



Longboat Key News

May 15, 2026

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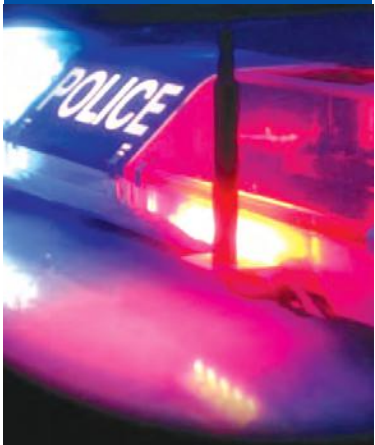
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Longboat Sues Unicorp Over the St. Regis Arch, Asks Circuit Court for an Injunction to Tear It Down

The structure that Whittall told this newspaper “will be here for generations” now has a deadline that will be set by a Sarasota County judge, not by him.

STEVE REID
Editor & Publisher
sreid@lbknews.com

The case has a number now. At 2:19 p.m. on Friday, May 15, special counsel Martin Garcia electronically filed the Town of Longboat Key’s Complaint for Mandatory Injunctive Relief in the Twelfth Judicial Circuit in and for Sarasota County. The defendants are SR LBK, LLC and SR LBK II, LLC — Chuck Whittall’s Delaware entities. The relief sought is the demolition of an arch and sign Whittall told the Town Manager last Friday he would not take down. A judge will now decide who is right.

For a year, the dispute over the St. Regis arch lived in memos, draped fabric, ordinance drafts, Planning and Zoning Board denials, and a phone call between two men. As of 2:19 p.m. Thursday afternoon, it lives in the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, Sarasota County as a thirteen-page Complaint for Mandatory Injunctive Relief, signed by attorney Martin Garcia of GarciaDell, P.A., on behalf of the Town of Longboat Key.

The complaint names two defendants: SR LBK, LLC, the Delaware entity that holds title to the St. Regis property at 1601 Gulf of Mexico Drive, and SR LBK II, LLC, the entity identified in the construction permits for the groin. Both, the Town pleads, are “controlled and managed, directly and/or indirectly, by Charles Whittall.”

It asks the court to enter “a Permanent Mandatory Injunction directing and ordering that SR LBK, LLC and SR LBK II, LLC immediately remove the arch and sign which have been illegally installed on the groin.”

The structure that Whittall told this newspaper “will be here for generations” now has a deadline that will be

See St. Regis, page 2



Grants, Growth, and Grit Define Longboat Key’s FY26 Mid-Year Comeback

The true character of a town isn’t measured when the skies are clear and the waters are calm. It is measured in the aftermath of the storm, when the winds have died down and the bill comes due.

STEVE REID
Editor & Publisher
sreid@lbknews.com

For the Town of Longboat Key, the Fiscal Year 2026 Mid-Year Update—presented at the May 18, 2026, Town Commission Regular Workshop—is far more than a routine recital of revenues and expenditures. It is a living, breathing blueprint of survival, a testament to a community that took the heavy blows of Hurricanes Helene and Milton and emerged not just standing, but moving fiercely forward.

Town Manager Howard Tipton

See Report, page 13

Holding Back the Gulf: Longboat Key to Debate Regulations on ‘Aqua Dams’ as Threats Mount

Two years after Hurricanes Helene and Milton ravaged the island, Longboat Key officials are preparing to tackle a growing trend: homeowners deploying massive freestanding flood barriers. But as the Town Commission will discuss next Monday, one resident’s salvation could become a neighbor’s destruction.

STEVE REID
Editor & Publisher
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Two years have passed since the skies over Longboat Key darkened and the Gulf of Mexico rose to claim the land. The devastating twin blows of Hurricanes Helene and Milton remain etched into the memories of every homeowner, business owner, and town official on this fragile barrier island. The storms didn’t just rip roofs from homes or wash sand over Gulf of Mexico Drive; they tore into the financial and emotional fabric of the community. As noted in the Town’s mid-year financial update, the catastrophic toll slashed the municipal fund balance dramatically—from \$15.3 million down to \$9.4 million. Yet, even as the community rebuilt, the existential dread



of sea-level rise and future massive storm surges lingered heavily in the salt air.

Today, the town is no longer just reacting; it is desperately searching

See Flood Fixes, page 12

Infrastructure, Beaches, and Stressed Funds Take Center Stage at Budget Workshop

Monday’s workshop will set the tone for how Longboat Key balances its ambitious resiliency goals with fiscal responsibility.

On Monday, May 18, the Longboat Key Town Commission will convene for its first Special Workshop to discuss the Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) budget.

The 10:15 a.m. meeting will provide a critical first look at the town’s financial roadmap, focusing heavily on a massive \$166.2 million Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that spans through FY31.

With the town facing significant cost drivers like post-hurricane beach restoration, aging utility infrastructure, and inflationary pressures on public safety equip-

See Budget, page 12

St. Regis, from page 1

set by a Sarasota County judge, not by him.

The Trapdoor: Whittall's Own 2022 Permit

The single most powerful paragraph in the Town's complaint is not about the arch. It is about a permit Whittall sought four years ago.

In 2022, after obtaining what the Town calls a "De Minimis Exception" from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for rebuilding the existing groin, SR LBK II nevertheless applied to the Town for a building permit. On December 16, 2022, the Town issued one. The work was completed by April 2023 and inspected and approved on April 12, 2023.

Two years later, in February 2024, Unicorp returned to the Town for another permit — this time for the "post and rope" handrail Whittall now describes as part of the same project as the arch. The Town issued Permit PB24-0117 on March 5, 2024. The handrail work was completed and finalized on July 17, 2024.

The complaint hammers the point home: "SR LBK II also sought and obtained a building permit from the Town, recognizing that the groin was within the Town's jurisdiction and that the rebuilding of the groin was subject to the Town's Code of Ordinances."

This is the trapdoor. Whittall has spent the last two weeks arguing — to this newspaper, to the Town Manager, to anyone who will listen — that the groin sits in state waters, that the Florida DEP is "the proper agency," and that the Town has no jurisdiction over what is built on the groin. The Town's complaint replies, in essence: You agreed it was our jurisdiction. Twice. In writing. On your own permit applications.

As the complaint phrases it: "The groin itself is within the Town's territorial and regulatory jurisdiction, which SR LBK/SR LBK II acknowledged by seeking, and obtaining, from the Town a building permit in 2022 for the repair of the groin as well as a building permit in 2024 for the installation of the rope handrail on the groin."

The Field Permit That Came With Strings

Whittall's secondary argument — that a February 19, 2024 FDEP "Field Permit" authorizing the installation of "post, rope and sign" pre-empts Town jurisdiction — runs into a problem the Town quotes from the face of the permit itself.

The Field Permit, attached to the complaint as Exhibit 2, includes a Special Permit Condition stating that it "is valid only after all applicable federal, state and local permits are obtained and does not authorize contravention of local setback requirements or zoning or building codes."

A second special condition adds: "Structure should be installed per local governmental ordinances."

And then there is the matter of Whittall's signature. On the Field Permit application, dated February 21, 2024, Whittall personally certified — in his capacity as agent for SR LBK II — that he "shall obtain any applicable licenses or permits which may be required by federal, state, county or municipal law prior to commencement of the authorized work," and that he accepts "responsibility for compliance with all permit conditions."

The Town's argument from there is a closed loop: the state's own permit told Whittall he needed a Town permit. He signed the form acknowledging he would obtain one. He did obtain one — for the handrail. He never applied for one for the arch.

The complaint puts this in two sentences side by side: "SR LBK II thereafter complied with these conditions in the FDEP Field Permit when it undertook the construction of the handrail, with the posts and rope, by obtaining a Building Permit from the Town for such work in 2024.

SR LBK II, however, failed to comply with the FDEP Field Permit conditions prior to and as a condition for installing the arch and sign."

What Was Actually Drawn — and What Wasn't

Buried in the exhibits is a detail that may matter more than its placement suggests. The Field Permit application Whittall submitted to FDEP, the Town pleads, contained "plans provided details as to posts being installed on the surface perimeter of the groin, including how the posts would be affixed to the surface of the groin."

But: "it does not appear that the plans contained any details as to the installation of any sign or arch on the groin. Rather, the only indication in the plans as to sign or arch was a computer generated rendering of the groin with the posts and ropes installed along with an arch on the groin with a sign."

In other words: the engineering drawings showed posts and ropes. A separate artistic rendering showed an arch. The artistic rendering, the Town argues, is not engineering, and it is not a permit application. A judge will be asked to consider whether a watercolor of two people holding hands beneath an archway, attached to a Florida state field permit application, constitutes regulatory authorization for a 14-foot welded marine-stainless structure.

The same problem repeats at the Town level. When Duncan Seawall, Dock and Boat Lift, LLC, submitted SR LBK II's handrail building permit application to Longboat Key in February 2024, the complaint states, the application "did not include details or a request for the arch structure with signage." It depicted "3' 6" high, 8" x 8" timbers with holes in the timbers for 2" synthetic rope." The arch appears nowhere in the technical drawings — only, again, in an artistic rendering on a single 8.5" x 11" sheet tucked into the file.

The Town's position is that an arch you decline to engineer is an arch you never permitted.

The Four Code Violations

The complaint identifies four specific provisions of the Town's Code of Ordinances the arch and sign are alleged to violate.

Zoning Code Section 158.094(C) — the arch and sign "constitute a structure which was constructed seaward of the Erosion Control Line."

Zoning Code Section 158.099(A) — the arch and sign on the groin "constitute a structure over water, which is required to be permitted in accordance with the provisions of that Chapter."

Sign Code Section 156.05 — "the Town has never issued a permit to authorize the permanent sign, as required by Section 156.05."

Sign Code Section 156.07(C) — "the sign itself is prohibited under Section 156.07(C)."

These four numbered code citations, taken together, are the legal architecture on which the Town hopes to stand. The complaint concludes that "SR LBK/SR LBK II's failure to remove the arch and sign, after demand, and without having obtained a permit and/or a zoning exemption from the Town constitutes a violation of the Town's Zoning Code and Sign Code."

"Doubled Down": The Faux Greenery Comes Off

The most evocative single word in the complaint is doubled. It appears at paragraph 44. "Not only did SR LBK/SR LBK II not remove the arch and sign by that deadline," the Town writes of Friday's 5:00 PM deadline set by Town Manager Howard Tipton, "it 'doubled down' by removing the faux greenery which it had previously placed over the sign portion of the arch."

See St. Regis, page 3



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St. Regis, from page 2

That is news. During the months when SR LBK was pursuing the now-withdrawn Text Amendments, the company had agreed to cover the signage portion of the arch with faux greenery — fabric and silk foliage designed to obscure the “St. Regis” lettering and crown insignia from the beach. That covering, by Whittall’s own gesture, was the public-facing concession that the sign was at issue. Its removal — pleaded in the complaint as a deliberate act after the deadline passed — has now been entered into the court file as evidence of defiance.

For a circuit court judge weighing the equities of a mandatory injunction, “doubled down” is the kind of phrase that does work.

A Footnote on a Footnote: Did the State Permit Even Apply?

In Footnote 1 of the complaint, attached to paragraph 31, the Town raises a second, more technical attack on Whittall’s reliance on the FDEP Field Permit.

The Field Permit, on its face, expired on February 19, 2025. The arch and sign were constructed in August 2025 — six months after expiration. Florida law allows certain construction permits to be tolled and extended under § 252.263(1)(b), Fla. Stat., typically in connection with a declared state of emergency. But the Town says it has seen no evidence that SR LBK II ever filed the written notice that statute requires.

“While the Town currently presumes SR LBK II exercised its rights under §252.263(1)(b), Fla. Stat., to toll and extend the Field Permit beyond 2/19/2025,” the footnote reads, “the Town currently does not have any evidence of a written notice being provided to the FDEP in compliance with that statute. If no such notice was given, SR LBK II’s reliance on the Field Permit as its basis for installing the arch and sign is wholly unfounded for the simple reason that the Field Permit had expired by August 2025.”

Translated: the Town is reserving the right to argue that the state permit Whittall keeps invoking was not even in effect on the day the arch went up.

The Master Sign Permit That Wasn’t

The complaint also addresses, and dispenses with, an argument Whittall had floated earlier in the dispute — that the arch was covered under the existing master sign permit for the St. Regis development.

When the Town’s Director of Planning, Zoning & Building, Allen Parsons, first contacted SR LBK after the August 2025 installation to tell the company the arch was non-compliant, the complaint pleads, “Mr. Whittall responded that he was told the arch and sign was included within the master sign permit which the Town had previously given for the St. Regis development.”

Parsons replied, the complaint continues, that “the groin arch and sign was not part of a master sign permit, and that while Mr. Parsons was willing to talk to Mr. Whittall as to how he could seek to amend the Town’s Code of Ordinances, the sign would have to be removed, either permanently or until a Town Code change allowed the structure and sign to be located on the groin.”

The Town pleads that “SR LBK/SR LBK II did not remove the arch and sign as instructed by Mr. Parsons.”

Why “Irreparable Harm” Is Already Won

A plaintiff seeking a mandatory injunction in Florida normally has to prove four elements, one of which is irreparable harm — the kind of injury that cannot be undone with money damages. In ordinary litigation, that is a high bar.

In code enforcement litigation, the bar collapses. The Town’s complaint cites the Second District’s 2005 decision in *Ware v. Polk County*, 918 So.2d 977, for the proposition that “as SR LBK/SR LBK II has violated one or more of the provisions of the Town’s Code of Ordinances, and because the Town is seeking injunctive relief, irreparable harm is presumed and any alternative legal remedy is ignored.”

That single citation is the procedural reason this case is moving fast. The Town does not have to prove damages. It does not have to quantify lost tax revenue or aesthetic injury. It has to prove that the arch violates the code. If it does, under *Ware*, the injunction follows almost automatically.

The Defendants’ Address — and a Telling Land Map

Exhibit 1 to the complaint is an aerial map of the Town’s territorial boundaries, marked in red, depicting Longboat Key from its north end on Anna Maria Sound to its south end at New Pass. The Town has filed it to make the affirmative case that the groin — and the structures on it — fall within municipal jurisdiction.

Exhibit 2 is the eight-page Florida DEP Field Permit Whittall has been citing as his authority. It is the document whose own Special Conditions, the Town now argues, refute the very position Whittall has built around it.

Exhibit 3 is a developer’s sketch of the arch itself, prepared by K&G Marine of Davie, Florida, for “Unicorp National Developments Inc., Att.: George Giebel, St Regis Sign,” dated April 28, 2025. It depicts the structure in cross-section: a flanged I-beam frame, twelve feet tall, with welded marine stainless steel, the letters “ST. REGIS” across the apex, “LONGBOAT KEY” below it, and the crown medallion on top. The arch shown in Exhibit 3 is the arch the Town wants demolished.

That an internal engineering drawing exists, dated April 2025, prepared months before the arch was installed in August 2025, will likely become its own piece of evidence. It establishes the structure was professionally designed and detailed — and that the design, with all its specifics, was never submitted to the Town for permit review.

What the Court Is Being Asked to Do

The complaint’s “WHEREFORE” clause — the formal statement of the relief sought — asks the court to do four things:

First, to enter a Final Judgment finding that SR LBK and SR LBK II violated Sections 158.094(C), 158.099(A), 156.05, and 156.07 of the Town’s Code of Ordinances.

Second, to enter a Permanent Mandatory Injunction “directing and ordering that SR LBK, LLC and SR LBK II, LLC immediately remove the arch and sign which have been illegally installed on the groin.”

Third, to reserve the court’s jurisdiction to enforce the terms of that injunction — a standard provision that allows the judge to hold further hearings and impose sanctions if the order is ignored.

Fourth, to award costs in favor of the Town and against SR LBK and SR LBK II.

Notably, the complaint does not ask for attorney’s fees in its WHEREFORE clause — consistent with what Town Attorney Maggie Mooney told the Town Commission on May 4: “I cannot guarantee this commission that we will recover attorney’s fees and costs.”

The Town wants the structure down. It wants its costs back. Beyond that, it is asking the court for nothing it has not been promised by statute.

Litigation Is the Substrate of This Property

Anyone surprised that the St. Regis arch is heading to court has not been paying attention to the eighteen acres on which it stands. Litigation is not an interruption of life on this parcel — it is the geological layer beneath everything built on it. Strip away the cabanas, the wedding lawn, the porte-cochère, the boardwalk, and the groin, and what you find at the bedrock is forty years of legal filings. In 1988, Colony founder Dr. Murray “Murf” Klauber sued the Town of Longboat Key after the Town pulled his building permit for a luxury spa condominium called The Reserve. Eight years later, a federal jury awarded him nearly \$9 million for civil rights violations, and the Town settled for \$6.5 million in cash in March 1997. In 2007, Klauber sued his own Colony condo owners over \$14.1 million in disputed repair costs. In 2009, Bank of America foreclosed on him. By 2010, the Colony was closed; by 2013, Klauber had thrown three of his Colony companies into Chapter 11 to stall a Sarasota foreclosure hearing. The bankruptcy court eventually wrested the property from his hands. He died in 2018, the same year the buildings came down.

Then came Whittall’s turn at the wheel. After buying the wreckage in 2016 for \$22 million, Unicorp spent the next five years in court against Tennessee developer Andy Adams, who controlled seventy-five units and refused to sell at Whittall’s price — a dispute the local press christened the Colony’s “Battle of Gettysburg.” Other unit owners filed their own motions and their own threats to challenge the Town’s approval of the project. Judge Hunter W. Carroll spent years parsing the resulting tangle before the condominium association was judicially terminated in 2021. By the time Whittall settled with Adams that April for somewhere north of \$15 million, he estimated his total spend on the property and demolition — before a single new wall went up — at approximately \$80 million. Now, having battled the Klaubers’ aftermath, the holdout unit owners, and the bankruptcy court, Whittall is set to battle the Town that approved his project in the first place. The arch dispute is not the first courtroom this parcel has seen. It is just the next stratum.

What Whittall Said Last Week

Against the backdrop of the complaint, Whittall’s statements to this newspaper last week now read as the public-relations companion to a position about to be tested in court.

“The state gave us a permit to build a groin, do ropes and columns and put a sign on it,” Whittall said. “Maggie Mooney said she does not agree. The state said they are the proper agency. We believe we have rightly built the sign.”

Garcia’s complaint replies: the state permit said the opposite. The state permit said local codes apply. Whittall’s own signature certified it.

“It is not offensive — it is beautiful,” Whittall said. “It looks like a 1950s Monaco pier.”

The complaint does not address beauty. It addresses Section 158.094(C).

“We will fight it on every level, whether it’s the Florida Supreme Court,” Whittall said.

He may yet. But the appellate ladder begins in the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, and the rung labeled *Town of Longboat Key v. SR LBK, LLC and SR LBK II, LLC* has now been set in place.

What Tipton Said

Town Manager Howard Tipton, after Whittall’s Friday 5:00 PM phone call telling him the arch would not come down, declined to escalate the rhetoric.

“I appreciate that he created a great resort out of the dilapidated Colony, and so much effort to buy the individual units,” Tipton said. “Chuck wants to work together. It is not going through Town Code Enforcement. It is going straight to circuit court.”

Thursday afternoon, that prediction became a docket entry.

What Happens Next

SR LBK and SR LBK II will be served with the complaint and summons in the coming days. Florida’s Rules of Civil Procedure give them twenty days from the date of service to file an answer or a motion to dismiss. Given Whittall’s stated litigation posture and the depth of Unicorp’s legal bench, a motion to dismiss is likely — testing the Town’s jurisdictional theory before the case ever reaches discovery.

If the motion to dismiss is denied, the case will move to discovery: depositions of Whittall, of Parsons, of Mooney, of Tipton, of Duncan Seawall personnel, possibly of the K&G Marine designer who drew Exhibit 3. Document production will likely reach into Unicorp’s correspondence with FDEP, with K&G Marine, and with the Town’s own Planning and Zoning office.

A hearing on the Town’s request for a permanent injunction — and possibly an earlier hearing on a temporary injunction — will eventually be set by the assigned judge.

Whittall has promised to take the case to the Florida Supreme Court if necessary. The Town has promised to pursue cost recovery without guaranteeing it. The arch, draped no longer in faux greenery, now bears the more permanent covering of a case caption: *Town of Longboat Key, Florida, Plaintiff, v. SR LBK, LLC, and SR LBK II, LLC, Defendants.*

A judge will decide the rest.

The Complaint for Mandatory Injunctive Relief was filed at 2:19:05 p.m. on May 15, 2026, in the Twelfth Judicial Circuit in and for Sarasota County, Florida. Filing # 248297089. Special counsel for the Town is Martin Garcia of GarciaDell, P.A., 1819 Main Street, Suite 300, Sarasota.

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EditorLetters



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Mar Vista Restaurant

To: Longboat Key Planning and Zoning Director Allen Parsons
Thanks Allen!
Sarah Karon
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

Mar Vista

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Sarah Karon
Thanks Commissioner. A team investigation with Police, the Fire Marshal and Code Enforcement is underway. I will be responding back to Ms. Lopez when that's complete and will provide a copy of the results to Tip to share with you.
Allen Parsons
Planning and Zoning Director
Town of Longboat Key

Mar Vista Restaurant

To: Longboat Key Planning and Zoning Director Allen Parsons
Will your code officers be investigating this complaint? Please let me know status, thanks.
Sarah Karon
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

Mar Vista Restaurant

To: Longboat Key Commission
I am writing to formally report several safety and compliance concerns with Mar Vista Restaurant.
I have observed the following issues that require immediate attention:
Is Mar Vista a restaurant or a wedding venue? How does the town determine occupancy if it is a wedding venue over a restaurant?
- Capacity Violations: The restaurant appears to be seating patrons well beyond the legal capacity limits.
- Illegal Parking: There is frequent illegal parking associated with the establishment, which is impacting the surrounding area.
- Safety Hazards: The overcrowding and blocked access points present a significant danger

to patrons in the event of an emergency.

- Traffic Congestion: The high volume of visitors and poor parking management are causing substantial traffic issues in the neighborhood.

I am bringing these matters to your attention to ensure the safety of the public and compliance with local laws. Please let me know if you require any further information to investigate these concerns. Thank you for your assistance.

Patti Lopez
Longboat Key

Request and Strong Support for 78-Foot Clearance Coquina Bridge Option

To: Ralph Haschke

I am so sorry. I had three other email pages opened and mistyped. Your points are well taken and as I mentioned earlier will be entered into the official record. On another note this afternoon at 3:15 is our disaster preparedness seminar, it's at the longboat Key Cub Harborside ballroom, we would love to see you there.

Gary Coffin
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

Request and Strong Support for 78-Foot Clearance Coquina Bridge Option

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Gary Coffin

See Letters, page 5

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EditorOpinion

The St. Regis Arch: A saga in which nobody looks especially smart, including, and I cannot stress this enough, me

A Humble Editorial, In Which We Try, And Fail, To Understand How A Town Of 7,500 People Has Spent Approximately The Gross Domestic Product Of A Small Caribbean Nation Arguing About A Sign.

STEVE REID
Editor & Publisher
sreid@lbknews.com

I would like to begin by saying that I love Longboat Key. I love its dolphins, its sea oats, its astonishingly well-organized recycling pickup, and the way the entire island achieves an unspoken collective consensus, around 9:47 p.m. every evening, that it is now bedtime.

But I am here to report, with great sadness and only mild caffeineation, that we have lost our minds. We have, as a community, become so deeply invested in the question of whether a fourteen-foot piece of welded marine-grade stainless steel may exist on a concrete groin sticking into the Gulf of America (formerly Mexico, formerly Mexico, currently Mexico, depending on who is reading your map) that future archaeologists are going to dig us up and assume we worshipped it.

A Brief, Helpful Timeline For Newcomers

In August of 2025, the St. Regis built an arch. The arch was beautiful. The arch was also unpermitted. This is the equivalent of showing up to a wedding wearing a tuxedo you sewed yourself out of curtains: people may admire the workmanship, but they will also wonder why you did not, at any point, consult the bride.

The Town said: take it down.

The St. Regis said: but it's so pretty.

The Town said: we have a Code.

The St. Regis said: but Instagram.

And thus began The Year Of The Arch, an extended period of municipal anguish during which approximately every adult on this island has been asked to develop, defend, and possibly tattoo onto their forearm a personal position on signage policy.

The Draping Of The Sign, Or, We Have Become A Nation Of Faux-Greenery People

For most of the past year, the offending sign portion of the arch was covered in faux greenery, which is a phrase I never expected to type, much less type repeatedly. I will say, in defense of faux greenery, that it represents a noble Floridian compromise: when in doubt, cover the problem with something that looks like a plant.

Then, last Friday at 5:00 p.m. — a deadline set by Town Manager Howard Tipton, who I imagine has not slept since approximately Labor Day — the developer removed the faux greenery. The Town's lawsuit, which I have read in its entirety because apparently this is my life now, describes this as "doubling down." It is the only time in recorded legal history that the phrase "doubled down" has been deployed in reference to fabric foliage, and I would like that fact to be entered into the Congressional Record.

Things The Town Has Now Produced In Connection With This Arch

A constitutional memorandum. Two ordinances. A draft Text Amendment. A second draft Text Amendment. A withdrawal of both draft Text Amendments. Two Planning and Zoning

Board denials. One Town Commission resolution. One special counsel engagement letter. One 5:00 p.m. deadline. One phone call. And, as of Thursday afternoon at 2:19 p.m., one thirteen-page Complaint for Mandatory Injunctive Relief, plus three exhibits, plus several attached aerial photographs in which our beautiful island looks, from space, like a thin and indignant fish.

Things The Developer Has Now Produced In Connection With This Arch

The arch.

The Quotes Era

In recent weeks, we have entered what historians will surely call The Quotes Era. Chuck Whittall, the developer, has compared the arch to "a 1950s Monaco pier," which is a wonderful image except for the part where Monaco is not actually known for piers, but rather for casinos, royalty, and Formula One drivers behaving badly on yachts. He has called the arch "an Instagram memory moment," which I am told is a thing, and "a true landmark," which it is rapidly becoming, though not in the way he intended. He has also informed us he will fight this case to the Florida Supreme Court, which is the legal equivalent of telling your spouse you will die on this hill, except that you have rented the hill, the hill is on state submerged land, and the hill is currently in litigation.

Town Attorney Maggie Mooney, by contrast, has produced sentences containing phrases like "content-neutral regulation" and "Section 158.094(C)," and I would just like to take a moment to thank her, because somebody has to be the grownup, and apparently it is going to be a woman with footnote citations.

What This Is Really About

It is not, of course, about the arch.

It is about whether a town gets to enforce its rules against a developer who has spent \$600 million, employs more attorneys than several Caribbean nations have citizens, and possesses an absolutely magnificent ability to call things landmarks until they become landmarks.

It is also about whether the rest of us — the people who actually went down to Town Hall and got a permit to build a pergola — feel like chumps. (For the record: yes. We feel like chumps.)

A Modest Proposal

I propose the Town and the developer settle this immediately, as follows: the arch stays, but every wedding photo taken beneath it must include, in the corner, in small print, the text "PHOTOGRAPHED IN VIOLATION OF SECTIONS 158.094(C), 158.099(A), 156.05, AND 156.07 OF THE TOWN OF LONGBOAT KEY CODE OF ORDINANCES, IRREPARABLE HARM IS PRESUMED, SEE WARE V. POLK COUNTY, 918 SO. 2D 977."

You're welcome. I'll be at the beach.

The opinions expressed in this editorial are those of the editorial writer and not necessarily those of his attorney or his psychologist.



REID

EditorLetters

Letters, from page 4

Thank you for your reply, not sure if you were trying to reply to "Frank" or maybe just mistook my name. I'm sure you get many emails ongoing.

No worries, I was trying to just give my opinion and many other residents I come into contact with etc. and wanted to mention the position.

I wanted to also check on the status of the overall proposal/solution and what happens next?

Ralph Haschke

Longboat Key

Request and Strong Support for 78-Foot Clearance Coquina Bridge Option

To: Ralph Haschke

Well said Frank, and thank you for your feedback. Your position will be so noted in the official town records.

Gary Coffin

Commissioner

Town of Longboat Key

Request and Strong Support for 78-Foot Clearance Coquina

Bridge Option

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Gary Coffin

I am writing to formally request a status update on the Coquina Bridge replacement project. As a longtime visitor and resident for five years on Longboat Key, I am tracking this project closely. I want to express my 100% unequivocal support for the 78-foot fixed-span clearance bridge option.

Many fellow longtime residents share this position but many stay quiet. I've spoken with many residents here and they are fully onboard for a new high clearance bridge. We view the fixed-span high-clearance bridge as the only logical effective choice to future-proof Longboat Key. I've added some reasoning below that you may have seen many times already but wanted to reiterate again here. The high clearance bridge offers clear long-term advantages over a low-level drawbridge:

Eliminates Operating Costs: No bridge tenders are required. (needed drastically due to continued rising improvement costs)

Lowers Maintenance Fees: Fixed concrete structures eliminate expensive mechanical repairs.

Improves Traffic Flow: constant delays from drawbridge openings. (This happens many times and only notice when living on the island and the flow of traffic is severely hampered for openings during the in-season it is so bad the north end of the island is completely un-usable)

Enhances Emergency Access: Evacuation routes remain uninterrupted during storms for effective and proper emergencies.

See Letters, page 6

Editor Letters



Letters, from page 4

Ensures Marine Access: The 78-foot clearance accommodates most every modern larger vessels very reliably. (this will accommodate all vessels and eliminate accidents as recent as a week or two ago where a sailboat mast was damaged by hitting the drawbridge not opening in time due to a problem with the sail boat.

Building a new drawbridge will only commit our town to decades of avoidable operational expenses, traffic bottlenecks, bridge accidents, and constant continued maintenance that won't end. We must invest in a permanent, high-clearance structure to safeguard our infrastructure and taxpayer funds.

Could you please provide the current timeline for the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study? Please also share the dates for the next public comment window.

Thank you very much for your time, dedication, and consideration of our community's long-term future. I've added my number below should you need to reach out to me. I've also forwarded my original letter to Mr. David Turley project manager for the project below showing my support earlier this year for the project when announced.

Ralph Haschke
Longboat Key

Longboat Pass Bridge Replacement

Florida Department of Transportation, District One
To: Florida Department of Transportation Project Manager David Turley

I am writing in strong support of replacing the existing Longboat Pass Bridge with a modern, future ready structure that will safely and reliably serve Longboat Key, Bradenton Beach, and the greater region for the next 75 years and beyond.

The current bridge, as you know was constructed in 1957, is now nearing 70 years of service and has been formally classified as functionally obsolete, primarily due to substandard should-

ers, safety barriers, and its inability to meet modern transportation and evacuation needs. While the bridge has served the community well, continued reliance on a structure that has definitely exceeded its intended design life places increasing safety, operational, and financial burdens on residents and the State of Florida.

Why Rebuilding and Future Proofing Is the Responsible Choice

1. Public Safety and Modern Standards

A replacement bridge designed to current standards would significantly improve safety by widening the deck and providing dedicated pedestrian and bicycle facilities, addressing long standing hazards for non motorized users. The existing bridge's narrow configuration no longer reflects accepted safety standards for a primary evacuation and commuter route.

2. Emergency Evacuation Reliability

The existing drawbridge opens frequently, regularly stopping traffic and creating bottlenecks. A high level fixed span would eliminate draw openings altogether, providing uninterrupted access during hurricanes, medical emergencies, and large scale evacuations—an essential consideration for a barrier island community.

3. Long Term Cost Effectiveness

From a lifecycle perspective, a fixed span bridge avoids the substantial long term operating, staffing, and mechanical maintenance costs associated with drawbridges. Building once, correctly, and durably is fiscally responsible and reduces the likelihood of repeated, disruptive construction cycles.

4. Climate and Coastal Resilience

A new bridge can be engineered to withstand sea level rise, storm surge, and corrosive marine conditions using modern materials and design standards—capabilities the existing structure cannot realistically achieve through continued repairs alone.

5. Support from the Marine Community

Many local fishermen, recreational boaters, and marine operators support a modern replace-

See Letters, page 7



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Sandra Smith | 941.383.3388

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EditorLetters



Letters, from page 6

ment bridge. A fixed span design reduces unpredictable delays, eliminates navigation conflicts caused by frequent openings, and improves safety and efficiency within the pass. For those who work and recreate on the water, consistent and reliable clearances are a clear operational improvement.

6. Economic Stability and Opportunity for the North End

Reliable access is essential not only for residents, but for workers, service providers, and visitors. Eliminating routine traffic stoppages will improve access to the north end of Longboat Key, encouraging thoughtful reinvestment and long term economic stability aligned with the character of the area.

Coordinated Infrastructure Improvements: Drainage and Dredging

As part of this once in a generation infrastructure investment, I respectfully encourage coordination with partner agencies to pursue complementary improvements to neighborhood drainage systems and strategic dredging in the project area.

Recurring flooding during heavy rainfall and king tide events continues to impact nearby roads and properties, while sediment accumulation affects drainage performance and navigability. Aligning bridge construction with drainage upgrades and targeted dredging—where environmentally appropriate—would reduce chronic flooding, improve storm resilience, enhance waterway function, and maximize the public benefit of the overall investment.

Managing Tourism Demand and Funding Infrastructure Through User Based Fees

Finally, I encourage consideration—by the appropriate local and county authorities—of tourism based access and parking management strategies for the Coquina Beach and Bradenton Beach areas.

Seasonal visitor traffic is a primary contributor to congestion on the Longboat Pass Bridge and surrounding roadways. Implementing measures such as paid parking, beach access fees, or resident priority parking programs—approaches used successfully in many coastal destinations; could help manage peak season demand while ensuring that those who place the greatest strain on infrastructure also contribute to its upkeep.

Revenue generated through such programs could be dedicated to:

- Roadway resurfacing and pavement improvements,
- Flood mitigation and drainage upgrades,
- Dredging and waterway maintenance,
- Transit and traffic management solutions, and
- Partial recovery of long term bridge construction and maintenance costs.

This approach would reduce congestion, improve visitor experience, and provide a sustainable funding source for infrastructure improvements without placing additional financial burden on year round residents.

Planning for Future Generations

Major bridges are generational assets. Decisions made today will shape safety, mobility, and

resilience for decades. Choosing a future proof design ensures that today's community does not leave tomorrow's residents with avoidable risks, higher costs, or limited options. Preserving quality of life means not only honoring the past, but responsibly preparing for the future.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical project and for considering the long term interests of the entire region. I appreciate FDOT's continued public engagement and technical diligence as this process moves forward.

I'm happy to discuss with you further and also help advocate if necessary, but honestly this is a no-brainer. Thank you very much for your time Mr. Turley let's get the project started and get the path to the future for the north end of Longboat Key.

Ralph Haschke and Amy Holcombe
Longboat Key

Florida League of Cities Home Rule Award

To: Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton

Congratulations on being honored with the Florida League of Cities Home Rule Hero Award! This is a fantastic achievement, and I am truly delighted to help Savannah prepare the news release celebrating your accomplishment while she is away from the office. With the meeting originally scheduled for today now cancelled, we believe it's the perfect opportunity to move forward and share this exciting news without any further delay.

To make the announcement even more meaningful, I would love to include a brief quote from you in the release. Your words will add a personal touch and help emphasize the significance of this award, not only for you but also for our broader community. Your perspective will surely inspire others and highlight why this recognition matters.

Thank you in advance for taking a moment to share your thoughts. Once again, congratulations on this well-deserved honor! I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Tina Adams
Fire Administration & Communications Manager/PIO
Town of Longboat Key

Mar Vista Restaurant

To: Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton

They were not. Mar Vista met its parking requirements (with a combination of onsite spaces + credits (no longer available) for boat & bicycle parking). The satellite lot's excess spaces while, intended to serve the Mar Vista, were not required spaces.

Allen Parsons
Planning and Zoning Department
Town of Longboat Key



**JEFF
RHINELANDER**
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Jeff@jeffrhineland.com

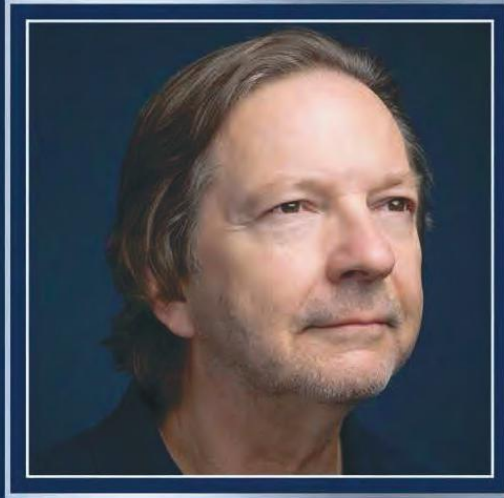


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Spotting Negative Friends and Fake Friends

**A long time friend asked me to write this story - fake friends HURT, give disappointments every day, and hide or destroy all hope and trust
Truth broken multiple times with no repentance = breaks TRUST and Hope broken multiple times without repentance = breaks FRIENDSHIP.
Hope is promise between two friends to build Hope, Trust, and loyalty of each other....**

Friends from the past, realize they (Faith and Hope as the characters herein) know the names of many, but essentially all are "fake friends" = hides or steals all hope. Both friends - the lead female and the lead male learn the Characteristics of True Friendship and Knowledge removes the weeds from the friends to find and defend hope - next both the female lead and the male lead learn how to teach people in this worldly journey about the Characteristics used to find and defend hope - they help others to find and defend hope....

As an important note this is about two lives meant to be one. This world separated them and then the misleading part of this world reminded both the boy and girl they were friends forever - reminding both they were meant to be a guiding light to teach the people in this world to be the strong guiding couple they were made to be - together.

As a Building Block - a life long friend once sent me an email visiting about hope. I replied -

Faith You and I Learning How To Spot Negative Friends (Fake People)

Faith I sincerely have a deeply felt and eternal need to be your friend. I also yearn for you to want me to be your friend. I have learned I will make changes to keep your emotions safe from this world and from me - that I will never hurt you from this moment to live for eternity. Faith please trust me with your tear of sorrow - form me to gently touch your cheek and place your tears on my heart to keep, hold forever more. I pledge to help you cope, help you to remember tears and cherish all the joys those tears are missing and hold your tears and laughter forevermore. I have courage, conviction, confidence to defend you, and our charity in a bound covenant I have for you and you have for me.

A few characteristics of a true friend are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Learning Fake Friends

Fake Friends will hide or destroy hope. They will be negative in your quest of finding and defending hope.

How do I spot and take actions to find fake and negative friends

How do I spot and take actions to find fake and friends in the group of friends I am sowing like the story of the planter who was sold the seeds of weeds for his planting in my crops (of fiends)

Faith is surrounded by the chill and darkness of negative and fake friends. Faith is tender hearted and feels hurt and pain when loved ones hurt. Recollect Faith and Hope first meeting after Hope's Long Absence:

Faith Tells Hope

"Hope, It's been very difficult for the years without you. I have not changed the reality of losing my loved ones - My Heart is breaking. My family - is just going. My loved ones have passed. My Love just gone, I don't have it anymore. PLEASE Hope walk with me - i don't want to be alone - PLEASE walk with me! I am hurting - always!!! Was I going to believe that true love never dies; what do i do for True Love? It's not here. Oh Hope help me. It's still dark. Oh Hope, I need you as a friend - returning after so many years. I have been looking in all the wrong places. There are so many lies, so many untold truths - I have put all my trust in all the wrong friends - i am so disappointed every day. Please stay with me to start this new day. I am chilled, the sunrise is only beginning - HOPE! "OH Hope where are you? The darkness continues to surround me! I AM COLD and ALONE! Does anyone understand, does anyone care? I need someone to walk with me, HOPE OH PLEASE be at my side..."

Faith sorely needs someone who understands her, feels her hurts, has a true need to be with her at her side to show her he understands and sincerely has true empathy. Hope and Faith can build together defenses to find and defend Elusive Hope by recognizing and turning their backs on the fake and negative friends and in the "other direction" they find each other, Loyalty, and Hope.

Hope Talks to Faith

Faith let's you and I work together to recognize fake friends and fake people. You and I will learn together and I will help you and you will help me to remove negative people and negative results from people in our lives -

Hope Tells Faith

Hey Faith let's work side by side to find and remove friends in our group who are negative about us as a couple and negative about helping to build us and hope for us everyday -

Faith let's work together because separately we might miss something or worse have been manipulated by selfish fake people. Let's reflect on fake relationships and set boundaries to protect us from negativity.

We need to identify behavior of friends to find fake friends- Faith my true love we need to work together to identify fake friends by discussing key traits, such as lack of genuine interest in our well-being, be sensitive to their dishonesty, and self-centered behavior.

Characteristics To Spot the Fake Friend

Find those who fight or do not believe in characteristics of friendship -

How do I spot and take actions to find fake friends in the group of friends I am sowing like the story of the planter having seeds of weeds in my crops (of fiends)

- Love
- joy,
- peace,
- patience,
- kindness, = How do I spot friends being fake about Kindness
- goodness,
- faithfulness,
- gentleness, and
- self-control
- truth

Instead - they seek all contradictions to those behaviors - They do not talk truth, they do not have self-control, etc.

The difference between true friends and relationships that only pretend to be faithful.

Think of genuine friendship — loyalty, sharpening, truth-telling.

Why guarding your relationships protects your personal purposes and characteristics help to defend Hope —

How do I spot friends being fake about Kindness

To spot fake kindness in friends, look for behaviors such as inconsistency between their words and body language, keeping score of favors, and a lack of genuine support during tough times. True kindness is selfless and consistent, while fake kindness often seeks validation or serves personal interests.

Kindness is the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate towards others, often demonstrated through acts of generosity or concern without expecting anything in return. It is a behavior that can improve well-being for both the giver and the receiver.

It is not being a bully and not being cruel or cold hearted.

A kind friend typically shows empathy, is supportive, and demonstrates honesty and loyalty. They respect your feelings and boundaries, making you feel valued and understood

How do I spot friends being fake about Joy

To spot fake friends regarding joy, look for signs that they drain your peace or only celebrate your successes without supporting you in difficult times. Genuine friends will encourage your spiritual growth and share in both your joys and struggles, reflecting the true fruits of the friendship like love and kindness.

A friend who brings you joy typically possesses traits such as kindness, positivity, and a good sense of humor. They are supportive, compassionate, and make you feel valued and understood, enhancing your overall happiness.

That friend REALLY cares about YOU unselfishly and expects nothing in return

- Positive Words and Thoughts
- Empathy
- Gratitude
- Humor

How do I spot friends being fake about Peace

Fake or Negative friends sometimes make your hurts, fears, concerns hurt even more. They just do not "get you." That is opposite of a caring, concerned friend who understands and cares.

Fake friends often create agitation rather than peace, as the True Friendship Connection imparts true peace that calms the soul. If you feel drained or unsettled after interactions with someone, it may indicate they are not genuinely supportive.

How To Tell if Someone's Speaking in the thinking of true concerned friendship? First reaching for you. Lack of soft questions of concern. Sometimes you start to feel uncomfortable what the friend is doing or suggesting.

A good friend typically exhibits traits such as honesty, trustworthiness, empathy, and supportive, which reflect strong moral values. The true friend prioritize your well-being, respect your feelings, and encourage positive behavior, creating a healthy and nurturing friendship.

- Good Morals
- Good Etiquette
- Truth
- No need to hide what the friend does, acts with you, or tells you
- Unselfish

Continued In Next Edition Of

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OnPatrol



The following are actual police reports as written by Longboat Key Police Officers. They are edited for length, punctuation and to protect privacy.

May 8 Wages of Wrath

8:19 a.m.

Officer Van Dyke, Officer Miano and Officer Pescuma responded to the 400 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for a report of a verbal argument between a former employee and staff. On scene the officer separated both parties. Officer Van Dyke spoke with the former employee who said she was on the premises to obtain a paycheck from the previous week when she felt management was trying to deny paying her owed weekly wages. She further said she was agitated with the staff and desperately needed the funds for rent. Then Officer Van Dyke interviewed the store manager who stated that the former employee had called out sick numerous times and was terminated due to that reason. She further explained they attempted to contact her earlier to obtain information to be able to pay her through direct deposit. The manager also advised they attempted to explain this to the former employee she became agitated and escalated the verbal argument. The manager advised the former employee that once she completes the direct deposit form, her owed monies will be in her account by close of business this day. The former employee completed the necessary form without further incident. Which was subsequently returned to the gas station to process. The gas station owner requested a formal trespass form be given to the former employee, which was done by Longboat Key Police Department. A copy of the trespass warning was given to the gas station management. A copy was also issued and explained to the former employee. The former employee was advised of the trespass warning particulars and further advised the warning is in place for one year. Longboat Key Police Department's agency copy with both parties signature and the former employee's right thumb print was completed. A teletype for the trespass warning was sent to the Sarasota Sheriff's Office Dispatch for entry and future reference. No further action. Case clear.

May 9 The Mystery Mako

3:42 p.m.

Officer Van Dyke responded to the 300 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to a suspicious boat. A white Mako was observed to be tied down to a post in the ground in proximity to the mentioned location. Upon further investigation, the registration was determined to belong to a member of the Club. The security guard stated that he will take care of the situation going forward. Case clear.

Saw You at 5:23

5:11 p.m.

Officer Miano and Officer Pescuma responded to Hibiscus Way for a town ordinance violation of noise in the area. On scene with the complainant, officers observed and heard power tools being used around 5:23 p.m. Officer Pescuma interviewed the subcontractor and was observed utilizing a table saw at 5:23 p.m. The company was issued a citation for violating town ordinance of not using power equipment after 5 p.m. Case clear.

Tangled Up in Line

6:58 p.m.

Officer Troyer responded to the 2300 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for an injured seabird caught in fishing line near the pool area. On scene and located the seabird caught in fishing line in the vicinity of the pool. The seabird was freed from the pool area, but refused to cooperate to remove the remaining fishing line from its wing. The seabird was also observed with a badly injured wing. The seabird fled to the nearby beach brush where they couldn't access the same area. There were multiple attempts to flush the seabird out of the brush were met with negative results. The seabird fled deeper into the brush where they could no longer able to observe its whereabouts. Officers advised staff to call the police department to further assist if the seabird retreats from the thick brush. Case clear.



May 10 Ex Marks the Spot

6:36 p.m.

Officer Tillman responded to the 4000 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive. Upon arrival, it was determined that the complainant had a previous relationship with the woman. The man explained that the two had a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship until two months ago when the two went their separate ways. The man stated that since then, she has blocked his number from several devices and still feels as if she is being followed.

On this date, the woman approached her boyfriend and her family on the beach and stated that he wanted to talk. He said that he was not willing to talk and that if he did not leave, she was calling the police. The boyfriend stated that she lives an hour away from this location and there is no way this was a coincidence. The woman is a full-time resident of South Africa and does frequent the United States. The boyfriend also stated at no time did the confrontation become violent and there is no signs of physical violence in the past. The girlfriend said she wanted a police report documented in case of future involvement. Case clear.

May 11 Hot Hood, Cold Case

2:00 a.m.

Sgt. Montfort while on patrol in the 3900 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive, observed a vehicle parked in front of a residence under construction. Sgt. Montfort had recently patrolled through the area and did not observe the vehicle previously. The residence is currently under construction and feared a burglary may be occurring. Sgt. Montfort pulled into the lot and observed that the vehicle was hot to the touch and was recently parked. Shortly thereafter, Sgt. Montfort observed movement inside of the residence and a man was walking out the front door. Sgt. Montfort announced his presence and his reason for the contact. The man was from Mexico City and is currently in the U.S. working for a construction company who is working at the residence. The man produced a work order which displayed his name. The man stated he normally stays in Palmetto and that he did not want to sit in traffic on his way to work. Sgt. Montfort inquired if a certificate of occupancy was issued but he was unsure. The man was sent on his way without incident. Case clear.

May 12 Served, Not Scammed

9:02 a.m.

Officer Maple was dispatched to Dream Island Road for an officer standby call. The call was in reference to a civil process serving by Manatee County Sheriff Office Deputy Cowling to the complainant. Upon his arrival, Officer Maple met with the Deputy and complainant who was concerned of a possible scam attempt by someone acting as a law enforcement officer. Officer Maple stood by as the woman was served without incident. Case clear.

Keys to Nowhere

11:02 a.m.

Officer Zunz responded to the front desk of the police department for a Public Works employee who wanted to turn over a set of found keys he had been given by a resident. Officer Zunz tried to find the owner through his contact at the Post Office came back negative. The keys were placed into a temporary storage locker for safe keeping.

May 13 The Manatee Vanishing Act

10:33 a.m.

Officer Miano and Officer Pescuma responded to Binnacle Point Drive for an injured manatee. On scene with the caller, the officers observed two manatees in the water, adjacent to the shore. The manatees were alerted to their presence and fled the area, unable to see if the manatees were injured. Case clear.

Casting in the Wrong Place

7:33 p.m.

Officer Pescuma was dispatched to Bay Isles Parkway in reference to a suspicious person. The caller reported a man fishing on the golf course. Upon arriving on scene, Officer Pescuma observed a man fishing. The security guard and Officer Pescuma made contact with the man and advised him that he is not allowed to fish on the golf course, whereas it is private property. The man said he was unaware and departed the area without incident. Case clear.

May 14 Leash Lessons

1:42 p.m.

Officer Van Dyke responded to the area of the 7000 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to an animal problem. Responding officers located an unleashed dog and advised the owner to keep the dog leashed or on the boat. The subject was compliant and the dog was relocated to the boat. Case clear.

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BreakPoints



Why Your Tennis Game Has Multiple Personality Disorder (And How to Cure It Before Tuesday's Doubles)

In recreational tennis, you may face a 45-year-old ex-college player ripping 80-mph topspin in game one, followed in game two by a charming retired orthodontist whose forehand travels at the velocity of a slowly deflating birthday balloon.

STEVE REID
Editor & Publisher
sreid@lbknews.com

Recreational tennis on Longboat Key is not actually a sport. It is, according to a study I just invented, approximately eight different sports played simultaneously by people who have not bothered to inform each other which sport is currently in session.

You arrive at the courts at 10 a.m. expecting tennis. What you get is a doubles match in which your opponent across the net is a Hard Hitter who appears to have replaced his right arm with a leaf blower, while his partner is an 84-year-old gentleman named Walter who has taken 11,000 lessons and now hits a backhand slice so vicious and slow that the ball actually stops over the net, considers its options, files a brief tax return, and then trickles onto your side of the court while you stand at the baseline screaming at your feet, which have unionized and refuse to move.

This is the central tragedy of amateur tennis, and the reason therapists in Sarasota all drive Mercedes.



REID

Why the Pros Don't Have This Problem (And It's Annoying)

On television, Sinner and Alcaraz hit balls at one another that travel at roughly the speed of light, generating about the same amount of pace. There is rhythm. There is calibration. There is flow.

This is because they are professionals, which is the technical term for "people who do not have to play their dermatologist on Wednesday."

In recreational tennis, you may face a 45-year-old ex-college player ripping 80-mph topspin in game one, followed in game two by a charming retired orthodontist whose forehand travels at the velocity of a slowly deflating birthday balloon. Your brain, which is busy thinking about lunch, cannot recalibrate this fast. Your brain was not designed for this. Your brain wants to lie down.

Meet the Slice-and-Dicers

The Slice-and-Dice player is a Longboat institution. He or she has taken so many lessons that the local pro now drives a boat. They cut. They dink. They use angles invented by 14th-century geometers. They take pace off, give pace back, and somehow do it all while wearing a visor and saying "lovely shot" in a tone that suggests they pity you.

The challenge: they give you nothing. You must generate every ounce of pace yourself. Over-cook it and the ball lands in the parking lot. Under-cook it and you've fed them a marshmallow, and they will hit a drop shot so devastating you'll briefly consider pickleball.

How to Survive the Slice-and-Dicer

Real advice, free of charge:

Bend your knees like you mean it. Slice balls stay low. Stand up straight and try to muscle one, and you will hit it into the net, then the net post, then your shin.

Shorten your backswing. A huge loopy swing on a slow ball is how you end up in someone's pool.

Brush up aggressively. You must generate your own topspin. Low-to-high, racket face slightly closed, finishing high over the opposite shoulder. Think of it as scooping ice cream — slow ice cream, the kind you have to work for.

Move forward. The slice sits up briefly before it dies. Attack it on the rise. Do not let it bounce twice, which is technically a point against you in most rule books.

Take the angle off. Hit through the middle deep. Trying to thread a winner off a low slow ball is how unforced errors are born.

Meet the Cannonball People

The Hard Hitter, by contrast, strikes every ball as if it personally insulted his mother. The good news: he gives you all the pace you need. The bad news: he gives you all the pace you need.

How to Survive the Cannonball People

Shorten everything. Backswing, follow-through, expectations.

Block and redirect. You don't need to swing. You need to put the racket face in the right place and let physics do the work, the way physics has been begging you to since high school.

Step in early. Taking the ball on the rise gives him less time to recover and makes you look like you know what you're doing, which is the entire goal of recreational sports.

Aim higher over the net. You don't need to flatten it. He's already flattened it for you.

The Serve Lottery

Serving on Longboat is a separate horror. One opponent dishes up a soft pat that arrives at your service box looking apologetic. The next one hits what is technically known as a Pancake Serve, because it is flat, hot, and lands on your plate before you've found a fork.

Adjust your stance: stand closer for the patty-cake server (you'll need to generate pace yourself), stand back and shorten your swing for the cannonball. And watch the toss — the toss tells you everything. Way out in front means flat and fast. Over the head means kick or slice. A toss with a tremor means his rotator cuff has feelings.

The First Three Balls Rule

Whatever style you're facing, give yourself three balls to calibrate every match — and after every changeover against a different opponent. Don't try to win the point on ball one. Rally. Feel the pace. Feel the spin. Feel your knees, which at this age have opinions.



Pros do this too. They just do it during warm-up, because they are not also trying to remember whether they fed the dog.

The Mental Reset

Between points, breathe. Adjust your strings, even though the strings are fine. Tell yourself a single instruction — "low to high" or "block and step in" — not seventeen. Tennis is not a multi-tasking sport, despite what your inner monologue claims.

If you are losing 6-0 to a 78-year-old slice artist named Bev, this is normal. Bev has played 6,000 matches against people exactly like you. Bev will be fine.

Final Thought

The variety isn't going away. Embrace it. Recreational tennis isn't about the consistency of your opponent; it's about the consistency of you. Bend the knees. Shorten the backswing on fast stuff. Brush up on slow stuff. Pick one cue per point. Breathe.

And if all else fails, remember: pickleball does not care about your forehand.

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Flood Fixes, from page 1

for ways to hold back the tide. Next Monday, on May 18, 2026, the Longboat Key Town Commission will convene for a critical Regular Workshop. At the heart of the agenda is Item 4A—an actionable discussion that cuts straight to the core of island survival: the deployment of freestanding flood-control barriers, commonly known as “Aqua Dams”.

As climate-charged storms become more frequent and insurance costs skyrocket, desperate property owners are turning to modern, rapid-deployment solutions. Traditional sandbags are being replaced by an exploding market of freestanding flood barriers. According to Town Planning, Zoning & Building Director Allen Parsons, the U.S. market for these fillable barriers is projected to grow by 7.4% annually, reaching \$600 million by 2033. Florida, naturally, is anticipated to be among the highest in adopting these measures.

The Rise of the Aqua Dam

Homeowners and businesses are investing heavily in various systems to ring-fence their properties against the rising waters. The most common types include:

- **Modular and L-Shaped Barriers:** Interlocking systems that brilliantly use the weight of the floodwater itself to anchor the units to the ground.
- **Water-Filled Tubes:** Heavy-duty PVC tubes filled with onsite water to create a massive, durable berm that can be stacked to reach significant heights.
- **Inflatable and Air-Filled Barriers:** Lightweight membranes that use air to conform to uneven terrain.
- **Door & Window Shields:** Temporary structures that provide a watertight seal for entryways without requiring permanent hardware.

A False Sense of Security? The Hidden Dangers

But as the old island saying goes, water always wins. Trying to cheat the ocean can sometimes lead to disastrous, unintended consequences. Recognizing this, the Town engaged Del Schwalls, an environmental engineer with 25 years of experience in floodplain management, to investigate the real-world implications of these barriers in hurricane storm-surge environments. His findings, which will be presented to the Commission for direction, serve as a stark warning.

The core issue lies in the brutal physics of a hurricane. Freestanding barriers that rely on hydrostatic pressure (the force of standing water) are not designed to resist hydrodynamic pressure (the violent force of moving water and crashing coastal waves). Schwalls noted a

particularly dangerous scenario: inflatable barriers filled with air or fresh water are inappropriate in saltwater environments, as they will have significantly increased buoyancy and a greater chance of failure due to flotation. In the midst of a tidal surge, these barriers can easily detach and transform into massive, destructive storm debris.

The Neighbor Effect: When Protection Causes Destruction

Even more concerning is what experts call the “neighbor effect.” When perimeter barriers are erected around multiple properties, they displace the massive volume of floodwater. In a storm surge, when violent waves encounter a solid freestanding wall, the wave energy doesn’t simply disappear—it is diverted.

This diverted energy potentially increases the storm surge velocity and scour on adjacent, unprotected properties. It forces the water vertically or horizontally, often resulting in devastating damage to the upper floors of neighboring buildings that would otherwise be safely above the inundation level. In their desperate attempt to save their own properties, well-meaning residents could inadvertently be flooding and destroying their neighbors’ homes.

Charting a Course for Safe Resilience

Currently, under guidance from the Florida Division of Emergency Management and FEMA, the deployment of freestanding flood-control measures that do not involve altering or modifying a building does not require permits. But given the life-safety issues and the unique threat of coastal storm surge, Schwalls and Town staff are investigating whether the Town should consider some form of permitting or helpful guidance.

To prevent chaotic and dangerous deployments, the Town is exploring requirements that would mandate an engineering evaluation by a registered professional engineer before these barriers can be used. Homeowners would need to definitively prove through analyses that their barriers will not increase flood depths, wave action, or scour on adjacent properties. Furthermore, the barriers would need to be certified to withstand the calculated surge, wave, and wind forces of Longboat Key’s specific coastal environment, ensuring they are properly anchored.

The intense, actionable discussion scheduled for next Monday represents a turning point for Longboat Key. It is a sobering acknowledgment that as the waters continue to rise, the community cannot afford a “Wild West” approach to flood mitigation. Survival on the barrier island will require more than just individual ingenuity; it will demand collective responsibility, strict engineering standards, and a unified front against the encroaching sea.

Budget, from page 1

ment, Monday’s workshop will set the tone for how Longboat Key balances its ambitious resiliency goals with fiscal responsibility.

The Big Picture: Managing Costs Amid Rising Pressures

Town Manager Howard Tipton has provided early guidance emphasizing fiscal responsibility, maintaining essential services, and growing the town’s resiliency. However, the budget faces several external pressures and macroeconomic headwinds.

The town is projecting a modest 4% to 5% increase in property values, reflecting a softening real estate market. While property values are the primary engine for the General Fund, this modest growth is compounded by inflationary cost drivers that are creating financial pressure across all departments. Among the most significant challenges outlined in the agenda packet are:

- Rising insurance premiums, particularly concerning property, flood, and sovereign immunity coverage.
- Escalating costs and extended lead times for public safety vehicles and EMS apparatus.
- Wage and benefit increases, including merit, cost-of-living adjustments (COLA), and collective bargaining agreements.
- Ongoing uncertainty surrounding State of Florida property tax reform, which poses a long-term risk to municipal revenues.

On a positive note, the town’s FY2025 audit restored reserves to within policy guidelines. While Hurricanes Helene and Milton initially depleted the fund balance by approximately \$8 million, favorable audit results and pending Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reimbursements exceeding \$4.5 million are helping to stabilize the town’s financial footing.

Where the Money is Going: Top Capital Projects

The proposed five-year CIP totals \$166.2 million, with a staggering 72.3% of that funding dedicated to just the top ten major projects. For FY27 specifically, the capital budget sits at \$78.1 million, which includes \$50.5 million in carryover funds from FY26 and \$27.5 million in new spending.

Utility infrastructure, beach renourishment, and drainage projects completely dominate the five-year outlook.

- **Wastewater Collection Subaqueous Force Main:** This massive project accounts for nearly 26% of the entire five-year plan, coming in at \$42 million.
- **High Erosion Area Sand Placement:** Budgeted at \$32.9 million over the five-year window, the bulk of this (\$32 million) is slated for FY28 to address severe sand loss.
- **Village Phases 3 and 4:** Design and construction for these infrastructure updates will cost an estimated \$7.3 million.
- **Gulfside Structural Stabilization:** Budgeted at \$7.2 million for FY27 to address chronic erosional hotspots.
- **Canal Dredging Program:** Set to cost roughly \$7 million,

construction on this highly anticipated project is slated to begin in FY28.

Financial Stresses & “Stressed Funds”

While the town has mapped out an ambitious capital plan, staff is candid that capital and infrastructure needs currently exceed the size of potential funding sources. During Monday’s workshop, the Commission will need to pay special attention to two critically “stressed” accounts: the Sarasota County Infrastructure Surtax (IST) Phase IV fund and the Streets Capital Fund.

The Sarasota IST Phase IV—a 15-year spending plan approved by voters in 2022—is currently facing a \$3.7 million shortfall over its lifespan. Unprecedented inflationary pricing in the public safety sector is largely to blame. To compensate and ensure the town can afford essential fire trucks and ambulances, the Town Manager is proposing the removal of canal dredging and recreation center improvements from this specific funding source.

Similarly, the Streets Capital Fund, which is responsible for critical flood mitigation and resiliency projects, is facing an estimated \$1.8 million funding deficit through FY31. The town is aggressively pursuing Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds to close this gap.

Utility and Storm Resilience: The Cost of Hardening Longboat

Utility infrastructure remains the largest single category in the FY27 capital budget, accounting for \$52.1 million (66.7%) of the planned spend. Beyond the \$42 million subaqueous wastewater line, the town plans to spend \$3.8 million on the next phase of asbestos cement pipe replacement and \$4.2 million on water main evaluation and replacement. These utility projects will be heavily supported by a mix of grants and State Revolving Fund (SRF) loans.

Storm resiliency also represents a significant slice of the pie. The FY27 budget allocates \$7.9 million toward storm resiliency projects. Engineering designs and construction for low-lying, flood-prone areas like the Village, Buttonwood, and Sleepy Lagoon remain top priorities for the Commission over the next several years.

Beach Management: Managing the Sand Loss

Following the devastation of Hurricanes Helene and Milton, Longboat Key is staring down the need for a massive beach renourishment project. The storms resulted in a measured sand loss of 407,300 cubic yards.

To restore the shoreline, the town is planning an 800,000-cubic-yard sand placement project targeted for Fall 2027 or 2028, carrying an estimated price tag of \$32 million. While the town has applied for FEMA Category G assistance and state grants to cover the bulk of the costs, local taxpayers will still be responsible for an estimated \$5.1 million (16.1%) to \$12.7 million (39.9%) depending on the final breakdown of state and federal aid.

To finance this and future beach preservation efforts, the

town relies on its Beach Funding Model. The proposed FY27 budget features a strategy to implement a \$3.5 million ad valorem tax levy during non-debt years to build a sinking fund, which saves on interest expenses and ensures more manageable debt service payments when the town eventually bonds for major projects.

Taxpayer Impacts: What to Expect

Residents will undoubtedly feel the financial pressure of these massive capital upgrades over the coming years. Among the key impacts highlighted for the community:

- Even if the millage rate stays the same, modest increases in property values will result in higher tax payments for residents in FY27.
- Assessments for the highly anticipated Canal Dredging Program will appear on November 2026 tax bills.
- Previously approved multi-year utility rate increases will continue to factor into residents’ monthly bills.
- The Beach Program debt requires ongoing, dedicated millage support.

Next Steps for the Commission

Monday’s workshop is just the beginning of a long summer of financial planning. Following this initial overview, the town will receive preliminary property values from Manatee and Sarasota counties on June 1, 2026. A second budget workshop is scheduled for June 22 to delve deeper into the General Fund, followed by a special meeting on June 29 to set the maximum millage rate. Final public hearings and the official adoption of the FY27 budget will take place in September.

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GARDEN ARGOSY

Report, from page 1

and the Finance Director laid out a financial narrative that proves municipal accounting doesn't have to be boring—it can be the ultimate story of resilience.

The Brutal Toll and the Brilliant Rebound

Let's not sugarcoat the reality: Fiscal Year 2025 was a financial trial by fire. Battered by the ferocious impacts of Hurricanes Helene and Milton, Longboat Key saw its unassigned fund balance plummet, dropping from a comfortable \$15.3 million down to \$9.4 million. In the municipal world, a nearly \$6 million hemorrhage is the kind of event that triggers panic.

But panic is not in the Town's playbook. While the financial impact was undeniably severe, the outcome could have been catastrophically worse. Through a combination of aggressive insurance recoveries, razor-sharp bidding for contracts, and town departments that exercised relentless fiscal discipline to operate under budget, the Town clawed back approximately \$2.3 million in savings.

Today, half-way through FY26, the ship has steadied. The Town's operating revenues and expenditures are humming along perfectly in line with the budget. Even after the devastating hurricane drawdowns, the fund balance remains at a healthy 156 days of operating expenses—firmly within the Town's strict policy target range of 120 to 180 days. Longboat Key took Mother Nature's best shot and didn't even flinch past its safety margins.

Securing the Lifelines: A Grant-Funding Masterstroke

If defense kept the Town alive, offense is how they are securing the future. The mid-year update revealed a breathtaking victory in infrastructure financing: the Town successfully secured a staggering \$23.66 million in funding for the Subaqueous Forcemain replacement.

This isn't just pipe maintenance; it is the critical circulatory system of the island. By relentlessly pursuing outside money, the Town landed a \$9.58 million low-interest loan (at a miraculous 0% interest rate), a matching \$9.58 million principal-forgiveness grant from the State Revolving Fund, and a \$3 million federal EPA grant. The heavy lifting done by the Town's Grants Coordinator and staff means the residents of Longboat Key will see their vital infrastructure fortified without bearing the crushing weight of the entire bill.

This aggressive pursuit of grants didn't stop at the water's edge. The Town also successfully reeled in \$1.2 million from the State Beach Management Program, \$924,897 for Center Turn Lanes, and multiple grants for police body-worn cameras and pedestrian safety.

Boots on the Sand and Boats in the Water

A community is only as strong as its safety forces, and the Longboat Key Police Department has used the first six months of FY26 to get closer to the community than ever. When the Deputy Chief retired, the department didn't just absorb the salary savings—they strategically reallocated the funds to hire two additional patrol officers without increasing the budget by a single cent. This brilliant maneuver means more boots on the beach, more proactive marine patrols, and heightened security where the island needs it most.

Furthermore, the Police Department has taken to the water with newly acquired shallow-water Sea-doo's funded by WCIND grants, allowing officers to navigate congested vessel areas and enforce marine safety with unprecedented agility. Back on land, they launched the community-building "Cops, Cars, and Coffee" event at Whitney Beach Plaza, bridging the gap between residents, business owners, and the badge.

Building Back Smarter, Not Just Stronger

The Planning, Zoning, and Building Department hasn't just been stamping permits; they have been guarding the structural integrity of the island. In the wake of state legislative changes following the tragic collapses elsewhere in Florida, Longboat Key achieved a massive milestone: 198 out of 198 mandated Milestone Reports for condominiums older than 30 years and over 3 stories were successfully submitted to the state, with zero major structural issues identified.

Meanwhile, FEMA audited the Town's permit processes and walked away highly impressed, awarding high marks for the Town's post-hurricane Community Rating System follow-ups. The department even embraced the future by pilot-testing a 24/7 Artificial Intelligence phone answering system to ensure residents get support at any hour of the day or night.

The Horizon Beckons

As Mayor Debra Williams, Vice Mayor Penny Gold, and the rest of the unopposed, unified Commission look toward the second half of Fiscal Year 2026, the mission is clear. The Town will wait for FEMA to obligate funds for prior debris removal, carefully monitor the economic landscape, and begin drafting the FY27 budget.

The mid-year update is not merely an accounting of dollars spent and saved; it is the heartbeat of Longboat Key. It is the story of a town that refuses to be defined by the disasters that strike it, choosing instead to be defined by the fierce, strategic, and unified way it bounces back. For FY26, the Town is hoping for a quiet hurricane season, but if the first six months are any indication, Longboat Key is ready for absolutely anything.

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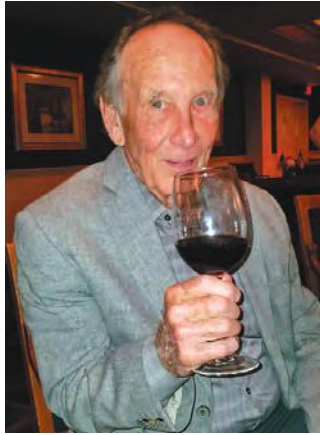


Reserve Roma Ristorante by Chef Antonio

Chef Antonio, a tall and serious young man, brings his culinary skills directly from Rome. The servers and other staff help recreate the atmosphere of a neighborhood ristorante in Rome or Florence. The featured selections command attention, but the little things make the difference between a restaurant and a ristorante.

S.W. and Rich Hermansen
Guest Writers
wine@lbknews.com

The West Coast of Florida from Tampa south to Venice has a wealth of Italian cafes and restaurants. Anyone would have to think twice before trying to find a niche in this crowded scene. Chef Antonio has accepted the challenge and found a promising venue at the Reserve in Sarasota. His concept brings the simple elegance of an Italian ristorante, as distinguished from more casual cafes, bars, and wine bars (trattoria, osteria, enoteca). These restaurant prototypes overlap somewhat but ristorantes have a focus on more formal dinners between 7PM and 10PM (19-23 in Rome). The Reserve by Antonio fits neatly into the classic definition of an Italian ristorante.



Essentially a small inn with a restaurant and a few rooms for guests, the Reserve occupies a small space just off a circle on Tamiami Trail north of the downtown area of Sarasota in the Historic Central-Cocoanut District and south of the Ringling College of Art and Design. The small indoor seating of perhaps thirty diners occupies the lower floor of a charming old inn. Outdoor seating adds about twenty seats in a small courtyard.

Chef Antonio, a tall and serious young man, brings his culinary skills directly from Rome. The servers and other staff help recreate the atmosphere of a neighborhood ristorante in Rome or Florence. The featured selections command attention, but the little things make the difference between a restaurant and a ristorante. We see tables dressed in white cloths and set for dinner. Bread arrives at the table in a small brown paper bag, warm and crusty, with a slice of white Italian cheese and honey and a side dish of olive tapenade. We check the wine list while we enjoy tastes of the bread with the cheese and honey and then with the olive spread. The wine list includes a wide variety of Italian, French, USA, and other selections. We opted for the luscious Roero Arneis, Bruno Giacosa, a white variety that has regained a foothold in the Piedmonte region of Italy after disappearing for a time. It has an aromatic nose and white stone fruit flavors that blend with delicate finfish and shellfish tastes. As a contrast, we matched it with a short rib starter on four flat breads that had a wreath of microgreens on pesto oil surrounding it.

We found the specials intriguing: especially the veal scallopini or rack of lamb. The Mediterranean branzino, divers scallops, duck à la orange, and pork ossobuco sounded tempting as well. Instead we chose a local finfish dish, the grouper Livornese, a thick filet of fresh grouper basted in a light olive oil, garlic, white wine, and tomato sauce presented with cherry tomatoes, black olives, and root vegetables, and the highly recommended lobster risotto in a light and creamy tomato sauce with sections of lobster tail, claw, and head meat. The Arneis wine paired well with each of these choices.

We shared the limoncello mouse for dessert. This blend of rich whipped cream with fresh

fruit and a lady finger came with small glasses of the luxuriously sweet and intense house limoncello.

The attentive service at the Reserve by Antonio allowed us ample time to consider our choices and good advice when we asked about menu items specials. Clearly the staff appreciates fine dining as much as we do. Some of the little details made an impression on us. After the staff cleared the table next to us, Joanne, from Bavaria after Italy, smoothed the white tablecloth over a wooden tabletop and ironed the tablecloth with a steam iron. We have never seen that done before.

S. W. Hermansen has used his expertise in econometrics, data science and epidemiology to help develop research databases for the Pentagon, the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Agriculture, and Health Resources and Services. He has visited premier vineyards and taste wines from major appellations in California, Oregon, New York State, and internationally from Tuscany and the Piedmont in Italy, the Ribera del Duero in Spain, the Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale in Australia, and the Otago Valley in New Zealand. Currently he splits time between residences in Chevy Chase, Maryland and St. Armand's Circle in Florida.

Rich Hermansen selected his first wine list for a restaurant shortly after graduating from college with a degree in Mathematics. He has extensive service and management experience in the food and wine industry. Family and friends rate him as their favorite chef, bartender, and wine steward. He lives in Severna Park, Maryland.



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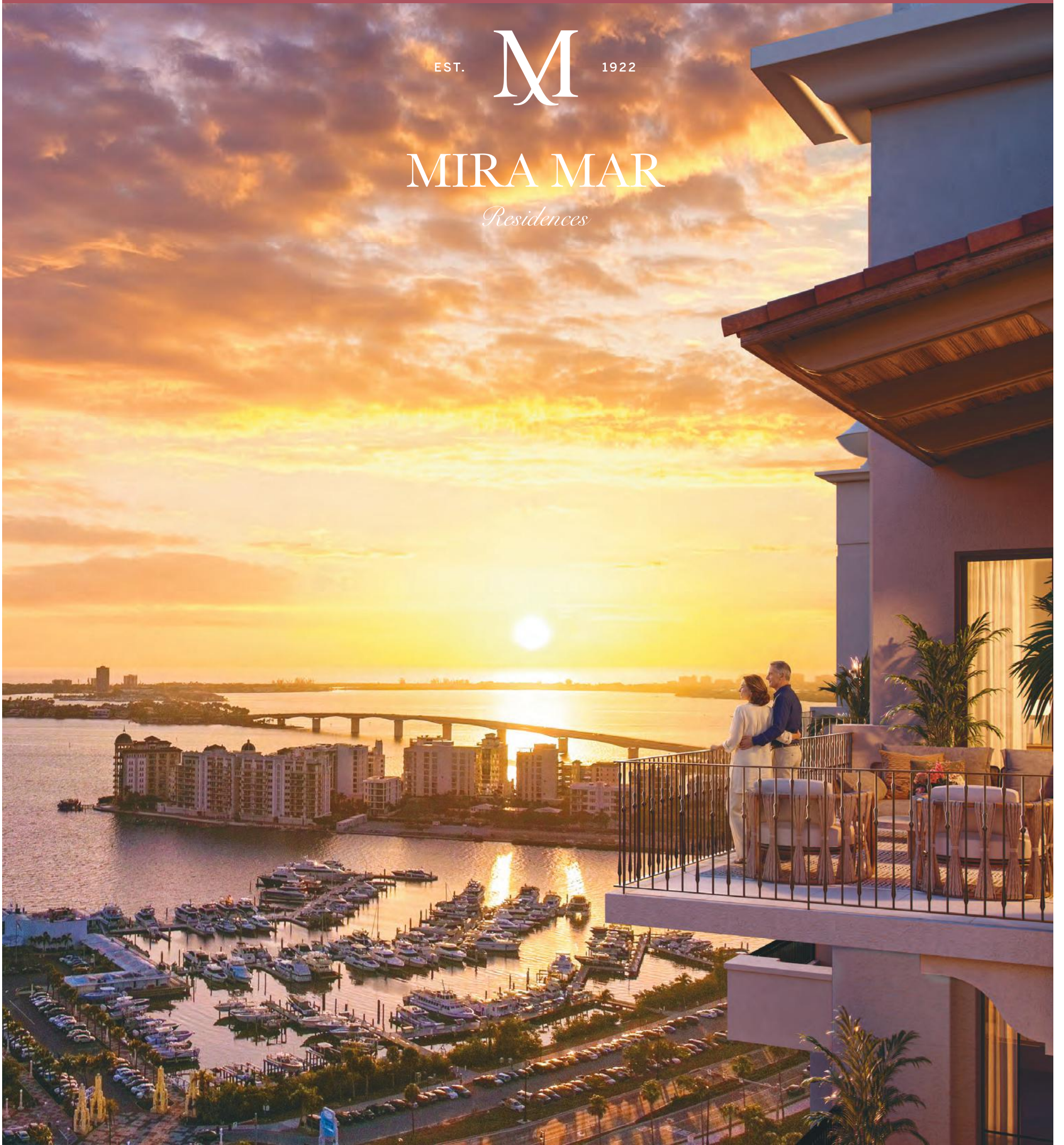
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