

# Longboat Key News

June 26, 2026

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InsideLook



True cost of so little rain ...page 4



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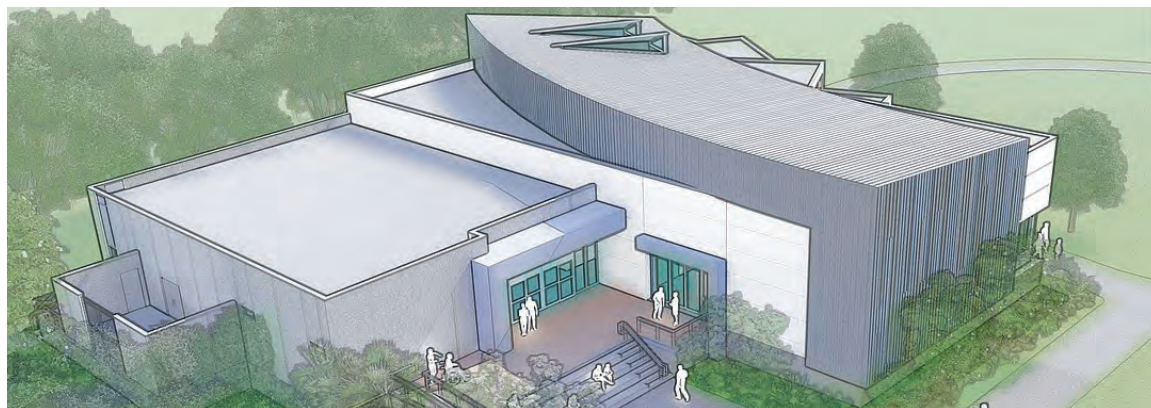
Report blames cars, not planes ...page 3



The Case of the Stuck Duck ...page 10

## Easy to Build, Hard to Keep Longboat Library has a Cost Philanthropy Cannot Cover

*The county has advanced the design. Donors have met their pledge. But the recurring expense of keeping the doors open runs on the very tax now facing Florida voters — and that arithmetic is suddenly anything but settled.*



STEVE REID  
Editor & Publisher  
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There is a difference, rarely discussed in the celebratory language of groundbreaking and ribbon cuttings, between a building and an institution. A building can be financed once — with impact fees, a bond, a benefactor's gift. An institution requires something far more demanding: a standing subscription to the future, renewed every fiscal year, paid in the steady currency of property tax. Sarasota County has all but secured the money to build the Longboat Key Public Library. What it cannot yet promise is that it will be able to afford to keep the lights on once the building exists.

That distinction, abstract in ordinary times, has become the central financial question hanging over one of the most patiently assembled civic projects in the island's history — and it now turns, improbably, on a single line on

See Library, page 12

## Longboat Wants Homes to Go Up; Its Own Code Keeps Getting in the Way

*Longboat Key wants more of its homes lifted out of harm's way. On June 22, the Town Commission confronted an awkward truth: the Town's own zoning code is often punishing the very homeowners trying to do it.*

STEVE REID  
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The discussion, brought as a workshop conversation rather than a vote, asked a deceptively simple question — when a homeowner raises an aging, flood-prone house to meet federal standards, why does the Town's rulebook so often stand in the way, and what can be done about it?

### The Town wants homes to go up

Town Manager Howard Tipton set the stakes at the outset. "This is one of the more interesting conversations you're going to have," he told commissioners. "We really do want to see more properties elevating. Water levels are continuing to be a concern. But we have certain properties — especially the smallest ones — that create some challenges when it comes to elevation."

The case for elevation isn't theoretical. Planning, Zoning and Building Director Allen Parsons reminded the commission how newer, higher homes fared in the 2024 storms.

"The properties built over the last 20-some-odd years that met the FEMA flood elevation requirements did really well," Parsons said. "They did not have flooding in the habitable portions of the structures." Garages and ground-level spaces flooded; the living areas above did not.

"Elevating structures is really one of the best resiliency strategies that can be had for structure safety," Parsons said. "What we want to avoid is disincentivizing or making things difficult for those electing to elevate their homes. It's an expensive proposition."

### What happens when a house goes up 10 feet

The trouble starts the moment a modest older home rises.

See Elevation, page 5

## NewsAnalysis How a Sarasota Barrier-Island Library and a \$288 Million Bayfront Stage Came to Share the Same Fate

*The two projects could hardly differ more in scale. One is a \$14.5 million library for several thousand island residents; the other is a \$288 million cultural landmark on the downtown waterfront. Yet they are bound by a single, unforgiving fact of public finance.*

STEVE REID  
Editor & Publisher  
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It is tempting to read the Longboat Key library's predicament as a local story — a barrier island, a modest building, a county hedging its bets. It is not. It is the leading edge of a regional reckoning, and the same fiscal weather now gathering over Town Center Green is bearing down, with far greater force, on the most expensive civic undertaking Sarasota has ever contemplated: the new performing arts center meant to succeed the Van Wezel.

The two projects could hardly differ more in scale. One is a \$14.5 million library for several thousand island residents; the other is a \$288 million cultural landmark on the downtown waterfront. Yet they are bound by a single, unforgiving fact of public finance. Both depend on the steady yield of the property tax. Both rely on a Sarasota County government edging toward the exit. And both await the verdict of the same November ballot — a referendum that functions, on the regional balance sheet, as a slow-acting solvent on the revenue that has underwritten the cultural coast for half a century.

### A Purple Landmark, Slowly Losing Its Footing

The Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall opened on Sarasota Bay in 1970 — a great purple shell in the organic tradition of Frank Lloyd Wright, designed by the Taliesin studio he founded, its hue famously chosen to echo a seashell. For fifty-five years it has been the cultural

See Van Wezel, page 13

# Editor Letters



Longboat Key News and Sarasota City News encourages Letters to the Editor on timely issues. Please email to: [letters@lbknews.com](mailto:letters@lbknews.com) or mail to PO Box 8001, Longboat Key, FL 34228. We also print letters sent to Town Hall that address Longboat Key issues. We reserve the right to edit.

## Charter Review Committee

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Gary Coffin  
Again, I'm sorry I missed the meeting, but the initial email below refers to a tentatively scheduled meeting on June 22nd. I never received confirmation. If there's anything I can do to rectify the situation, please let me know. Again, thanks for thinking of me.  
Steve Baril  
Longboat Key

## Charter Review Committee

To: Steve Baril  
Steve I think everything you'll need is in this mail. Thanks again.  
Gary Coffin  
Commissioner  
Town of Longboat Key

## Charter Review Committee

To: Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton  
To date, we have received three applications for the Charter Review Committee! A tentative Meet and Greet with applicants is currently planned for the Regular Workshop on June 22, and appointments to the Committee are tentatively scheduled for the Special Meeting on June 29 (Committee meeting schedule to be established for September 2026).  
As you interact with residents, please consider reaching out and sending the attached blank application to those who have demonstrated an interest in serving their community. These engaged community members often bring valuable perspectives and a strong commitment to Longboat Key. Applications must be submitted no later than the close of business on Tuesday, June 16 (an extension from Monday, June 15).  
Thank you for helping spread the word and encouraging community participation. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. Have a great day and enjoy your weekend!  
Stephanie Garcia  
Deputy Town Clerk  
Town of Longboat Key

## Broadway Beach Access Concerns

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Sarah Karon  
Regarding the Broadway Beach Access and related areas, Charlie Mopps, Public Works Director, is reviewing these with his team and will provide a response in the near future.  
As far as the Broadway Roundabout project, that project will improve about 1,000-ft. of

roadway north of the roundabout and about 1,000-ft. of roadway south of the roundabout with wider bicycle lanes and a wider trail on the east side. The roundabout itself will be nicely planted to create an aesthetic gateway feature at the north end as well as safer pedestrian, bicyclist, and vehicular intersection crossings as noted below. The Florida Department of Transportation ("FDOT") is paying for the majority of construction and administering the future construction contract. The FDOT is planning to begin a 30-day advertising period to obtain construction bids starting on July 24th while the engineering team is finalizing permit acquisition. Once a construction contract is negotiated and in place, the intent is for FDOT to start the construction project in early 2027 and run about 18-months. Please let me know if you have any questions.  
Isaac Brownman  
Assistant Town Manager  
Town of Longboat Key

## Broadway Beach Access Concerns

To: Patti Lopez  
Thank you for letting us know of these concerns at Broadway Beach. I know the Town is prioritizing better trash management at beach access points but it seems we are missing the mark significantly here.  
As for Turtle Watch equipment storage, I'm cc-ing Cyndi Seamon here: Cyndi, perhaps the Town and/or the LBK Foundation can assist your team in creating a better structure for your tools? I would be happy to work with you on this.  
Regarding plans for beautification of the parking area: sounds like a good idea, perhaps Asst Town Manager Isaac Brownman will share thoughts on this.  
We are on track for Broadway Roundabout project, Isaac will give us the latest on that score as well. It will be a lovely gateway to the North End, in addition to improving pedestrian and bike safety. Let me know how I can be of assistance, thanks.  
Sarah Karon  
Commissioner  
Town of Longboat Key

## Broadway Beach Access Concerns

To: Longboat Key Public Works and Town Commission  
As a resident of the north end of Longboat Key, I am writing to express my concerns regarding the Broadway beach access and to inquire about the Town's maintenance and development plans for this area.

See Letters, page 6



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# It's Not the Planes — It's the Traffic, \$26,000 Air Study Tells Longboat Commission

*When residents began noticing a fine grit settling on their cars, lanai furniture and outdoor surfaces, the prevailing suspicion on Longboat Key pointed skyward — to the jets climbing out of Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport. After a \$26,000 third-party investigation, the Town's consultant told commissioners on June 22 that the evidence simply doesn't support that theory.*

*“There was some concern about particulate matter that was showing up on vehicles and on furniture outside, and we needed to find out where it was coming from,” Town Manager Howard Tipton told the commission as he introduced the item at the afternoon Regular Workshop. “The initial concern was aircraft emissions.”*

## Why the Town ordered the study

The complaints had a plausible trigger. Residents connected the fallout to a change in aircraft flight patterns at the airport in 2024, and the Town wanted an independent answer rather than a hunch.

“There were resident concerns of particulate matter accumulating on surfaces throughout the community, and this was correlated to an aircraft pattern change that happened in 2024 at the Sarasota-Bradenton airport,” said Mark St. Marie, national technical lead for healthcare at The Vertex Companies, the environmental consulting firm the Town retained. “The Town asked us to provide a third-party, data-driven study.”

St. Marie brought an unusually specific résumé to the question. “I'm also retired Air Force, a certified industrial hygienist, 36 years of practice,” he said. “I traveled around the world and the country doing aircraft emission studies for 22 years in the Air Force.”

## Looking for a “fingerprint”

The central idea of the study, St. Marie explained, was that aircraft exhaust leaves a distinctive chemical and physical signature that can be separated from every other source in a community. “What we're looking for is a fingerprint that we can associate specifically with the aircraft that's excluded from every other source,” he said.

The timing of the sampling was deliberate. Vertex was hired in early March but waited until April to begin collecting data — in order to capture Longboat Key's worst-case wind conditions. “We really wanted to select the prevailing winds that are the worst case for Longboat Key,” St. Marie said. “The winds change from northern to southern-westerly, and that certainly carries it directly from the airport over to Longboat Key.”

Over six days and 11 separate monitoring deployments, Vertex collected roughly 16,000 data points, combining real-time, direct-reading air monitors with laboratory analysis of collected samples. The firm measured particles of several sizes, screened for metals, volatile organic compounds and combustion byproducts, and tracked wind direction and noise to time particle “fallout” to the moments aircraft passed overhead. Monitors were set on tripods at ground level, six to eight feet up, at three Longboat Key locations — including the Positano community and the area near the Town's public library. For comparison, Vertex also took “background” samples off-island near Interstate 75 and at a park near the Key's north end.

## What the data showed

On point after point, the aircraft signature failed to appear.

The particles Vertex found were predominantly the larger PM10 size, not the ultra-fine particles that jet thrust typically produces. “There was no repeatable fingerprint that we could associate specifically with the particle sizes,” St. Marie said.

The chemistry told the same story. “What we typically see with aircraft emissions is some very specific metals — things like chromium and cadmium that are only found in aircraft,” he said. “In this case, we didn't find any metals in any of the samples.” He called that result unusual for this kind of study: “Typically, we do see metals.”

The carbon profile pointed in a familiar direction. “The one thing we did find in the carbon footprint is a heavily weighted concentration related to gasoline and diesel engines,” St. Marie said. Critically, the Longboat samples looked just like the off-island comparison samples taken beside the interstate — similar in chemical makeup, particle size and concentration.

## The verdict: local sources, not the runway

“The study did not identify conclusive evidence of unique aircraft-related particle impacts,” St. Marie told the commission. “What we did find is that there are particles falling, but it's not associated with the aircraft.”

Pressed on the likely culprit, he didn't hedge. “The likely contributor, in our professional opinion, is roadway traffic and marine activity, or local and regional combustion activities” — vehicle exhaust along Gulf of Mexico Drive, boats, and equipment such as golf-course and lawn machinery. Larger particles, he noted, “stay local. They don't travel as far.”

His recommendation was equally direct: stop spending on testing. “There's really no immediate action that we need to take,” he said. “I wouldn't recommend spending more money on any types of surveys. Having a communication with the airport is probably your best action to take.” He added that he “wouldn't feel comfortable justifying more sampling in this case, even for Vertex.”

## “Good news, bad news”

Commissioners welcomed the finding but pointed out it doesn't make the grit disappear.

“This is sort of good news, bad news,” Mayor Debra Williams said. “It's good news that, with some confidence, it's not coming from aircraft — but we still have it. It's still something that we're dealing with.” She pressed the point: “If I'm reading your report correctly, you're saying this is just what we should expect — most likely from traffic along GMD and lawnmowers and things like that?”

“It could be — and it could be episodic, during this time when the winds change,” St. Marie answered. “I do think it's coming from local sources, but it'd be great to see if it's only related to certain times of year.”

## Residents push back on the timing

The first resident to the podium questioned whether late April was a fair test at all.

“I think it's difficult to judge a study done right now when there's very, very little traffic,” said Diedre Greer of 6750 Gulf of Mexico Drive, at the Key's far north end in Whitney Beach. “If this was done in the height of season, I think we would see a very different result.” Told the sampling ran at the end of April, she noted the north end's traffic is “almost nonexistent right now.” Williams conceded the point: “Fair point.”

Commissioner Sarah Karon raised a scientific wrinkle of her own — the region's ongoing drought. St. Marie agreed it could matter. Dry air keeps fine particles from clumping together and dropping out, he explained: “These particles could have been so dry that they did not coalesce and did not fall in this case.”

Commissioner Gary Coffin asked whether the monitors could distinguish leaf-blower and lawnmower debris (largely too coarse for what Vertex targeted) and whether mold or mildew had been measured. “It was beyond the scope of this contract,” St. Marie said. “We did not sample for those.” Commissioner Steve Branham asked the budget question directly, and St. Marie confirmed the fee: “\$26,000 for the six days of sampling, with all the equipment and three people involved.”

## What the Town will do next

Rather than commission more testing, staff signaled it will keep the conversation with the airport going — with a new angle.

“Based on this information, one of the things we're going back to is taking a look at the noise from some of the low-flying aircraft,” Tipton said. “We've got a meeting coming up with the new airport director, and we're talking with him about asking the airlines — instead of going off at 100% throttle, can they go 90% or 80%? It may not be a pollution reduction, but it could be a noise reduction.”

St. Marie noted the Town has leverage on flight paths if it chooses to use it. “The FAA has the ability to change these things,” he said. “Based on community-impact studies and conversations with the community, they can change the routes and the frequency of how often they fly” at a given runway. The Town, he said, may also wish to keep documenting residents' observations going forward.

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# The Drought That Won't Quit: One-Day Watering Extended to Oct. 1

*With the wet season off to one of its driest starts in memory, regional water managers have extended one-day-a-week sprinkler limits clear through October — and the science suggests relief may not arrive on schedule.*

By the calendar, Southwest Florida should be soaked right now. Late June is supposed to be the heart of the rainy season, the stretch when towering afternoon thunderheads roll in off both coasts and drop an inch on the lawn before the evening news. Instead, the sky has mostly kept its hands in its pockets.

On June 23, the Governing Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District responded to the stubborn dry spell by extending its Modified Phase III "Extreme" water shortage order through Oct. 1. For Longboat Key, Sarasota and the surrounding barrier islands, the headline is simple and unchanged: outdoor irrigation stays capped at one day a week — and that applies to everyone, including homeowners drawing from private wells.

## The numbers behind the order

The district's case is written in rain it never got. When the Phase III order was first declared on March 24, the region was already running a 13.7-inch deficit against its typical 12-month total. By the end of May, the shortfall stood at 11.4 inches. Sarasota County has collected just 11.82 inches so far this year against a calendar-year average of 20.79 — roughly 57 percent of normal.

The most alarming figure is the freshest one. With a week still left in June, the county had logged only 1.03 inches for the month, about 13 percent of what June usually delivers. Rivers, lakes and public supplies are all running low, district staff reported, with several water bodies described as severely below normal. The permitted watering windows remain narrow and deliberately nocturnal: 12:01 to 4 a.m., or 8 p.m. to 11:59 p.m. Properties smaller than an acre — which is most of them out here — get just one of those windows, not both.

## Why a dry June is a big deal

Here is the part that makes this drought genuinely unusual rather than merely inconvenient. In Florida, well over half the year's rain falls between June and September, and almost none of it arrives as a gentle, all-day soaking. It comes from convection: the peninsula bakes in the summer sun, sea breezes push inland from the Gulf and the Atlantic, the two air masses collide somewhere over the middle of the state, and the rising, moisture-laden air erupts into thunderstorms. It is the same engine that makes central Florida the lightning capital of the country.

That engine is the region's recharge system. A dry winter is survivable; a dry summer is not, because there is no second act. When the wet season sputters — as it has now for two years running — the deficit doesn't merely hold steady, it compounds, because the months that were supposed to refill the tank are the ones coming up short.

## The El Niño wrinkle

The atmosphere may be partly to blame, though not in the way most people would guess. The deficit was built largely during a dry cool season, and the climate pattern now taking shape points to a wetter winter ahead — not a wetter summer.

In mid-June, NOAA declared that El Niño, the periodic warming of the equatorial Pacific, had officially formed, and forecasters expect it to strengthen, possibly to a rare "very strong" event, by the winter of 2026–27. El Niño runs strongest in the cool months, when it nudges

the storm track south and historically hands the Gulf Coast a wetter, cooler dry season. That is encouraging for October and beyond.

The catch is that the same pattern tends to suppress the Atlantic hurricane season by ramping up the wind shear that tears storms apart. NOAA is forecasting a below-normal 2026 season, and Colorado State University recently trimmed its outlook to roughly 11 named storms — well under the long-term average. Tropical systems and their trailing rain bands are one of the region's most reliable drought-busters; a quiet season removes one of the wildcards that often ends a dry stretch. In short, the climate driver promising winter relief may also keep the near-term tap turned low.

## Where the island's water actually comes from

For all the talk of sprinklers, it is worth remembering where the water in them originates. Longboat Key doesn't pump its own — the town buys finished water wholesale from Manatee County, a blend drawn from the Floridan Aquifer and the Lake Manatee Reservoir. Sarasota County leans heavily on the Peace River, supplemented by deep wells reaching the intermediate and Floridan aquifers. Both surface sources are exquisitely sensitive to drought, which is why the district has separately authorized the Peace River/Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority to increase its withdrawals from the shrinking river.

Living on a barrier island adds a wrinkle of its own. Coastal freshwater floats in a lens atop denser seawater, and the balance is delicate: every foot the freshwater table drops can allow the salt beneath it to rise many times that distance. Over-pumping during a drought is precisely how coastal and shallow-well aquifers turn brackish — a slow, expensive problem that conservation now helps head off later.

Enforcement has teeth this time. To protect what supply remains, Sarasota County stopped issuing courtesy warnings on April 17; violators now go straight to a citation.

Within the one-day rule, though, there is more latitude than the headlines suggest:

- Hand-watering and micro-irrigation of flower beds, shrubs and other non-lawn plantings is allowed any day — but only before 8 a.m. or after 6 p.m.
- New lawns and plants get a 60-day grace period: water any day for the first 30 days, then three days a week for days 31–60 (keep a written schedule), split by address — even numbers on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday, odd numbers on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday.
- Washing the car at home is fine, but only on your assigned watering day and only with a shutoff nozzle. Pressure washing is permitted when prepping a surface for paint or sealant. Boats may be rinsed and engines flushed after each use to clear saltwater.
- Restaurants may serve water only when a diner asks, and charity car washes are off the table unless they were scheduled before the restrictions took hold.

## The clause your HOA needs to read

One provision deserves special attention in a community as association-governed as ours. The district's order expressly bars any HOA or similar body from enforcing deed restrictions or aesthetic standards that would require residents to use more water — no demanding a lush green lawn, no mandating replacement plantings, no ordering a pressure-wash to satisfy a community-standards letter. If a board's rulebook collides with the water shortage order, the order wins.

And if there is consolation for anyone watching their St. Augustine grass go dormant, it is this: agronomists generally agree that one deep weekly soak grows a healthier, more drought-tolerant lawn than frequent shallow sprinkling, which only trains roots to stay lazy near the surface. The pre-dawn and after-dark windows the district mandates also happen to be when the least water is lost to evaporation. The rules, in other words, are nudging the region toward the way lawns should have been watered all along. For the full order, the district points residents to WaterMatters.org/Restrictions, with conservation tips at WaterMatters.org/Water101.

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## Elevation, from page 1

“Post-hurricane, we’ve had a number of properties seeking to elevate their existing structures above or at the FEMA flood elevation requirements,” Parsons explained. “On a number of properties with smaller, constrained lots — depending on when the houses were built — they may not meet the current zoning standards. When those homes are elevated, what was at ground level before is now up in the air 10-plus feet. Access needs to be provided to that.”

That access — stairs and decks reaching a front door that now sits a story off the ground — is where the conflicts begin.

### The six-inch rule and the lot-coverage trap

Two provisions do most of the damage: setbacks and lot coverage.

“The setbacks and lot coverage seem to be the significant issue that we have seen often,” Parsons said. The mechanism is a quirk in the definitions. “Our zoning code calls anything constructed on a property above six inches in height a structure. So a deck can become a structure,” he said. “That starts to add to the lot-coverage maximum — which in some cases may already be exceeded.”

Most single-family districts cap building coverage at roughly 30% of the lot. But many of the small lots where elevation makes the most sense — in the Village, parts of Sleepy Lagoon, and the mobile home park — predate today’s standards and are already non-conforming. “We have lots that are non-conforming,” Parsons said. “We have development on those lots that are non-conforming.” A new stair run or a wider deck can push an already-overbuilt lot further out of compliance.

### Setbacks, daylight plane and rooftop equipment

The list of pinch points runs longer than coverage alone.

The Town’s daylight-plane rule — an angle meant to keep tall structures from blocking light to neighbors — can trip up a home that is merely being lifted, not enlarged. “What likely makes more sense is to exempt that kind of structure that’s just being lifted up — not being added onto,” Parsons said.

Mechanical equipment is another snag. Air conditioners and utility meters must also be raised above the flood elevation. “Those actually have to meet our setback requirements,” Parsons noted — a problem on narrow lots where there is nowhere compliant to put them.

Since the 2024 hurricanes, the building department has issued about 30 home-elevation permits, “a little over half of those in the mobile home park,” Parsons said — though those were modest lifts of a few feet, not full 10-foot elevations, so access hasn’t yet become an issue there. Still, he added, “you could not have more constrained lots in the town than in our mobile home park.”

### Why a variance isn’t the answer

The existing escape hatch — a variance from the Zoning Board of Adjustment — is a poor fit, Parsons said, because it demands a hardship finding the situation rarely satisfies cleanly.

“The case that has to be made for a variance is one of hardship and unique circumstances,” he said. “It can be difficult for zoning board of adjustment members to find that what’s being proposed isn’t necessarily the bare minimum” — and the bare minimum, in practice, is usually just a three- or four-foot strip of stairs.

### What staff wants to do

Parsons floated several tools the Town could study, stressing he was not asking for a decision yet.

The leading idea is administrative relief — a new, lighter-weight path distinct from a variance. “The terminology could be something different than variance — like an adjustment,” he said, with criteria written into the code and a staff official empowered to approve qualifying requests. Other options on the table: allowing wider, uncovered slatted decks that let rainwater percolate through and therefore wouldn’t count against lot coverage; and permitting lot coverage to exceed the cap when a homeowner adds no new square footage or impervious area.

Underlying all of it is a single principle. “Wherever possible, we would like to not have the code be a reason why someone would choose not to elevate if they otherwise want to,” Parsons said.

His recommendation was to hand the problem to the Planning and Zoning Board. “It would be staff’s recommendation to pursue this further with the planning and zoning board, with some workshops to flesh out these issues and bring back recommendations to the commission,” he said, pointing to Fort Myers Beach as a community that has already built an administrative process for elevated homes.

### The legal landmine

Town Attorney Maggie Mooney delivered the cautionary counterpoint — a reminder that in the current legislative climate, giving rights away can be a one-way door.

“We are in the era of SB 250, or SB 180, which says governments shall not adopt anything more restrictive or burdensome on property owners,” Mooney said. “This is going in the other direction — we’re giving more rights. But I just want you all to appreciate that once you give it, you may not be able to take it back.”

The risk, she warned, is a future claim under Florida’s property-rights law. “If we try to taketh away, property owners may turn at us and say, ‘You’re taking away a vested right I had — and now, government, you owe me because of the Bert Harris Act,’” she said. For all its clunkiness, she argued, the variance process has one virtue: “It allows you to look at properties on a case-by-case basis. Developing a one-size-fits-all rule has some consequences.”

### One commissioner’s personal fight

No one on the dais spoke with more direct experience than Commissioner B.J. Bishop, joining remotely, who is rebuilding after losing her own home.

“I wish we had done this about four years ago,” Bishop said. “I think I am the only member of this commission experiencing the issue of trying to construct after losing a home to a hurricane — and the issues our code has created.”

She ticked through the traps one by one. On pools: “The six inches coming off the ground could well be an eight-inch rim around your pool, and suddenly that pool puts in a setback requirement that makes it almost unfathomable to recreate a pool that existed on the site before.” On daylight plane: when she built a garage a decade ago, “we were penalized because the lift-station right-of-way is on that side of the property — we had to constrain the garage to avoid casting shadow on a piece of property that will never be constructed on.” On wide rights-of-way: “There are parts of Buttonwood Drive over 60 feet in width. Imagine the penalty you absorb with that kind of right-of-way restriction sitting in front of your property.”

*“It’s a challenging environment when someone has experienced flooding, wants to make the investment to be safer, and then runs into regulatory issues,” he said. “There’d be some trade-offs.”*

Bishop also signaled where federal policy is heading. “The 50% rule is somewhat laughable, but FEMA is going to stop encouraging people to repair on the ground,” she said. “If your house is badly damaged in a hurricane, it needs to go up.” Homes left at grade, she warned, become projectiles in a major surge, “pushed into the elevated homes next to them.”

Her conclusion was blunt about the Key’s future. “As much as I hate seeing those neighborhoods become mega-mansion neighborhoods with elevated homes, the reality is that’s probably what Longboat Key in the next 10 to 20 years is going to look like,” she said. “I would urge you to get this to the planning and zoning board so they can create a set of rules people can live with.”

### The neighbors’ side

Commissioner Sarah Karon pressed the question staff is most likely to hear from the other side of a property line.

“There’s the potential for some folks feeling that a neighbor who elevates and gets an exception for daylight plane is problematic — that they’re losing property value or quality of life,” Karon said. “What do you think about that as a potential problem?”

Parsons acknowledged the tension. “It’s a challenging environment when someone has experienced flooding, wants to make the investment to be safer, and then runs into regulatory issues,” he said. “There’d be some trade-offs.”

Karon also flagged the precedent risk — whether rules written for storm-damaged or low-lying homes could be claimed elsewhere on the island — and asked whether elevating homeowners typically bring in fill (generally not, Parsons said, though it is permitted with an engineered drainage plan). Vice Mayor Penny Gold pushed on process: “Are you considering some sort of formal procedure for this, or just a seat-of-your-pants thing?” Any administrative decision, Parsons replied, would be governed by written criteria.

### Residents speak

Two residents urged the commission to act — and to keep the fix simple.

Blythe Jeffers, of 652 Lyons Lane, said she’s been personally lobbying builders to go higher. “When I see their signs go up, I call and say, ‘Do you know you can go five more feet up?’ — because we really need to raise the roads,” she said. “And they still come back and say the architect’s plans are at grade.” She urged the Town to streamline the cumbersome variance route — “you had to put an ad in the paper, and it was going to take a couple of months” — and recounted her own utility-meter ordeal: “FP&L required us to build a platform on the side of our house, and boy, it was a big platform.”

Jay Plager, vice chair of the Planning and Zoning Board speaking in his personal capacity, called the referral obvious. “It seems to me this is a no-brainer,” Plager said. “We ought not to ad-hoc it with variances and special exceptions when we’re really misusing those special provisions, which are designed for special circumstances.” The Town’s usual instinct to force conformity, he argued, doesn’t fit here: “That doesn’t make sense in this context — particularly where there are homeowners willing to come forward with their own money and fix up what they’ve got, if we’ll only let them do it in a sensible way.”

### What’s next

With no formal recommendation on the table, Mayor Williams asked for direction. “Do we have a consensus to direct planning and zoning to come up with a solution for this very difficult problem?” she asked. The commission agreed, sending the issue to the Planning and Zoning Board to draft options and report back.

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# Editor Letters



## Letters, from page 2

While the north shore access point has been improved, the Broadway access remains in disrepair following Hurricanes Helene and Milton. Despite being one of the island's busiest points with approximately 100 parking spaces, it faces persistent issues with illegal parking, littering, unauthorized pets, and unsafe boating. Furthermore, the landscaping and parking areas appear neglected, the walkway lacks a proper path, and frequent garbage overflows are creating unsanitary conditions.

I am also concerned about the current storage solutions for the LBK Turtle Patrol. Given the importance of their work for nesting turtles, does the Town intend to provide a more permanent and aesthetically appropriate structure for their equipment to replace the current plastic bins?

I believe that if we do not maintain a respectable appearance at our access points, visitors may be less inclined to respect our community's efforts to protect seabirds and sea turtle habitats and residents.

Finally, noting the successful beautification projects on the south end of the island, I would like to understand the Town's goals for the north end. Could you please provide a timeline for restoring the Broadway access property and share any plans for beautifying the roadway areas north of Whitney Plaza? Thank you for your time. I look forward to your response regarding how these matters will be addressed.

Patti Lopez  
Longboat Key

## FDOT Projects

To: Longboat Key Commission, Sarasota City Commission  
A Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022, and executed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and FDOT, granted Location and Design Concept

Acceptance for I-75 at Moccasin Wallow Road PD&E Study, from north of I-275 to north of Moccasin Wallow Road in Manatee County, Florida. This project includes modification of the existing interchange from a traditional diamond interchange to a diverging diamond interchange (DDI) and construction of a braided ramp between I-275 and Moccasin Wallow Road interchanges.

All information about the project, including a copy of all final documents, is available on the project website at <https://www.swflroads.com/project/454096-1>. This project will now proceed to the next phase of development.

If you would like more information regarding this project, please contact FDOT Project Manager, Nicole Harris, at (863) 519-2335 or by e-mail at [Nicole.Harris@dot.state.fl.us](mailto:Nicole.Harris@dot.state.fl.us).

Melissa Slater  
District Corridors Program Engineer  
Florida Department of Transportation

## Longboat Key Bridge

To: James Haft  
Hopefully Tal will be responsive to you. I am not one of his voters.  
BJ Bishop  
Commissioner  
Town of Longboat Key

## Longboat Key Bridge

To: Longboat Key Commissioner BJ Bishop  
Meanwhile, I don't believe Tal wrote a letter either as promised.  
James Haft

See Letters, page 7



# SECUR-ALL INSURANCE AGENCY

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*Sandra Smith* | 941.383.3388

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# Editor Letters



## Letters, from page 6

Longboat Key

### Longboat Key Bridge

To: James Haft

No. I am in DC next week with one of their commissioners and will push our issue.

BJ Bishop

Commissioner

Town of Longboat Key

### Longboat Key Bridge

To: Bradenton Beach Mayor John Chappie

Did the BB Commission take a position on the proposed LBK Bridge?

James G. Haft

Longboat Key

### Longboat Key Bridge

To: Longboat Key Commissioner BJ Bishop

At our next commission meeting, I will be asking the commission if they would like to have an official position on the proposed height of the LBK Bridge.

John R. Chappie

Mayor

Bradenton Beach

### Longboat Key Bridge

To: Bradenton Beach Mayor John Chappie

Residents of north LBK are very concerned about the proposed fixed span bridge. Jim Haft, who co-leads LBK North, has reached out to Bradenton Beach, is hoping you will join our Mayor, Debra Williams, in our request to build a smaller, less intrusive structure.

Thank you John. Hope recovery is continuing on Bradenton Beach. I know you have been swamped.

BJ Bishop

Commissioner

Town of Longboat Key

### Longboat Key Bridge

To: Bradenton Beach Mayor John Chappie

Just following up on my prior message. Is Bradenton Beach willing to send a letter to FDOT opposing the 78 foot mega bridge at Longboat Pass? If so, can you please send me a copy?

I've attached the letter that the Town of Longboat Key has sent to FDOT opposing the fixed bridge. Tal Siddique was going to send a letter as well, in support of the communities in his jurisdiction. Having a letter from Bradenton Beach would greatly assist our lobbying efforts to oppose the bridge.

James G. Haft

Longboat Key

### Thank You

To: Longboat Key Commissioner BJ Bishop

It was so great to see you again and am glad that we were able to have an extended meeting - I know Vern always enjoys meeting with you.

It has been a wonderful seven years, and I will definitely miss this work but am looking forward to the new challenge ahead of me.

In the meantime, please let me know if you need anything and I will let you know whenever we are down in Sarasota/LBK (which will be more often than not!).

Chase Babair

Longboat Key

### Thank You

To: Chase Babair

It was wonderful to see you yesterday when we met with Congressman Buchanan. Thank you, as always, for all the help and support you provide me and our entire staff at Longboat Key. Kaylee, Isaac and Charlie love working with you.

Congratulations on your new home. Hope settlement goes smoothly. I will definitely be in Land O Lakes when you open your new Smoothie Shoppe. Will be quite a change from working on the Hill.

Please let Vern know how much we appreciated the extra time he took with our group. We have been so proud to have him as our Congressman. Not sure who will be in that office next year, but we will miss the Congressman and you terribly. Stay in touch.

BJ Bishop

Commissioner

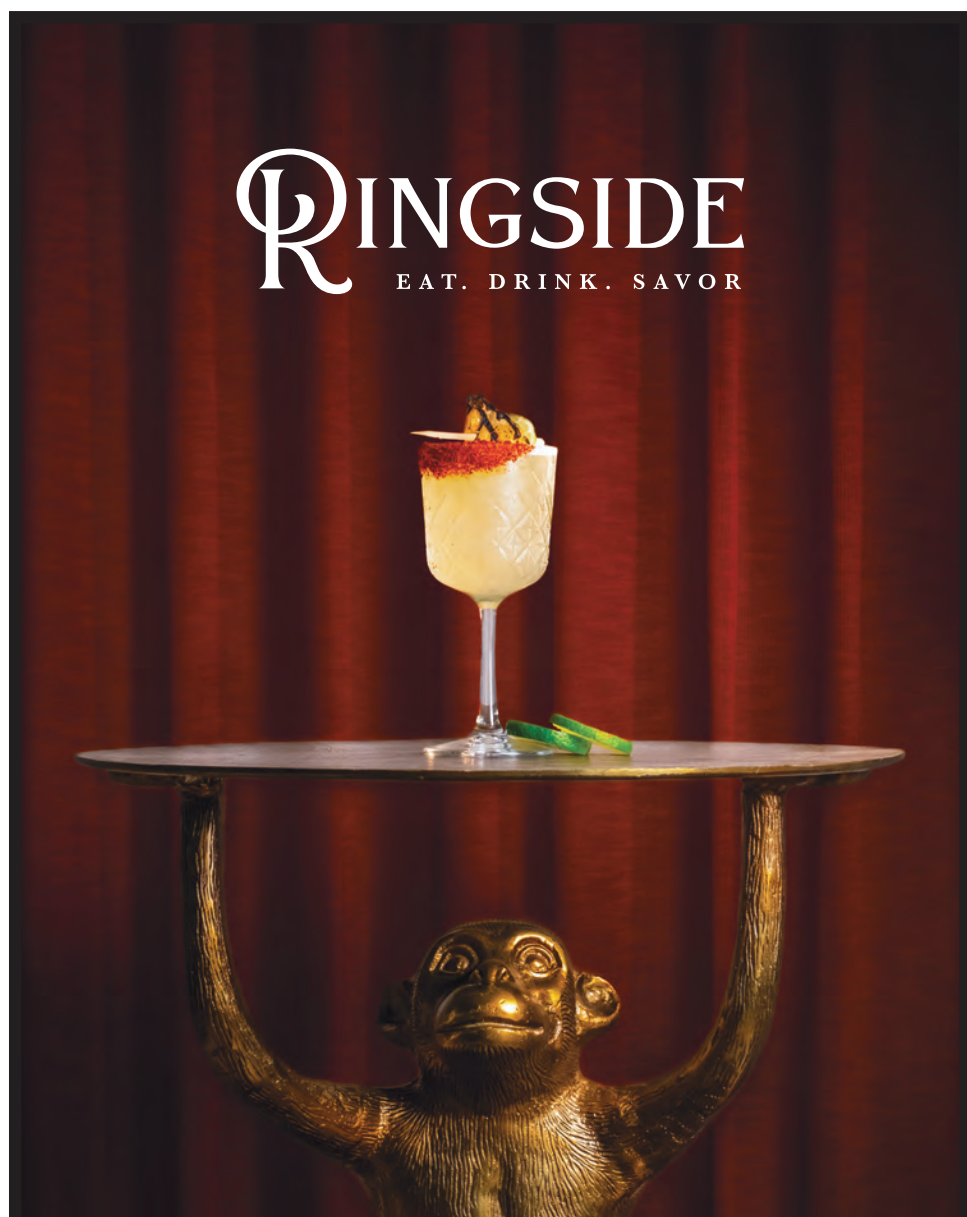
Town of Longboat Key

### Thank you

To: Omar Franco

It was wonderful to get to know you a bit better on this trip. Loved our time at dinner Tuesday night. Shannon was fabulous with us. I hope we see more of her. I believe this was one of our most successful fly-ins and your team Was a great part of that. If I can ever be of

**See Letters, page 8**



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# Editor Letters



## Letters, from page 7

any help please do not hesitate to contact me.

BJ Bishop  
Commissioner  
Town of Longboat Key

## Thank you

To: Sami Araboghli

As always, it was wonderful to see you yesterday when we met with Congressman Steube. You all have done so much to help Longboat Key and it is truly appreciated. Please be sure Greg knows how much we appreciated the extra time he spent with Jen and me.

I have made a reservation for you to join me at the Tiger Bay Luncheon on Thursday July 9th at 11:45 a.m. It is at Michael's on East in Sarasota. I know Jen will appreciate the extra support at this debate event for the City of Sarasota election. If the Congressman wishes to attend, please let me know and I will make a reservation for him as well. Have a wonderful 4th of July. We will see you soon.

BJ Bishop  
Commissioner  
Town of Longboat Key

## LBK Communication Team Update

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Gary Coffin

Thank you, Commissioner, for your support. I completely agree, the realignment of our Communications Team is a fantastic move that will truly benefit our community. With Savannah stepping into the leadership role, I am confident our team will keep sharing timely and valuable information with everyone we serve. Savannah brings so much to the table, and I am excited to see how she leads us forward.

I'm glad you received the notification on your personal cell. I'll go ahead and pull up your account details to check your order and confirm the contact information we have for you, including your cell phone and email address to see what order of notification we have listed and will keep you updated. Thanks again for your encouragement and feedback.

Tina Adams  
Public Information Officer  
Town of Longboat Key

## LBK Communication Team Update

To: Longboat Key Public Information Officer Tina Officer

Sounds like a great move and coordination,, by the way Tina my city phone did not activate this morning but my personal phone did.

Gary Coffin  
Commissioner  
Town of Longboat Key

## LBK Communication Team Update

To: Longboat Key Commission

I wanted to share an exciting update regarding the Town's Communications Team: Effective October 1, 2026, Savannah Cobb will assume the role of Lead for the Communications Team. This transition is part of our ongoing efforts to strengthen and grow

the communications services we provide to our departments, employees, residents, businesses, and visitors.

Over the past year and a half, the Communications Team has experienced significant growth in both the number of requests we receive and the responsibilities we manage. As we continue looking for ways to better serve the organization, Town leadership has identified an opportunity to redistribute responsibilities and further develop the team.

Now that Savannah has returned from maternity leave and settled back into her role, we are excited to expand her responsibilities and utilize her skills in a greater leadership capacity. Savannah has been an integral part of many communications projects and initiatives, and this transition is a natural next step.

I also want to emphasize that this change reflects the continued growth of the Communications Team and the Town's investment in its future. As communications needs continue to expand across the organization, this transition allows us to better utilize the strengths of both Savannah and me. Savannah will take the lead on Town-wide communications while I remain focused on public safety communications, emergency management initiatives, strategic projects, and supporting the Communications Team. Together, this positions us to provide even greater support and service across the Town.

As part of this transition:

Savannah will serve as the Town's primary Public Information Officer (PIO) for general Town communications.

She will lead the Communications Team, assist with assigning projects, oversee communication initiatives, and help coordinate communications related to Town events and activities.

I will continue serving as the PIO for Public Safety, maintaining responsibility for Police, Fire Rescue, emergency management, and public safety communications.

I will remain actively involved with the Communications Team and serve as Savannah's backup when needed.

Over the next several months, Savannah and I will work closely together through cross-training and knowledge sharing to ensure a smooth and successful transition.

As a reminder, when submitting communication requests, please continue to send them to: Communications Team

Using the team email helps us track requests, assign projects appropriately, and ensure nothing falls through the cracks. Whether it's a social media post, press release, employee communication, event promotion, graphic, video, website update, or another communication need, the team email remains the best place to start.

Another change accompanying this transition is that oversight of the Communications Team will move from Chief Dezzi to the Town Manager's Office. We are grateful for Chief Dezzi's support, leadership, and guidance over the years, as well as his role in helping develop the Communications Team into what it is today.

The Communications Team remains committed to supporting every department and providing timely, accurate, and engaging communications. We are excited about this next chapter and the opportunities it creates to continue improving how we communicate both externally and internally. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out.

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

## USCG Contact

To: FDOT Project Development Engineer David Turley  
I called once last week. No response yet. I'll ping them again.  
Steve Branham  
Commissioner  
Town of Longboat Key

## USCG Contact

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Steve Branham  
It was nice meeting with the Town of Longboat Key earlier in the month. I am just wondering if you have had a chance to reach out to the Coast Guard to see who we need to specifically talk to about the bridge height recommendations.  
David C. Turley  
Project Development Engineer II  
FDOT District 1

## Bayfront Park

To: Longboat Key Public Works Director Charlie Mopps  
A group of men that regularly play basketball at Bayfront Park have made a request that when the baskets are replaced after the court resurfacing, they not be replaced with a glass backboard (the sun comes through and impairs visibility). They are suggesting a white backboard, similar to the one in the attachment. Can this be done?  
Debra Williams  
Longboat Key

## Charter Review Committee - Update

To: Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton  
To date, we have received three applications for the Charter Review Committee! A tentative Meet and Greet with applicants is currently planned for the Regular Workshop on June 22, and appointments to the Committee are tentatively scheduled for the Special Meeting on June 29 (Committee meeting schedule to be established for September 2026).  
As you interact with residents, please consider reaching out and sending the attached blank application to those who have demonstrated an interest in serving their community. These engaged community members often bring valuable perspectives and a strong commitment to Longboat Key. Applications must be submitted no later than the close of business on Tuesday, June 16 (an extension from Monday, June 15). Thank you for helping spread the word and encouraging community participation. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. Have a great day and enjoy your weekend!  
Shayla Griggs

# KeyRealEstate

## Bird Key, Lido Key, Longboat Key latest sales

Address	Sq. Ft.	List Price	Bed/Bath/Half Bath	Days On Market	Sale Price
581 HIBISCUS WAY	3,235	\$3,850,000	4 4 1	1	\$3,664,311
5005 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#5	4,044	\$3,995,000	4 4 1	738	\$3,500,000
600 DE NARVAEZ DR	1,971	\$2,750,000	3 3 0	97	\$2,590,000
7149 LONGBOAT DR N	3,230	\$2,399,000	4 3 0	60	\$2,250,000
2410 HARBOURSIDE DR Unit#131	3,825	\$1,849,000	3 3 1	28	\$1,700,000
3040 GRAND BAY BLVD Unit#283	2,550	\$1,799,000	3 3 0	198	\$1,650,000
2341 HARBOUR OAKS DR	2,282	\$1,399,990	3 3 0	8	\$1,410,000
3511 FAIR OAKS CT	2,579	\$1,399,999	3 2 1	82	\$1,325,000
2675 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#303	1,896	\$1,295,000	2 2 0	2	\$1,320,000
580 RUSSELL ST	2,716	\$950,000	5 3 1	87	\$914,750
535 DE NARVAEZ DR	1,556	\$750,000	2 2 0	4	\$750,000
2110 HARBOURSIDE DR Unit#536	2,031	\$749,000	3 2 0	29	\$725,000
706 BAYPORT WAY Unit#706	1,601	\$739,000	2 2 0	68	\$700,000
5055 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#435	1,484	\$599,900	2 2 0	181	\$575,000
1975 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#G4-206	1,068	\$449,000	2 2 0	232	\$430,000
4360 CHATHAM DR Unit#305	747	\$320,000	1 1 0	134	\$290,000
408 JACKSON DR	2,585	\$2,998,000	4 4 0	59	\$2,750,000
111 S PINEAPPLE AVE Unit#1204	2,845	\$2,950,000	3 3 1	289	\$2,600,000
325 GOLDEN GATE PT Unit#502	2,263	\$2,420,000	3 3 1	0	\$2,420,000
301 QUAY COMMONS Unit#1703	1,828	\$1,795,000	2 3 0	206	\$1,600,000
800 N TAMIAMI TRL Unit#1217	1,830	\$1,300,000	2 2 1	76	\$1,180,000
1350 5TH ST Unit#306	1,836	\$950,000	3 3 1	121	\$960,000
226 GOLDEN GATE PT Unit#32	1,454	\$799,000	2 2 0	179	\$775,000
800 S BLVD OF THE PRESIDENTS Unit#5	1,090	\$520,000	3 2 0	356	\$470,000
750 N TAMIAMI TRL Unit#307	810	\$400,000	1 1 0	106	\$390,000
1064 N TAMIAMI TRL Unit#1212	1,137	\$368,000	1 2 0	145	\$340,000
850 S TAMIAMI TRL Unit#308	876	\$349,000	2 2 0	9	\$330,000

### Letters, from page 8

Deputy Town Clerk  
Town of Longboat Key

### Hello Dedrea

Thank you for your kind words and for attending yesterday's meeting. Our staff and commissioners are dedicated and focused on serving the community, and your positive feedback is welcomed and appreciated.

Your long history on the island, especially after the loss of your condo, speaks volumes about your dedication to our community. We appreciate you volunteering to serve on the charter committee. We will be making the appointments at our next meeting on 6/29.

Debra Williams  
Commissioner  
Town of Longboat Key

### Meeting today

To: Longboat Key Vice Mayor Debra Williams

I so enjoyed attending the meeting today. All of our town officials seemed very competent, and it was wonderful to watch you work as a team. The speakers were very prepared and extremely interesting in their presentations.

Thank you for considering me to be a part of this. When I sent in my application, I said any way or committee that I can serve on would be an honor. Please know that I am a full-time resident on our beloved island and have owned property on and off since the 1980's. My condo was completely destroyed in the last hurricane, but I survived it all and cherish every day I have here. Thank you and everyone that serves this community for all their hard work!

Dedrea (Dee) Greer  
Longboat Key

### FEMA Money

To: Longboat Key Commissioner BJ Bishop

Thank you Cameron for the update. This will be our first FEMA dollars received for the 2024 storms so it would be very exciting to see that come in.

Howard N. Tipton  
Town Manager  
Town of Longboat Key

### FEMA Money

To: Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton

I just received an update that \$1.9 million in FEMA funds are going towards Longboat Key's storm resiliency project. That seems like some huge news! I saw the update and realized I haven't caught up with you all since the power line undergrounding ceremony. I hope all is well.

Cameron Paul  
Deputy Regional Affairs Director  
Tampa Office of U.S. Senator Ashley Moody

### Canal program

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Gary Coffin  
Yes, Sir. Jamie is pulling it all together and responding.  
Charles Mopps  
Public Works Director  
Town of Longboat Key

### Canal program

To: Longboat Key Public Works Director Charlie Mopps  
Charlie, are you able to clarify Christie's questions?  
Gary Coffin  
Commissioner  
Town of Longboat Key

### Canal program

To: Longboat Key Public Works Director Charlie Mopps  
We were not able to attend the canal project meeting today. We had a couple of questions that we hope you can answer. We received the letter stating the proposed cost per property (we are a canal side home in Country Club Shores). It stated this was a five year assessment and then it was unclear after the first five years. Has that been clarified or amended? Secondly, there was also an asterisk with an additional 8% administrative fee? This is very confusing and possibly not permissible. Can you clarify this point as well?

Christy and Patrick Gaughan  
Longboat Key

### FY27 CPF Requests

To: Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton  
Good morning, just an FYI. I verified with Adam and he gave an explanation on the number changes.  
Kalee Zavela  
Grants Coordinator  
Town of Longboat Key

### FY27 CPF Requests

To: Longboat Key Grants Coordinator Kalee Zavela  
This looks right to me. The reason Rep. Buchanan's request is more than we asked for is because he wanted to raise it this year since his last CPF for the town was an unsuspecting victim of the DHS shutdown. The reduction from 3M to 700k is actually much more typical.

See Letters, page 11

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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.

## June 20

### Found property

5:33 p.m.

Officer Troyer and Officer Castro responded to the 4200 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for a report of found property. The complainant was traveling southbound on Gulf of Mexico Drive behind a black Mercedes work van when he observed a wallet fall off the back of the van. The complainant stopped and retrieved a black men's wallet from the roadway. He then made contact with Officer Troyer and turned over the wallet. Officer Troyer then gave Officer Castro the wallet for reporting and storage. The following items were found inside the men's wallet. The following items were found inside the wallet: three Kentucky ID cards, one Kentucky work ID, two health insurance cards, one Capital One Visa Credit Card, one Priority Pass credit card, one Republic Bank Master Card and \$20. All the items were in the same name. Officer Castro attempted to locate a phone number for him, but was unsuccessful. No social media profile was found. All the items were placed in a property and evidence temporary locker at the Police Department to be released upon request. Case clear.



a construction noise coming from a neighboring building. Upon his arrival, Officer Mathis made contact with the worker at the location and he advised that they were contacted by the maintenance department of the building for an emergency repair to the pool. The worker explained the work was completed and no more construction noise would take place. Case clear.

### Ducklings

4:06 p.m.

Sgt. Montfort while on patrol in the area of the 2200 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive, got a call for service regarding baby ducks stuck in a pool. Sgt. Montfort arrived at Harbor Cay Lane and met with

the homeowner and realtor who were showing the house during an "Open House" event. Just prior to Sgt. Montfort's arrival, the ducks were safely removed from the pool. Case clear.

### Trespass

5:56 p.m.

Officer Miano responded to the 3700 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for a possible trespass on the beach. Officer Miano interviewed the complainant who said there's multiple subjects possibly trespassing on Gulfshore's beach property and further said a dog was observed with them. Officer Miano spoke with the subject in relation to his presence on Gulfshore's beach property. The man advised he and his family are residents of the community. The complainant advised she is familiar with him and confirms he does in fact live at the community. The man further advises his dog is a service dog for his wife's medical conditions. Both parties were satisfied with the outcome. Case clear.

### Vehicle

8:48 p.m.

Officer Miano responded to Gulf of Mexico Drive for a possible family disturbance occurring inside a black Toyota Rav4. The location of the black Toyota was unknown, all units attempted to locate the vehicle. Officer Miano contacted the caller via cell phone and she said her sister advised her that their mother was having a verbal argument with her ex-boyfriend. The daughter also advised that he was operating the vehicle in an unknown location of Gulf of Mexico Drive. She also stated the ex-boyfriend already exited the vehicle and was walking someone along Gulf of Mexico Drive. The daughter advised the ex-boyfriend was a white-Hispanic male with a book bag. Officer Pescuma located the ex-boyfriend in the area of the 4900 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive. Longboat Police Officers had a language barrier with the ex-boyfriend and he was eventually able to relate there was a verbal argument with the mom and he was eventually able to relate there were no threats of harm to her. He further advised he exited the vehicle voluntarily without incident. All parties failed to cooperate any further. Case clear.

## June 21

### Noise

1:22 p.m.

Officer Mathis was dispatched to the 2200 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to

### Incident

11:02 p.m.

Officer Miano and Officer Pescuma responded to a condominium for possible subjects on the beach. Officer Miano observed several subjects near the water with flashlights fishing offshore. Officer Miano advised the subjects that the beach was closed after 11 p.m. and that the use of flashlights with white lenses was also prohibited during turtle nesting season. The subjects advised they were residents and unaware of both ordinances and would vacate the beach. The subjects were observed exiting the beach. Case clear.

## June 22

### Sea turtle

11:01 p.m.

Officer Tillman responded to the 5000 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for a sea turtle attempting to lay eggs on the beach and is missing a fin. When Officer Tillman arrived on scene, he observed several red lights walking south. Officer Tillman spoke with one subject who stated that he saw a sea turtle laying her eggs in the area and that everyone kept their distance and no white lights were on. The turtle laid its eggs and appeared to be missing a fin. The turtle had reentered the water prior to the officer's arrival. No violations observed. Case clear.

## June 23

### Found property

10:51 a.m.

Officer Green responded to the Police Department lobby for an anonymous woman who entered turned in a found Florida tag that was found in the 6800 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive near Whitney Plaza. She advised she did not see it come off a vehicle and that it was just in the roadway. She wanted to remain anonymous. The tag was run through NCIC/FCIC and did not return as stolen. Officer Green reached out to the registered owner of the plate and advised her that they had the tag and it was available for her to pick up. Case clear.

### Boat

4:03 p.m.

Sgt. Butler responded to Harbourside Drive and spoke with the complainant from the Moorings who advised the club is involved in a civil dispute with someone regarding non-payment for rendered services related to slip/mooring usage. The employee stated the owner of the vessel owes the club approximately \$8,000. The employee requested NCIC/DHSMV information in order to contact the vessel owner directly. Sgt. Butler advised her that information is privileged law enforcement information and can't be released or forwarded for a private civil payment dispute. Sgt. Butler further advised that the matter appears civil in nature and suggested the club pursue appropriate civil remedies, including filing a lien against the vessel, if applicable. The employee said the club does not wish to pursue a lien at this time. No criminal offense reported, civil matter only. Case clear.

## June 25

### Security guard

4:35 a.m.

Officer Miano responded to Bay Isles Parkway security gate for a past disturbance at the gate. Officer Miano spoke with the security guard who said he and a man who was a golf maintenance employee had a verbal argument when the golf employee attempted to bypass the security gate. The guard further advised he was using the bathroom when he saw the grey Ram pickup attempting to bypass the gate and a verbal argument ensued afterwards. When the verbal argument ended, the golf employee continued to his work site without any further issues. Officer Miano interviewed the golf employee at the maintenance building. The golf employee related he sat at the gate for several minutes waiting for the security guard, and then decided to bypass the gate. He said all of the golf course maintenance employees had their access cards revoked due to an employee being terminated and are currently awaiting new ones. The employee further said he had an important department meeting and grew impatient with the security guard not being present. He was apologetic for the incident. A follow up interview was conducted with the security guard and he was advised of the findings, which he said he was unaware of the access cards being revoked. The security guard was issued all necessary incident information for his internal report and requested no further action by police. Case clear.



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# EditorLetters



## Letters, from page 9

The Appropriations Committee has been trying to keep spending low, and most CPFs get reduced like that.

Adam Cross  
Potomac Partners DC

## FY27 CPF Requests

To: Adam Cross  
Hey Adam, rereading my email below. Can you just confirm I am right? I don't understand the change in the numbers.

Kalee Zavela  
Grants Coordinator  
Town of Longboat Key

## FY27 CPF Requests

To: Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton  
Just wanted to send a quick update and reminder regarding our FY27 Community Project Funding (CPF) requests. Of the three projects submitted through Representatives Buchanan and Steube, two projects were included in the House Appropriations Committee CPF tables and are considered effectively locked in pending final federal budget adoption. The Multi-Use Trail request was not selected for funding this cycle.

Project  
Representative  
Requested  
Supported  
GMD Complete Street Corridor Feasibility Study  
Buchanan  
\$1,000,000  
\$3,000,000  
Multi-Use Trail Feasibility Study  
Buchanan  
\$1,000,000  
\$0  
Aquatic Habitat Restoration Project  
Steube  
\$3,000,000  
\$700,000

For reference, the Complete Street Corridor request focused on a corridor-wide feasibility analysis and implementation plan for Gulf of Mexico Drive, while the Aquatic Habitat Restoration project would beneficially reuse dredged canal sediment to restore approximately 2.74 acres of seagrass habitat in Sarasota Bay.

Below is the original correspondence from Adam regarding the House Committee announcements.

Kalee Zavela  
Grants Coordinator  
Town of Longboat Key

## FY27 CPF Requests

To: Adam Cross  
Awesome update Adam! Thanks for all your efforts to keep these in play.  
Howard N. Tipton  
Town Manager  
Town of Longboat Key

## FY27 CPF Requests

To: Longboat Key Assistant Town Manager Isaac Brownman  
The House Appropriations Committee has posted some of the FY27 CPF Tables. So far the here is what is included for the town:

\$3,000,000  
Longboat Key Complete Street Corridor  
THUD Bill (LINK)  
Rep. Buchanan  
\$700,000  
Town of Longboat Key for Sarasota Bay Restoration Project  
Interior-Environment bill (LINK)  
Rep. Steube

Once the projects are included in the CPF tables, they are essentially "locked-in". The Homeland Security shutdown was a unique problem that excluded CPF projects, but these two bills and their CPF tables are very likely to be enacted despite future negotiations on the overarching bills themselves. Great job putting the requests together Kalee!

Adam Cross  
Potomac Partners DC

## FY27 CPF Requests

To: Longboat Key Assistant Town Manager Isaac Brownman  
I wanted to let you know that both Rep. Buchanan and Rep. Steube will be submitting our requests to the House Appropriations Committee. Here is the posting from Rep. Buchanan:

1) Town of Longboat Key  
\$3 million request

The funding would be used to complete the Major Feasibility Analysis for the full 10-mile Gulf of Mexico Drive corridor, a planning and feasibility component of the Gulf of Mexico Drive Corridor Improvement Project. Funds will support technical analysis, engineering evaluation, environmental screening, traffic and safety modeling, drainage and resiliency assessment, right-of-way review, public engagement, and development of phased implementation recommendations.

2) Town of Longboat Key

\$1 million request

The funding would be used to advance the planning and feasibility phase for a 12-foot-wide multi-use trail along State Road 789 (Gulf of Mexico Drive) within the Town, addressing pedestrian and cyclist safety, drainage, and resiliency needs, a transportation and active mobility component of the Gulf of Mexico Drive Multi-Use Trail Project.

Rep. Steube has not yet posted all of his requests online, but his staff have informed me that they will be submitting the Aquatic Habitat Restoration project.

Rep. Buchanan's requests can be viewed here: <https://buchanan.house.gov/funding-requests>

Rep. Steube's requests can be viewed here: <https://steube.house.gov/appropriations-requests-fl-17/>. The House Appropriations Subcommittees will announce which projects are selected, and at what amount, sometime later this month, or in early May.

Adam Cross  
Potomac Partners DC

## Deputy City Manager Appointment

To: Sarasota City Commission

I am pleased to share that I have appointed Jennifer Jorgensen as the permanent Deputy City Manager for the City of Sarasota. The city has many opportunities and challenges facing us both short and long-term. During the last 4 months, Jennifer and I have worked closely together on many of these competing priorities and have developed a relationship built on mutual respect and trust. I am confident this relationship will only strengthen over time, resulting in our office providing the best support we can to the Commission, our city departments, and the public. Based upon this appointment, we have divided up areas of responsibilities and reporting as follows:

City Manager - Departments Direct Reporting  
Development Services  
Planning  
Finance  
Parks & Recreation  
Police / Independent Police Panels  
Emergency Services  
Communications  
Human Resources  
Deputy City Manager - Departments Direct Reporting  
Utilities  
Public Works  
IT  
Governmental Affairs/Legislative  
Procurement  
Grants  
Homelessness Response/Services  
Van Wezel  
Special Events  
As I finish up my third week, I truly believe this appointment and organizational alignment will help us stay focused on the needs of both our community and our internal organization/team. Please let me know if you have any questions. Have a great weekend!

Karie Friling  
City Manager  
City of Sarasota

## Deputy City Manager Appointment

To: Sarasota City Manager Karie Friling  
Great news! Congratulations to Jennifer!  
Liz Alpert  
Commissioner  
City of Sarasota

## The Wine Concierge

To: Sarasota City Auditor and Clerk Shayla Griggs

My wife Bonnie Ross and I are original residents of the BLVD of Sarasota. According to the above application, there is a request for a Minor Conditional Use since alcoholic beverage stores are not permitted within the applicable zoning district. Similarly, the same applicant requested an MCU for the private club under construction in our building. Both applications require a site plan and ask whether any external construction is proposed. Very substantial exterior construction is currently underway at our building despite the fact that the site plans do not identify any such exterior construction. It appears that the applicant chose to intentionally mislead the City in applying for the conditional use.

Our understanding is that the applicant also refused to supply our building manager with any plans for their facility and has refused to comply with the condominium documents to obtain prior approval from the residents as required by those documents.

Therefore, we believe any conditional use approval must be denied until the proper application has been made to the BLVD condominium association. Furthermore, you should be aware that the developer who represents the applicant continues to treat our building as if it is still the owner even though the building was turned over to our condominium association over five years ago. The City of Sarasota needs to ensure that this application not subvert the zoning requirements as well as the condominium declarations and other contractual documents.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.  
Alan and Bonnie Ross  
Sarasota

## The Wine Concierge

To: Sarasota City Commission

I am a resident of The BLVD Sarasota Condominium and am writing regarding the Notice of Filing Development Application referred to above, mailed June 11, 2026.

The request is for a Minor Conditional Use since alcoholic beverage stores are not permitted within the applicable Zoning district. The same applicant also requested an MCU for a private

**See Letters, page 15**

## Library, from page 1

the November 3 statewide ballot.

### A Project Advanced Without a Vote

During Sarasota County's most recent budget workshop, the County Commission advanced the preliminary Capital Improvement Program for the coming fiscal year, moving a slate of projects forward as a block. The library was among those that no commissioner chose to pull aside for individual scrutiny, redesign, or cancellation. In the procedural grammar of municipal budgeting, that silence is itself a decision: the project survives, the drawings continue, the architects proceed.

Carolyn Eastwood, the county's Director of Capital Projects, confirmed to the board that the library has reached the 70 percent design threshold — the stage at which a building stops being an idea and becomes a specified, costed, nearly buildable thing. The work will continue through completion.

But "the design will be finished" and "the building will be operated" are two different sentences, and the gap between them is precisely where the anxiety now lives.

### The Costs That Cannot Be Endowed

The construction of the library — roughly \$11 million for the core facility — is already accounted for through library impact fees, the one-time charges levied on new development specifically to fund the capital cost of growth. A determined philanthropic campaign on Longboat Key has met and exceeded its \$3.5 million target for enhancements: a community hall capable of seating two hundred, and an outdoor terrace designed to knit the building into the Town Center Green and the adjacent Karon Family Pavilion. The total project approaches \$14.5 million, and on the capital ledger, it is essentially solved.

It is the operating ledger that gives the commission pause — and operating costs, unlike construction, cannot be paid once and forgotten. They recur, indefinitely, for as long as the institution draws breath.

Steve Botelho, the county's Deputy Administrator and Chief Financial Management Officer, laid the figures before the board with clinical precision. A partial first year of operation in 2028 would cost the county on the order of \$740,000 — for staffing, utilities, maintenance, and programming. That figure climbs to roughly \$1.1 million in 2029 and reaches approximately \$1.4 million by 2031. None of it can be drawn from impact fees. None of it can be covered by the donations already raised. Every recurring dollar must come from the county's general fund — the pool fed, overwhelmingly, by property tax.

And the property tax is exactly what Florida is preparing to reconsider.

### The Measure on the Ballot

On June 2, the Florida Legislature passed HJR 1F — styled the "Save Our Homes from Excessive Property Taxes" amendment — by decisive margins in both chambers. The measure now goes before voters on November 3, where it requires the approval of 60 percent of the electorate to be written into the state constitution.

Its mechanics are straightforward and its consequences are not. The homestead exemption, currently \$50,000, would rise to \$150,000 in 2027 and to \$250,000 in 2028, indexed thereafter to inflation. The amendment further establishes a constitutional pathway toward the eventual elimination of non-school property taxes on homesteaded property altogether. For a great many full-time Florida homeowners, the levy that funds their local government would shrink toward zero.

What is offered to homeowners as relief arrives at the county treasury as subtraction. Sarasota County's Office of Financial Management has already modeled the loss: should the referendum pass, the county projects forgoing roughly \$87 million in property tax revenue by fiscal year 2029 — an amount equal to 28.5 percent of the property tax revenue it expects to collect in 2027, and some 17 percent of the entire general fund within a projected \$509.4 million budget. Statewide, the Florida Policy Institute estimates the \$250,000 exemption alone would cost counties on the order of \$4.8 billion annually, a figure that could approach \$8.65 billion under full homestead elimination.

These are not the numbers of belt-tightening. They are the numbers of structural retrenchment — and a recurring \$1.4 million annual obligation for a barrier-island library is precisely the sort of discretionary commitment that does not survive a contraction of that magnitude.

### What the Amendment Permits — and What It Omits

The deeper threat is not merely that revenue would shrink, but that the amendment dictates how the diminished remainder may be spent. The constitutional framework directs local governments to prioritize a defined list of essential functions: public safety, infrastructure, schools, debt service, and pensions.

A public library does not appear on that list.

This is the quiet detail with the loudest implications. A county struggling to fund police, fire, emergency services, and basic infrastructure on a property tax base reduced by tens of millions of dollars may find itself not merely disinclined but constitutionally constrained from underwriting a new cultural amenity — regardless of how complete its design, how generous its donors, or how long its community waited. The instrument that was meant to deliver the library would, in that scenario, forbid the county from operating it.

Commissioner Teresa Mast captured the board's predicament without ornament, speaking of the necessity of re-examining beloved projects that carry heavy recurring costs. The commissioners, she said, were not questioning the importance of such projects, only confronting the discipline of prioritizing among them when the means to fund them all no longer exist.

County Administrator Jonathan Lewis offered the board a measure of procedural calm: because the operating dollars will not be required until after the November vote, no irreversible decision is needed now. But Lewis was candid about the horizon beyond it. The long term, he allowed, is anybody's guess — which is, in the careful idiom of a county administrator, an

admission of considerable unease.

### A Quarter-Century in the Making

To grasp what stands to be lost, one must reckon with how long it took to arrive here.

The project did not begin as a library. It began, some two decades ago, as the island's yearning for a permanent home for arts and culture — a successor to the vitality that had once animated the north end before the Longboat Key Center for the Arts closed in 2017. For years, the favored vehicle was a partnership with Ringling College of Art and Design: a roughly \$13 million center, raised through philanthropy, with Ringling managing the facility on land the Town would provide. That arrangement collapsed when two commissioners turned against it and Ringling's president withdrew.

The vision narrowed and, in narrowing, became attainable. Rather than an arts center the Town would struggle to operate, Longboat would invite Sarasota County — which had not opened a new library since 2018 — to build and run a county library on town-owned land at the Town Center Green, the 4.8-acre parcel east of Publix that the Town had acquired for \$3.7 million and developed, all told, at a cost of some \$5.6 million. The county would fund the building; the island would raise private money for the enhancements that would distinguish it from a generic branch. In the interim, beginning in November 2023, a county pop-up library began visiting the island on the first and third Thursdays of each month — a placeholder, and understood as one.

### What the Campaign Survived

The fundraising was never a sure thing, and the autumn of 2024 nearly broke it. Hurricanes Helene and Milton inflicted more than \$225 million in damage across Longboat Key, costing the campaign roughly four months as residents turned, rightly, to recovery. A jittery stock market and a season of economic uncertainty further dampened the appetite for giving.

And yet the island delivered. By the spring of 2025, then-Town Manager Howard Tipton reported pledges totaling \$2.8 million, with the Town itself guaranteeing the remaining shortfall of some \$700,000. The donor roll was the portrait of a community willing itself toward

a goal: a \$1 million lead gift, a half-million-dollar commitment, a \$350,000 pledge, two gifts of \$250,000, four of \$100,000, two of \$50,000. On June 4, 2025, the County Commission formally approved the project and authorized final design. The Library Foundation for Sarasota County has since received the bulk of the donations and transferred the proceeds to county government.

Tipton, who shepherded the effort through every reversal, called the library the crowning piece of the Town Center — the element that would, at last, make the whole composition cohere.

### What the Money Was Meant to Build

The private dollars were never destined for shelving or circulation desks. They were meant to purchase the difference between a county facility and a civic gathering place. The two-hundred-seat community hall would give the island a venue it has never possessed; the existing Town Hall chambers seat no more than eighty, and the most consequential public meetings have long been exiled to borrowed rooms. The outdoor terrace, added during final design, was conceived to dissolve the boundary between building and park, drawing the library outward into the Town Center Green and toward the Karon Family Pavilion, itself the product of private giving anchored by a \$500,000 gift.

This was, in other words, never merely a library. It was the long-deferred answer to the island's oldest civic ambition.

### The Donors' Safety Net — and Its Cold Comfort

Should the project ultimately be abandoned for want of operating funds, county officials have confirmed that the \$3.5 million in private contributions held by the Library Foundation would be returned to the donors who gave it. No benefactor would lose a gift.

It is genuine reassurance, and it is also a hollow one. The dollars would be made whole; the years would not. The relationships cultivated, the pledges secured through a pandemic, two hurricanes, and a volatile market — all of it would resolve into a refund and a flat parcel of ground beside a pavilion, the most expensive vacant lot on the island's civic conscience.

### A Decision That Belongs to Strangers

The near-term calendar is procedurally unremarkable. Design continues. A budget workshop is set for August. Public hearings on the fiscal 2027 budget follow in September, with final adoption to come.

But the date that governs all the others falls on November 3, when Florida's voters — in Jacksonville and Tampa, in Tallahassee and Pensacola — will decide whether HJR 1F enters the constitution. If it does, the fiscal architecture beneath every county library, park, and cultural facility in the state shifts at once, and Sarasota County's calculus on whether it can staff, power, and program a new library on Longboat Key ceases to be a matter of will.

It becomes a matter of permission and of means.

The Longboat Key library is 70 percent designed, fully funded to construct, and surrounded by the goodwill of a community that spent a generation and several million dollars willing it into being. Whether it ever opens its doors may rest not with a county commission, a contractor, or a donor — but with an electorate spread across sixty-seven counties, deciding a question that has nothing to do with a barrier island and everything to do with it.

The building, in the end, was the easy part. Keeping it alive is the harder arithmetic — and Florida is about to do the math out loud.

*The private dollars were never destined for shelving or circulation desks. They were meant to purchase the difference between a county facility and a civic gathering place. The two-hundred-seat community hall would give the island a venue it has never possessed; the existing Town Hall chambers seat no more than eighty, and the most consequential public meetings have long been exiled to borrowed rooms. The outdoor terrace, added during final design, was conceived to dissolve the boundary between building and park, drawing the library outward into the Town Center Green and toward the Karon Family Pavilion, itself the product of private giving anchored by a \$500,000 gift.*

## Van Wezel, from page 1

anchor of the Gulf Coast, drawing touring Broadway productions, major orchestras, and marquee performers to its 1,741 seats and lending a city of modest size a cultural reputation of immodest reach.

It is also, increasingly, a building at war with its own location. Hurricane Milton made the point in 2024 with brutal clarity, driving as much as four feet of storm surge through the doors and into the grand foyer, the orchestra pit, the dressing rooms, and the electrical systems, darkening the hall through the end of the year. Engineering assessments have placed the cost of preserving and protecting the structure at roughly \$17 million.

A citizen panel — the Purple Ribbon Committee — studied the hall's future and reached a measured conclusion: the Van Wezel is structurally sound, can be floodproofed, and should continue to operate. But it is aging, inadequate to the largest touring productions, and exposed to a bayfront that the rising Gulf will only render more perilous. The committee's recommendation was to keep the hall alive until a worthy successor stands ready. Whether that successor will ever rise is the question that now consumes downtown.

## A Renzo Piano Vision, Twice Drawn

For the better part of a decade, the Sarasota Performing Arts Foundation — until recently the Van Wezel Foundation — has labored toward that successor: a new center on The Bay, the 53-acre city-owned waterfront park taking shape around the existing hall. Its architect is the Renzo Piano Building Workshop, the Genoese firm responsible for the Pompidou Center in Paris, London's Shard, and the Whitney Museum in New York — a pedigree that signals, by itself, the magnitude of the city's aspiration.

Aspiration, however, must survive contact with municipal arithmetic, and this project has spent years learning how punishing that contact can be. The first concept — four buildings raised on twenty-foot piers and cantilevered partly over the 10th Street Canal — carried a price beyond \$407 million, and the City Commission sent it back to be reconsidered.

What returned in March was leaner and shrewder. In Concept 2.0, the buildings descend from their piers; instead, the ground itself is raised to between twenty-two and twenty-six feet for resilience. The complex shifts south of the canal and turns perpendicular to Tamiami Trail to resolve a protected view corridor. The main auditorium contracts from 2,700 seats to 2,200 — a capacity the Foundation deems better matched to the community — and is joined by a flexible theater of 250 to 300 seats and a learning lab, the whole comprising some 110,500 square feet beneath two parking structures. The revised cost: approximately \$288 million, lighter by \$120 million, and still the most expensive building the city has ever proposed to construct.

The commission received the design warmly. The financing it rests upon is another matter entirely.

## The Anatomy of a Fragile Funding Stack

The proposed financing stands on a public-private partnership split evenly down the middle. Roughly half the cost is to be raised through private philanthropy by the Foundation, which has committed to a campaign of between \$172 million and \$207 million. The other half is public, drawn principally from the city of Sarasota's share of a Tax Increment Financing district established around The Bay in 2020, with the city pledging \$88 million from TIF revenue and allied sources.

A tax increment district is an elegant instrument and a fragile one. It captures the growth in property tax revenue from a defined area — here, the downtown parcels surrounding The Bay, including The Quay and the Rosemary District — measured against a 2019 baseline, and directs that increment back into the district. Both the city and the county participate, under an interlocal agreement, with the district running through 2049. Early projections placed its combined yield near \$200 million; more aggressive forecasts, premised on continued downtown appreciation, run far higher.

The instrument's elegance, however, depends on two assumptions: that downtown property values keep rising, and that the property tax itself remains intact. The November referendum imperils the second, and the county's wavering imperils the partnership built on the first.

## The Partner Who Will Not Commit

For the performing arts center, the county is not a reluctant funder but, increasingly, an absent one. Not a single commissioner now seated voted to create the 2020 TIF agreement, and the present board has been conspicuously cool toward directing its share of the district's revenue to a new hall. The county has at times deposited less than its full portion into the improvement district, and some members have raised the prospect of withdrawing from the TIF before its term expires.

Commissioner Mark Smith framed the county's posture in the language of stewardship, telling Suncoast Searchlight that the county's thirty-year participation could not be guaranteed and that the board bore a fiduciary responsibility for the tax dollars in question. It is a defensible position, and a costly one for the city, because the burden does not vanish when the county steps back. It shifts.

Were the county's projected contribution — by some estimates in the range of \$180 million over the life of the district — to disappear, a public share always meant for two governments would fall to one. The city's portion of a \$288 million project could double, before reckoning with the tens of millions more required for site preparation, parking, and infrastructure. A city commissioner has already objected publicly to letting the county off the hook on a regional project whose audiences and economic benefits will plainly extend well beyond the city line, going so far as to suggest a surcharge on non-city residents should the county walk away. The county, to date, has not reconsidered.

## The Common Thread — and the Larger Stake

Here the two stories converge, for the rope drawn tight around the bayfront is the same one wound around the island.

The TIF that funds the public half of the performing arts center is, at bottom, property tax revenue — and HJR 1F, passed by the Legislature on June 2 and bound for the November ballot, would raise the homestead exemption from \$50,000 to \$150,000 in 2027 and to \$250,000 in 2028, with a constitutional path toward eliminating non-school homestead taxes altogether. The district is fed chiefly by commercial and high-end residential property, so the effect on TIF receipts is not identical to the effect on a county general fund; but a measure that erodes the broad property tax base and constrains the permissible uses of what remains casts a chill across every public financing structure in its reach.

That constraint is the part too easily overlooked. The amendment confines property tax spending to a defined roster of essentials — public safety, infrastructure, schools, debt service, pensions. A performing arts center, whatever its economic yield, is nowhere on the list. The city of Sarasota has already instructed its legal staff to determine whether, under the amendment, property tax dollars may lawfully be spent on parks at all. Its longest-serving commissioner has counseled the city to prepare as though the measure will pass, and has acknowledged plainly

that capital projects — the performing arts center among them — may have to wait or may never be built. Everything, she has said, is on the table for cutting.

This is the insight that ought to give the region's most sophisticated readers pause, because it inverts the usual logic of a tax cut. The relief that flatters a homeowner's annual bill draws down, over time, the public capital that sustains the very amenities — the concert halls and libraries, the parks and the waterfront — that make the surrounding real estate worth what it commands. On the Sarasota side of Longboat Key alone, taxable value stands near \$5.7 billion, a figure that rests in no small part on the premium the cultural coast confers. To erode the mechanism that funds that culture is, in the long arithmetic, to begin disinvesting in the asset itself. The bill arrives not as a line item but as a slow diminishment of the thing that made the place desirable.

## A Campaign Waiting on a Signature

While its public partners hesitate, the Foundation confronts arithmetic of its own. By the most recent accounting, it has secured something over \$23 million in announced gifts — barely a tenth of its goal, and, at the pace of recent years, a sum that would take generations to complete. The reason is a standoff that has become self-reinforcing: major donors are reluctant to commit without a firm public commitment from the city, and the city declines to sign the implementation agreement — the procedural hinge that would carry the project from concept into schematic design — until the November ballot reveals whether its funding base survives.

The Foundation has answered with a new chief development officer and an enlarged fundraising team, and it speaks, reasonably, of being poised to engage transformational philanthropy. But transformational philanthropy is a creature of confidence, and confidence is precisely what a deferred ballot withholds. The most that can be said with assurance about the grandest cultural project in the city's history is that it remains, for now, alive.

## Two Halls, One Verdict

The symmetry between the island library and the bayfront center is exact in its particulars. Each has private money in hand or nearly so. Each has a public partner that pledged its participation and then watched the political ground shift. Each carries a funding obligation tethered directly to the property tax. Each waits on the same November vote.

The library is the smaller story by every conventional measure — a fraction of the cost, a fraction of the square footage, a community of thousands against the region's urban core. Yet it is the further along: its design nearly complete, its private dollars already transferred. The performing arts center, for all its grandeur, has spent years in revision, still awaits its most elementary procedural step, and has raised barely a tenth of its philanthropic target.

And in both, Sarasota County is the partner declining to commit. On Longboat Key it is building the library while warning that it may be unable to operate it. On the bayfront it is building nothing, content to let the city absorb whatever it cannot bring itself to abandon.

For a generation, Sarasota has financed the cultural infrastructure of its future on the assumption that property tax revenue would always be there to carry it — a barrier-island library for an underserved community, a performing arts center for the waterfront that defines the region's very identity. Both are designed. Both are approved in principle. Both rest on the trust of donors who believed government promises enough to write real checks.

And both now sit in the same waiting room, watching a single question travel toward the ballot box — a question no one in local government wrote, and no one in local government can stop. Should the answer come back as the homeowner's relief and the treasury's loss, Longboat Key may never witness a ribbon cutting at Town Center Green, and downtown Sarasota may spend another two decades patching the flood damage of a purple landmark it could not bring itself to replace.

The date is November 3. For a region that built its name on the arts, the curtain is already rising — and no one yet knows whether there will be a stage left to light.



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# Editor Letters



## Letters, from page 11

club that is presently under construction in the same building which is also known as 540 N. Tamiami Trail. The building is a condominium also referred to as "The BLVD Sarasota" and condominium owners and lessees are governed by and subject to a Declaration and By-laws of the BLVD Sarasota Condominium and Association. The proposed wine facility is located in space immediately adjacent to the proposed Club separated only by a common interior wall. Neither application nor plans disclose that exterior construction is proposed, as the Applicant is required to do. In fact, very substantial exterior construction has been commenced and is ongoing on the Building's Common Elements, in violation of the BLVD Association governing documents and without approval of either the members of the Association or the Board of the Association. Such construction has confiscated over 5,000 square feet of Common Elements for the Applicant's personal use, interfering with the loading dock and related areas used for various Association purposes, including deliveries, trash collection and recycling services.

In addition to investigating the Applicant for its unilateral actions and deficient filings, the City should immediately require the Applicant to suspend its unlawful construction activity.

The Applications for conditional use should also be denied as they not only fail to comply with applicable City requirements, but because they do not serve a public use. The establishment of a proposed wine store is admitted by the Applicant to be solely for the use of Club members - not the public. No parking space is provided for retail customers, and the Applicant has acknowledged at a community meeting that no wine will be displayed in the store for inspection by customers nor inventory retained on the premises to sell and provide to walk-in customers. Rather, the Applicant has acknowledged that the intended purpose for the wine store is to provide a facility for Club members to purchase case wine for their personal use away from the Club which is not permitted to be transacted at the Club itself, rather than to provide an opportunity for neighborhood residents to shop for and purchase wine for consumption in their homes. Accordingly, the proposed wine store does not serve any public purpose or provide access by neighborhood residents to a service not presently available. In short, the proposed wine store is inconsistent with any reasonable application for conditional use that would provide a convenience or benefit not presently permitted or available by existing zoning, and, accordingly, the MCU should be denied. Thank you for your consideration.

Donald A. Goldsmith  
Sarasota

## The Wine Concierge

To: Sarasota City Clerk Shalya Griggs

Addition hearty thank you from me and our Board of Directors from the BLVD Condo Association. We have been frustrated by the lack of clear communications and intentions of these applicants. They clearly know the governing documents of our condo since it was their legal team that created them. They also clearly know the Rules and Policies of our Condo Association as they are members and hold 3 or our 52 votes. They have simply not proactively communicated nor followed any of the Association's Rules and Policies. To make it clear, they refused to share their building plans and permits and ultimately we had to acquire them directly from the city. To say the least, our association members are extremely frustrated with their lack of coordination and transparency. We as an Association have taken initial legal steps to protect our interest.

What we are requesting is the City step in and make sure that their building permit application is accurate (we clearly think it is not), their private club application is accurate again (we have serious doubts), and their existing as-built aligns with their applications (it clearly does not).

Please feel free to reach out and discuss this or request additional information. Thank you again for your due diligence and support in this matter.

Howard Kilman  
President, BLVD Condo Association

## The Wine Concierge

To: Brenda Dunn

Thank you for taking the time to share your detailed concerns regarding the development applications at 1224 Boulevard of the Arts and the related notice distribution. I appreciate your thorough explanation and want to assure you that your comments have been received.

Additionally, your feedback regarding the notice distribution and its impact on residents within the required notification radius is duly noted.

We understand how vital it is that these matters are addressed promptly and transparently, given their direct effect on the rights and daily operations of condominium residents. Please know that your request for an investigation into both the application details and the notification process will be forwarded for review as part of our ongoing commitment to ensure all procedures are followed appropriately.

Should you have any further information to share or specific questions, please feel free to reach out. We will keep you updated as we move forward and will respond further once we have additional information. Thank you again for bringing these issues to our attention.

Shayla Griggs  
City Clerk, City of Sarasota

## The Wine Concierge

To: Sarasota City Clerk Shayla Griggs

I am a resident of The BLVD Sarasota Condominium and am writing regarding the Notice of Filing Development Application referenced above, which was mailed on June 11, 2026, and received on June 18, 2026.

I wish to bring a significant concern to your attention regarding the Accuracy and Scope of the Proposed Applications:

The current applications may not accurately reflect the scope of work ultimately intended by the applicants.

The applicants, Joel Freeman and Kevin Daves, previously submitted Applications 25-ASP-06 and 26-MCU-02 in November 2025 concerning commercial spaces within The BLVD Sarasota condominium. Those applications represented that the proposed work involved interior finishes only.

However, the work subsequently performed extended far beyond interior improvements. Significant alterations have been made to the exterior of the building, including the enclosure

and expansion of areas affecting the building's Common Elements, specifically the loading dock and surrounding areas.

As a result, the applicants have effectively encroached upon and restricted access to areas that serve the condominium's 49 unit owners. These Common Elements areas have historically been used for essential building functions, including deliveries, trash collection, recycling services, and other resident-related operations.

Such alterations are in violation of The BLVD Sarasota's governing documents, which require appropriate approvals before material modifications can be made to any Common Elements. The required condominium approvals were not obtained before these changes were undertaken.

Further, I am unaware of any site inspections conducted by the City during the course of these substantial alterations. Consequently, City staff may not have had the opportunity to observe the extent to which the completed work differs from what was represented in the approved applications.

The practical effect of these actions has been the appropriation of approximately 5,250 square feet of Common Elements property for the exclusive benefit of a private commercial interest, to the detriment of the condominium owners and residents.

I understand that the City has recently been made aware of these concerns. Given the circumstances, I respectfully request that the City thoroughly investigate the matter and consider whether further activity related to these applications should be suspended pending compliance with applicable condominium requirements, in addition to an amendment of the applications to accurately reflect actual plans, and any additional City review and approval deemed appropriate.

Because these issues directly affect the rights and use of Common Elements property by all residents of The BLVD Sarasota, this matter is of significant and immediate concern.

I would appreciate a response at your earliest convenience regarding the City's intended course of action.

Brenda Dunn  
Sarasota

## The Wine Concierge

To: Sarasota City Clerk Shayla Griggs

The condominium owners of The BLVD Sarasota are faced with an outrageous situation that demands immediate action from the City: the applicants referenced above provided false plans to the City and have seized property that is not theirs to build on.

I am a resident of The BLVD Sarasota Condominium at 540 N. Tamiami Trail and a former president of its Association board. I write regarding the Notice of Filing Development Application referenced above, mailed June 11, 2026. The Wine Concierge is being developed by the same applicants behind the private club (1000 North Sarasota) now under construction next door — both inside our building, both bound by the Declaration and By-Laws of The BLVD Sarasota Condominium.

A large exterior structure — air-conditioning units, mechanical equipment, and a permanent concrete pad for a generator — is being built in our loading area. The Declaration clearly identifies that area as a Common Element: it belongs to the building's 49 unit owners, not to the developer. None of this construction appears anywhere in the plans the applicants submitted to the City. To the contrary, their proposal specifically stated that no exterior work would be done — "interior finishes only." That same "interior only" representation runs back through their prior club applications (25-ASP-06 and 26-MCU-02, filed in November 2025).

This is not minor work. It has confiscated more than 5,000 square feet of Common Elements property, along with the air rights above it, for the exclusive private use of a single commercial owner, and it has closed the entire area — used every day for deliveries, trash disposal, and recycling — to residents and Association staff because of the hazards of active construction.

The applicants knew exactly what they were doing. A structure of this scale- involving a mezzanine built of steel girders that traverses the entire width of the loading area with power and mechanical systems- requires engineering, planning, and forethought. It is not credible that this is some afterthought that followed their submission to the city claiming they would build nothing outside of their unit. A false statement made knowingly, to obtain a government approval, is fraud, and the City should treat it as exactly that. One must wonder whether the applicants failed to mention the exterior construction because they knew they had no right to build on that land?

The Association did not stay silent. It sent the developer a cease-and-desist letter identifying this area as a Common Element under the Declaration and demanding the legal basis for the work. Construction did not pause for a single day. No legal basis has ever been provided — because there is none.

This is not a private matter for the courts. The false documents were submitted to the City, the construction sits on land the applicants do not own, and the City is being asked right now to reward the same applicants with two more approvals.

I demand the following actions be taken:

1. Suspend Applications 26-ASP-11 and 26-MCU-04, and any further activity on this site, until the unlawful exterior construction is removed and the applicants' filings are corrected to reflect what they have actually built.
2. Order the immediate cessation of all exterior construction.
3. Penalize the applicants for submitting false plans to the City.
4. Require the applicants, at their sole expense, to tear down and remove every exterior structure that does not appear in their submitted plans, and to restore the Common Elements to their original condition.
5. Impose penalties sufficient to deter this developer — and any other — from seizing condominium owners' property by brute force and daring the City to respond after the fact. The City should ask itself plainly whether this is conduct it wishes to reward.
6. Review the City's own approval and inspection procedures, which permitted more than a month of substantial exterior construction — on land the applicant does not own, and on plans that disclosed none of it — to proceed without apparent scrutiny.

Finally, this matter and the City's response to it should be made known to the local media. The residents of Sarasota are entitled to know what has been done here, and to be assured that the City stands behind their rights as homeowners against a developer who treats both the City's process and his neighbors' property as his to take.

Abraham Morgentaler  
Sarasota

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