbyist	Weston	R
Belinda Keiser	Vice Chancellor, Keiser University	Parkland	R
Frank Kruppenbacher	Attorney	Orlando	R
Dr. Gary Lester	Minister	The Villages	R
Jimmy Patronis	Psc Commissioner/Fmr Legislator	Panama City	R
Pam Stewart	Fl Education Commissioner	Tallahassee	R
Nicole Washington	Education Consultant	Miami Beach	R
Appointed By Joe Negron, Senate President			
Don Gaetz	Fmr President Of Fl Senate	Niceville	R
Anna Marie Hernandez Gamez	Attorney	Miami	R
Patricia Levesque	Ceo, Fdtn For Excellence In Educ.	Tallahassee	R
Sherry Plymale	Chr, St Bd Of Community Colleges	Fort Pierce	R
William "Bill" Schifino, Jr.	President Of The Florida Bar	Tampa	R
Chris Smith	Attorney, Fmr State Senator	Ft. Lauderdale	D
Bob Solari	Real Estate; County Commissioner	Indian River	R
Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch	Fmr Teacher; Mayor Of Sewall's Pt	Sewall's Point	R
Carolyn Timmann	Clerk Of The Circuit Court	Martin County	R
Appointed By The Chief Justice Of The Florida Supreme Court			
Hank Coxe	Attorney	Jacksonville	D
Arthenia Joyner	Attorney; Fmr State Legislator	Tampa	D
Roberto Martinez	Attorney	Coral Gables	R
Appointed By Richard Corcoran, Speaker Of The House			
Jose Felix Diaz	State Representative	Miami	R
Jeanette Nuñez	Speaker Pro Tempore	Miami-Dade	R
Chris Sprowls	State Representative	Palm Harbor	R
Tom Lee	Former Senate President	Thonotosassa	R
Darryl Rouson	State Senator/Attorney	St. Petersburg	D
Chris Nocco	Pasco County Sheriff	New Port Richey	R
Erika Donalds	Accountant; School Board Mbr	Naples	R
Rich Newsome	Businessman; Fmr Fed Prosecutor	Orlando	R
John Stemberger	Attorney; Conservative Activist	Orlando	R
Pam Bondi, Automatic Member	Attorney General	Tallahassee	R