



Longboat Key News

March 21, 2025

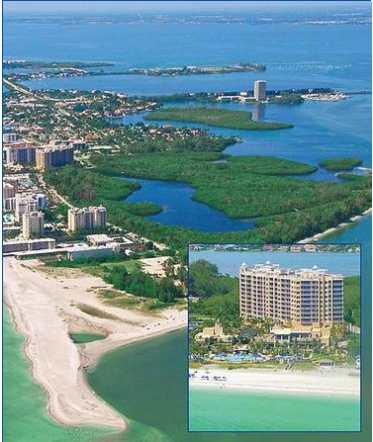
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InsideLook



Traffic: Is it worse this year? ...page 4



Lido condo hits \$3.9 million ...page 11



South African wines hit home ...page 6



Erratic driver with ladder ...page 10

Sarasota debates need and cost of new arts hall; Van Wezel future murky

Changing politics and escalating costs threaten to derail future of 2,700 seat center for Sarasota's Bay Park.

The City of Sarasota is debating the need and cost and viability of a new performing arts hall — yet again.

Sarasota's Bay Park project was conceived more than a decade ago as a plan to turn the 53 acres surrounding the Van Wezel Performing

Arts Hall into a public park transforming the city's waterfront.

The first phase of the project is complete with green spaces, walking paths and public amenities that opened to the public in 2022. A second phase is now underway.

But the park's next phases — which

include a \$407 million performing arts center — face an uncertain future amid debate and changes on boards that could end the taxpayer-funded money on which its future depends.

Funding for the center was supported by a bond issue. **See Arts Hall, page 15**

Story of Longboat's Chef Marcella Hazan opens Film Festival

The 27th annual Sarasota Film Festival will take place April 4-13.

The festival opens April 4 with Marcella, the story of renowned chef Marcella Hazan, who changed the way we cook and experience Italian food, and who spent her last years on Longboat Key until her death at age 89 in 2013.

Through her cookbooks and teaching—and an uncompromising commitment to Italian tradition—her impact was felt in millions of American home kitchens. Hazan's husband Victor and son Giuliano Hazan — himself an Italian cookbook author, chef, and teacher — as well as director Peter Miller, will attend the festival in-person and participate in a post-screening talkback.

The 27th annual Sarasota Film Festival will take place April 4-13 with feature, short film and television episode screenings, some of which will have directors, stars and other guests present.

The closing screening will be Taylor McFadden's "Lovers," about two women who return to their hometown for the funeral of a friend who took his own life and reconnect with their old community at the local dive bar music venue. McFadden will attend along with the film's executive producer, Nathaniel Rateliff — a singer-songwriter who, with his group the Night Sweats, has released songs such as the platinum-selling single "S.O.B." — and will perform an acoustic set following the screening.

This year, the festival will also branch out into television with a **See Festival, page 2**

Art blooms in Sarasota



Fine Art Show this weekend at Phillippi Estate Park. For more info, see page 13.

Woman transported to SMH after driving into bay on LBK

Tuesday night, Longboat Key EMS and Fire responded to a vehicle that ended up in the bay at the Longboat Key Moorings shortly after 5:30 p.m.

According to Tina Adams, the Public Information Officer for the department, a female had to be pulled from the vehicle and was in cardiac arrest. Adams said a male was also in the vehicle but suffered no injuries and was outside of the vehicle when crews arrived.

Adams said they transferred the patient to the Bayflight Crew and confirmed the helicopter was called due to traffic and time restraints. The helicopter picked up the patient at Ken Thompson Park near Mote Marine.

Adams said Longboat Key Police Department has an open investigation and they are working to figure out why and how the vehicle ended up in the water.



L.L.Bean to open first Florida store in Sarasota, Bradenton area later this spring

A major outdoor clothing brand will open its first Florida store at the University Town Center later this spring.

Outdoor retailer L.L. Bean announced it will open a 17,000-square-foot store at 111 N. Cattlemen Road this spring. The store — near the town center's Target, Best Buy and Old Navy — plans to hire more than 30 employees as it nears opening, and its Bootmobile will make stops around the area from March 29 to April 5, according to a news release.

The University Town Center location is L.L. Bean's first in Florida and the southeast U.S., with stores predominantly located in northeastern states like Maine, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. The 111 N. Cattlemen Road unit was previously a Bed Bath & Beyond.

St. Armands Circle businesses mostly open
The businesses on St. Armands Circle are ready for visitors after the 2024 hurricanes. Roughly 2/3 of the businesses on the Circle have reopened since last fall's hurricanes. Some businesses have moved locations and others are still rebuilding or waiting on permits.

Festival, from page 1
world premiere screening of the first two episodes from the fourth season of "Godfather of Harlem," starring Forest Whitaker as New York crime boss Bumpy Johnson in the 1960s, before it premieres April 13 on MGM+. Series co-creator Chris Brancato, who also co-created Netflix's "Narcos" and penned the 1997 period crime film "Hoodlum," will attend along with actor Rome Flynn, who's known for his roles on "How to Get Away with Murder" and "The Bold and the Beautiful" and who on the series plays crime lord Frank Lucas, previously portrayed by Denzel Washington in Ridley Scott's film "American Gangster."
Movies screening in Sarasota shortly after their premiere at this year's Sundance Film Festival will include the documentaries "The Librarians," about librarians fighting book banning in Florida and other states; "Marlee Matlin: Not Alone Anymore," about the Oscar-winning actress who attended the inaugural Sarasota Film Festival; and "Sally," about the astronaut Sally Ride. Other notable documentaries screening will include "Anxiety Club," addressing the topic of anxiety through comedians such as Sarasota's Tiffany Jenkins, and "Gallagher," about the watermelon-smashing comic and University of South Florida graduate who grew up in Tampa.
Also heading to the Sarasota festival from its recent Sundance premiere will be Andrew Ahn's "The Wedding Banquet," a remake of Ang Lee's 1993 Oscar-nominated romantic comedy, featuring "Saturday Night Live" star Bowen Yang and "Killers of the Flower Moon" Oscar nominee Lily Gladstone. "Being Maria," a biopic of "Last Tango in Paris" actress Maria Schneider that premiered at last year's Cannes Film Festival, will also screen along with "The Summer Book," Charlie McDowell's adaptation of the Tove Jansson novel starring Glenn Close.
Like last year, the Sarasota festival will feature a showcase of Oscar-nominated short films — this year featuring the animated short field, including the Oscar winner "In the Shadow of the Cypress." The short film selection will also include several with local ties, such as shorts made by Ringling College of Art & Design students or ones centered on environmental nonprofits such as Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium and Save Our Seabirds.
For more information, visit sarasotafilmfestival.com.

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EditorLetters

Longboat Key News and Sarasota City News encourages Letters to the Editor on timely issues. Please email to: 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.

GMD Street Lighting

To: Editor
I don't know if this subject matter has been covered but as a Safety Issue I will bring it up.
My wife and I have been seasonal residents since 1982, We are shocked to see how dark GMD is at night. Where are the Streetlights ?
The other night when there were no other cars around I momentarily shut off my car lights for a couple of seconds. Pitch Black. I mean Black.
Unless there is another Phase of Work coming , I am shocked.
After all the planning that went into burying the wires, where are the Street Lights for safety ? Please do not say TURTLES . There are so many ways to shield lights IF baby turtles, crawling on the sand, would have to have very long necks to be disoriented by Streetlights.
Has the FDOT fallen down on this issue or did someone give them wrong information? The next time you are on GMD at night, please notice.
Paul B. Ahern
Longboat Key

Travel time with traffic

To: Longboat Key Town Clerk Trish Shinkle
We left home at 5:15 pm Wednesday. We were meeting people in Bradenton. The southbound traffic was backed up past Buttonwood so we took the northbound route. The backup started at the Centre Shops. It took 2 hours to get to the bridge onto Bradenton Beach. The traffic was also paralyzed on Bradenton Beach. That portion of trip was 45 minutes.
We are going to need some out of the box thinking and powerful voices to deal with this island wide paralysis. It is not just a north end problem!
BJ Bishop
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

Travel

To: Longboat Key Commissioner BJ Bishop
We left the office at 4 p.m. It took me 2.5 hours to get home. Understand the frustration!
Trish Shinkle
Town Clerk
Town of Longboat Key

Travel

To: Longboat Key Town Clerk Trish Shinkle
I worry how much of this crazy traffic staff can bear. Is this worse this year?
BJ Bishop
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

To: Longboat Key Commissioner BJ Bishop
Yes, but both Counties had scheduled Spring Break the same week so I think that is part of the issue. Getting off at 4 helps because we're not getting home at 8 pm. I think most of us just expect the month of March and early April to be bad. Some of the department heads flex schedule for those that can work from home.
Trish Shinkle
Town Clerk
Town of Longboat Key

Longboat Key issues

To: Florida Senator Joe Gruters & Delegate McFarland
I know how swamped you are in Tallahassee so I wanted to share some important numbers with you before Penny Gold and I arrive in Tallahassee next week to talk about critical issues for Longboat Key.
In FY2024 Longboat Key spent \$4.05 million for Police, \$8.73 million for Fire Department
See Letters, page 12



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WineTimes

South African wines finding Sarasota venues

Traditional wine bars, shops, and restaurants in the Sarasota area are beginning cautiously to stock and serve wines from South Africa. We recommend the most widely planted wine grape, Chenin Blanc.

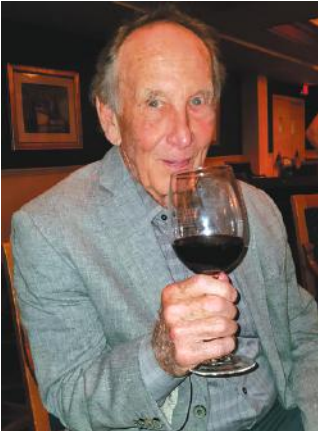
S.W. and Rich Hermansen
Guest Writers
wine@lbknews.com

As the leading wine importer in the world, the USA has the economic clout in the global wine market to make or break the wine industry of a smaller nation that exports a large proportion of its wine harvest. In 1978, Mateus Rosé, a sparkling wine of the color of an orange rose, alone accounted for forty percent of Portugal’s wine exports. When the sales of Mateus Rosé fell precipitously, so did Portuguese wine exports, leaving the industry in ruins. The Blue Nun phenomenon caused exports to the USA of German Liebfraumilch (our friend the artist Dan Glidden called it “Leap Frog Milk”) and other sweet white wines to soar to a peak in 1984-85, followed by rapid decline.

The popularity of South African wine exports during the 20th Century never reached heights from which a drop would break anything tougher than a ripe grape skin. From virtually nothing during Apartheid to next to nothing when Apartheid ended in 1994, exports began a slow uphill climb. Reborn in the international community, the Republic of South African (RSA) aspired to carve out a niche in the global wine industry.

The dream of a boom in wine exports quickly faded into a bust when the RSA wine industry rushed to take advantage of the opening of global markets. The Pinotage problem became the focal point of the problem with South African wines. Two reasons made it worse for Pinotage. First, the Pinotage grape originated in South Africa as a cross between Pinot Noir from Burgundy and Cinsault from Languedoc-Roussillon. Cinsault, called Hermitage in South Africa, contributes the “age” suffix to the hybrid name for this hybrid of French wines. Pinotage had become the South African wine in the eyes of the world. Second, leaf roll virus, a disease of grape vines, affected the aroma profile of wines made from old Pinotage vines and then fermented to high alcohol percentage levels and aged in new oak. During the final years of the 20th Century, some shipments of Pinotage to the USA and UK, to put it mildly, failed to please both critics and ordinary wine buyers. In fact, they stunk.

Now some big red wines and a few aged white wines have odd aromas when opened and not allowed to breathe. Premier French Pinot Noir from Burgundy may have a barnyard



smell, aged Reisling may have a petrol aroma (which many Germans consider a feature), and Sauvignon Blanc may have a green vegetal scent. These oddities would not tar a grape variety as a rule, but in the case of Pinotage, it did. Why? The worst examples of Pinotage smelled like burnt rubber or, in one cruel phrase, “tires on fire”.

The close association of Pinotage and South Africa and a few really bad examples left South African wine exporters in the lurch. The Pinotage problem has plagued the RSA to the present day. The RSA only exports about 1% of its wine production to the USA.

That should change. The wines from the RSA that we have tasted recently compare well with popular fine wines and usually cost much less. The RSA now features both a wide diversity of winemakers producing a wide diversity of wine varieties and blends.

Traditional wine bars, shops, and restaurants in the Sarasota Florida area are beginning cautiously to stock and serve wines from South Africa. We have recommended the most widely planted wine grape, Chenin Blanc: the 2024 Protea Chenin Blanc (\$17 retail) from the Western Cape has crisp and clean mouth feel and delicate white flower aromas. Also at 99 Bottles, the 2022 Big Flower Cabernet Franc (\$20 retail) from the Stellenbosch region shows a light bite of tannins and peppery, coffee finish.

The new star from South Africa, we contend, has to be the Pinotage that we enjoyed at the Alpine Steakhouse. The 2022 Kanonkop Kadette Pinotage (\$21) matches good Napa Cabs and Bordeaux reds. A redeeming son of earlier Pinotage, it has robust flavors and intense dark fruit tastes with no offending odors. It pairs well with rare beefsteak or lamb. On this centennial of the melding of Pinot Noir and Cinsault, drink a toast to viniculturist Izak Perold who developed the Pinotage grape in 1925!

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

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

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The Art of Selling what you Love

Sig Hermansen
Associate Writer

Judy Kepez-Hays is nothing short of a legend when it comes to real estate success in Sarasota and its luxury islands.

Judy and her team, which consists of herself, her son, Steven Kepez, REALTOR® and Leah George, REALTOR® have accomplished this success by remaining loyal year after year and decade after decade to both the area as well as generations of customers. The Judy Kepez-Hays team has sold over \$173 million in the last 2-1/2 years and Career Sales to date total over \$3.4 Billion. This translates into thousands of sold homes over more than four decades in the region's most competitive market.

What leads to success?
Is it talent? Honed skills? Perseverance? Inspiration? Knowledge?
Perhaps it is an indefinable combination,

but there is little mistaking that Longboat Key REALTOR® Judy Kepez-Hays has spent a lifetime striving and achieving goals in the face of repeatedly difficult circumstances. She has consistently been ranked nationally in the top .5% of Coldwell Banker Agents. Judy credits both her mother and father for her success. Her father, Louis Buky, was a professor in Budapest, Hungary and spoke nine languages. Kepez-Hays says it was his uncanny ability to relate to so many cultures that she has inherited and employs daily in her work. A large percentage of her clientele are European and Kepez-Hays credits these relationships for this year's strong performance despite a sanguine market. And what does Kepez-Hays employ from her mother, Rosalie? She credits her for her entrepreneurial spirit. Her mother started her own business in Budapest and had the first Swiss knitting machine in the community in 1955. Kepez-Hays moved to Chicago at six years old. Her mother died when she was 16 years old. She is proud that her father, who taught languages and math, raised her and her siblings, with the help of her Aunt Gabriella. One trait she attributes to her success is her tenacious ability to keep deals together. Once a contract is signed, obviously there are a myriad of contingencies and contractual exegesis that can undermine the buyer's and seller's original intent. You can find Kepez-Hays on one hand counseling a buyer and, on another hand, organizing inspections.

Early lessons learned
There is something in the intrinsic value of owning land and property that Kepez-Hays became aware of early on in her life in America. In the early 1960s, Kepez-Hays first became exposed to the significance of property ownership. Her father and mother at that time worked and saved and bought that time worked and saved and bought two lots in Barrington, Illinois. They later sold them for a profit. Watching the success of this transaction while growing up left an indelible mark on Kepez-Hays. Kepez-Hays bought her first home in California in 1974 in Redondo Beach. She says the house quadrupled in value within four years. But her formal move to a real estate career happened after she came to Florida in 1978 following a series of unfortunately events where she almost lost her son, Steven, in a boating accident. In 1978, she obtained her real estate license. She started at Realty World-Howard Lamb on Longboat Key near Pattigee's Restaurant. Within three weeks, she was on floor duty and got a listing at Katie's Bait & Tackle Shop. Kepez-Hays remembers she enjoyed driving her Triumph TR6 to work. The day she worked on floor duty, she had to take a client, Mr. Mason in her car. She only had a two-seater, and his son followed. "You never forget your first deal," Kepez-Hays says. The father bought the bait and tackle shop while looking for a business for his son. "He loved it," she said, but he wanted more land on the beach—the only contingency. Unfortunately, the land was not for sale.

Undeterred, Kepez-Hays spoke to the property owner, worked out a sale price and ended up selling Mr. Mason the bait and tackle shop for \$135,000 and the land for an additional \$20,000. Judy's husband, retired attorney Dr. John Hays, says that example shows one of her intrinsic talents. "Judy is driven – she gets up every morning before sun-up; she is focused."

In a short time, Kepez-Hays was the top producer in the office and won a four-day trip to the Bahamas. She soon joined Armada Realty on St. Armands Circle hoping to capitalize on the walk in traffic. She says Manly Tate and Barbara Ahearn were mentors who helped develop her dedication and professionalism. Kepez-Hays says she had an actual dream at the time in which she was at a large boardroom table negotiating a multimillion-dollar transaction with Nigerians. She says the dream ominously came true.

Four months later she was invited to work at Arvida, the developer of the Longboat Key Club and the region's most prestigious real estate company. She soon found herself at a boardroom table closing a \$3 million parcel in Harbour Links to a team of Nigerian investors. It was a large sale considering the year was 1986.

Stay on top
Later, Arvida was bought by Coldwell Banker where she has remained and grown her clientele and annual sales. Her success, in her own words is, "I don't let anything drop. Every day is a new day in the life of sellers and buyers, and you never know what will happen."

One thing her husband says is that "Judy does not push to sell but does not let anything slip away or fall apart."

Those sentiments were echoed by a former Broker who was extremely familiar with her work said, "One of the things that distinguishes Judy is she really is persistent and is creative in that persistence. She can present innovative ways to make transactions work for all parties."

I once asked her husband, John, what it is like to be married to a fast-paced driven REALTOR®. He said, "Although Judy is a driven person, she is remarkably easy person to get along with. We both like to ski. We've designed and decorated 11 houses in 11 years. I enjoy the closeness of her family."

Judy enjoyed for decades that her brother, Gabe Buky, lived close by and developed a real estate business with his son, Charles.

admires most is his remarkable versatility and adaptability, as he has skillfully navigated changing market conditions over the years with ease and expertise. Steven is the epitome of a professional in the real estate world, offering a unique combination of local expertise, unwavering dedication, and a passion for creating a place where clients can make lasting memories

Leah George, originally from Transylvania and a Florida resident for over thirty years, adds a background in architecture and civil engineering, two fields in which she earned advance degrees and training. Over 25 years in real estate, have not only provided Leah with far reaching networks, but also with crucial opportunities to work with an array of people from various cultural and business backgrounds.

Let's finish today, today...
Despite her years of success, Kepez-Hays has no intention of slowing down. Her husband joked that Judy borrowed his dog to accompany her while delivering a contract close to midnight. He says Judy's attitude is, "There is no tomorrow. Tomorrow will bring its excitement. What needs to be finished today is for today."

As of today, The Kepez Hays team has over \$30 million in pending transactions year-to- date. With integrity, commitment, excellence, communication, and knowledge, the team is shooting for the stars. There will be no slowing down for the Kepez-Hays team; we are always going 100 miles an hour.

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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.

March 14

Suspicious

12:45 a.m.

Officer Tillman responded to Lyons Lane for a report of a woman who heard someone talking outside her residence and believed they were trying to enter through a back door. Officers arrived and canvassed the area. Officer Tillman noted nothing appeared disturbed, however, it was determined that a neighbor had just arrived home and were seen walking inside their residence with the lights on. The neighbor's vehicle was warm to the touch. The complainant stated that this is the direction of where she had heard someone talking. Case clear.



man's name to the list and allowed him access to the area. The other issue was, the guard would not give the man a pass to enter through the second gate. Officer Troyer asked the guard if there was any issue where the man should not be on the property and if he would give the man a pass to proceed. The guard did not have an issue and provided him with a pass. Case clear.

March 17 Fire

10:30 a.m.

Officer Martinson was dispatched to Sands Point Road on a call of a suspicious incident. Upon arrival, Officer Martinson met with the caller out in front of the building. The caller stated at approximately 3 a.m. this morning,

Longboat Key Fire responded to a call of a fire alarm and the caller stated the fire alarm went off due to a fire extinguisher being used in the 12th floor elevator room. The caller stated he was told by Fire Rescue that someone must have taken the extinguisher out from behind the glass door case in the wall, pulled the pin and set it off. The caller stated that Fire Rescue told him the pin was found across the room and it would have had to have been pulled out by someone. The caller said that Longboat Key Fire told him to call the police department for a report because of the suspicious circumstances. The caller said there are no cameras in the elevator room so it is unknown how or who set off the fire extinguisher. Case clear.

Citizen assist

12:30 p.m.

Officer Ericsson while on patrol was contacted by a woman in the parking lot who said that she locked herself out of her residence and misplaced her keys. The woman asked for assistance getting into her house, she said that she had several windows unlocked at the house which would allow access to the residence. Officer Ericsson followed the woman to the residence, verified her identity and address and was able to safely enter and unlock her residence through a first floor unlocked window.

Vehicle

12:11 p.m.

Officer Martinson while on patrol on Bay Isles Parkway, observed a tan Ford F150 traveling northbound on Gulf of Mexico Drive approach the traffic light at Bay Isles Parkway while having a solid red light. The truck then proceeded through the red light making a right hand turn onto Bay Isles Parkway without coming to a stop. Officer Martinson conducted a traffic stop in the parking lot of Publix. Officer Martinson made contact with the male driver who was later identified, and explained to him why he had been pulled over. The driver did not speak English, and another Hispanic worker who happened to be walking through the parking lot at the time stated he would translate. Officer Martinson asked the driver for his license, registration and proof of insurance. The driver stated he did not have a driver's license and provided him with his Mexican Identification Card and a Mexican Driver's license. Officer Martinson asked the driver how long he has been living in Florida and he replied five years. It was explained to the driver that he needs to get a Florida Driver's license. The driver said the truck was a work truck and did not belong to him so he was unable to find the insurance and registration. Officer Martinson ran the driver's information and he came back clear of any wants or warrants, also, no record was found for the man having a Florida Driver's license. The driver was issued a criminal citation with a court date for no driver's license, never had one issued, and a moving citation for failure to stop at a steady red signal before making right turn. The written warnings were issued for No Proof of Insurance and Fail to Possess Registration. The driver was instructed to call someone with a valid driver's license to drive the vehicle and to leave it parked in the parking lot. Case clear.

March 18

Dog on beach

1:50 p.m.

Officer Ericsson was dispatched to the 4000 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for a dog on the beach. Upon arrival, Officer Ericsson located a woman with a small brown dog on the beach across from Bayfront Park. The dog was off-leash and Officer Ericsson advised the woman that dogs were not allowed on the beach. She said her dog was a Service Animal. Officer Ericsson advised her that service animals must remain on a leash at all times, at which time she put her dog on a leash. Case clear.

March 19

Ladder

6:33 p.m.

Officer Mathis was dispatched to the 6000 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for a possible reckless vehicle. The caller called 911 to report that a white Toyota with a ladder protruding from its open trunk was driving erratically and passing in a no passing zone. Officer Mathis met with the caller who witnessed the reported reckless vehicle who said that he did not have time to sit there and give a statement, that he was late for a birthday dinner. The caller advised Officer Mathis that the driver was driving erratically and passing in a no passing zone. The caller advised that he was not threatened nor felt in danger but that he had to leave and wanted no further involvement with the incident as traffic was backed up to get off the island and he was already late. The caller refused to provide a written statement. Officer Mathis then spoke with the driver who advised that the traffic had been backed up and delayed for some time now and that he did pass a vehicle but not in a reckless manner. The driver was asked to place a flag on his ladder that was hanging out of his truck approximately 6 feet. The driver placed a flag on the ladder and was advised to not pass in a no passing zone and was cautioned on reckless driving. Case clear.

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3161 BAYOU SOUND	3,684	\$2,400,000	4	3	1	67	\$2,200,000
3060 GRAND BAY BLVD Unit#124	2,550	\$1,525,000	2	2	1	2	\$1,530,000
1105 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#603	1,503	\$1,150,000	2	2	0	13	\$1,000,000
1930 HARBOURSIDE DR Unit#117	1,442	\$775,000	2	2	0	4	\$775,000
1065 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#104	1,503	\$775,000	2	2	0	88	\$762,500
4540 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#PH1	1,561	\$775,000	2	2	0	34	\$711,000
4430 EXETER DR Unit#103	1,152	\$725,000	2	2	0	35	\$705,000
5757 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#109	1,561	\$745,000	2	2	0	170	\$700,000
3810 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#F402	1,361	\$595,000	2	2	0	42	\$545,000
1932 HARBOURSIDE DR Unit#232	1,192	\$598,750	2	2	0	34	\$510,000
5310 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#26	711	\$450,000	1	1	0	2	\$450,000
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Editor Letters

Letters, from page 4

and EMS as well as storm operations which came up to \$12.78 million total for public safety.

Our total property tax revenue for FY2024 was \$19,784,754. The general fund operating funds were \$15,832,029. The general obligation facility debt \$356,559. The general obligation bayside debt \$596,639. And the general obligation gulfside debt \$299,527.

As you can see any attempt to stifle Longboat Key from using property taxes and business taxes as a means to care for our community would be a disaster. This does not even take into account the severe damage our community has suffered from last year's hurricanes.

There are at least 25 bills that have been submitted that severely impact property taxes and business taxes. These funds provide public safety in our town. We have a mature constituency that would be seriously affected by a loss of these revenues.

We greatly appreciate the work you are doing on behalf of all of our citizens and look forward to seeing you next week.

BJ Bishop
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

EOG DOGE - Letter to Local Officials

To: Longboat Key Commission
Not sure who all this was sent to since it is just a generic

letter. Provided as an FYI and staff will prepare a response by the indicated deadline.

Howard N. Tipton
Town Manager
Town of Longboat Key

EOG DOGE Efforts & Inquiry Regarding Financial Condition

To: Longboat Key Commission
Pursuant to Executive Order 25-44, the Executive Office of the Governor has established an EOG DOGE Team which will use advanced technology to identify, review, and report on unnecessary spending within county and municipal governments and recommend legislative reforms to promote efficiency, maximize productivity, and eliminate waste in state and local government. These efforts are focused on ensuring fiscal responsibility throughout Florida.

In addition to assessing your municipality's publicly available information over the coming weeks and months, the EOG DOGE Team is also assessing compliance with the financial management requirements set forth in section 218.503, Florida Statutes. This provision outlines the circumstances under which a local governmental entity is deemed to be in financial emergency or distress, triggering necessary corrective actions.

To fulfill our oversight role, and in accordance with article IV, section 1(a) of the Florida Constitution, we respectfully request confirmation as to whether your municipality has

encountered any instances of financial emergency or distress, including those listed in section 218.503(1), Florida Statutes, such as:

Failure to pay short-term loans or obligations when due as a result of lack of funds.

Failure to make debt service payments on bonds, loans, or other debt instruments when due.

Failure to timely pay uncontested claims from creditors for more than 90 days due to lack of funds.

Failure to transfer taxes, social security contributions, or retirement plan contributions as required by law.

An unreserved or total fund balance deficit in the general fund or any major operating fund that persists for two consecutive years.

If your municipality has encountered any of these conditions since State Fiscal Year 2018-19, or anticipates potential financial distress in the next six months, please provide a written response in keeping with your obligations under section 218.503(2)-(3), Florida Statutes, detailing the specific circumstances, any corrective actions taken, a point of contact, and any additional information relevant to compliance with statutory financial obligations.

Please submit your response to eogdodge@laspbs.state.fl.us no later than April 8, 2025 to ensure timely review and, if necessary, assistance from state authorities. If we do not receive a response from you within 45 days, it will be presumed that your municipality is in possible statutory violation and in need of assistance. If you have any questions or require further clarification, please contact eogdodge@laspbs.state.fl.us.

We appreciate your cooperation in maintaining the fiscal integrity of local governmental operations.

EOG DOGE Team

Longboat Key Beach Restoration

To: Longboat Key Town Clerk Trish Shinkle

Hello we are full time residents and owners of a couple rental units on Longboat key specifically at the Resort of Longboat Key.

I wanted to know what the beach restoration plan was for the beach at the Resort section, since the hurricane the shore has receded drastically and it won't take another hurricane to flood the garages again but maybe a regular Florida storm.

As a resident at Longboat key and an owner of multiple rentals it worries me that not enough effort and consideration has been put on this side of the Island.

Would you be able to give me a plan for the area there or direct me in the direction of someone who can speak to my attorney?

Gay Sacharoff
Longboat Key

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Arts Hall, from page 1

posed to come, as it has for other portions of The Bay Park, through grants, private donations and revenue generated from a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district created five years ago by the city and county of Sarasota.

Designed to capture the increase in surrounding property values and channel those funds back into the park's development, the TIF initially was expected to raise \$200 million over three decades. But thanks to rising property values in the district, a recent Sarasota Performing Arts Foundation projection shows the balance has quadrupled to \$775 million.

Supporters of the new performing arts center say that unexpected windfall should cover the costs of the new venue – a glass-covered complex featuring a 2,700-seat theater, lobby and multi-purpose facility that would further Sarasota's status as a cultural destination.

Critics argue that Sarasota's existing venues, including the Van Wezel, are sufficient to meet the community's needs and that the funds could be better used for affordable housing, a new jail and stormwater infrastructure.

The county, which initially supported the TIF district, has shown signs of reluctance to continue its financial commitment. There's not a single county commissioner left in office who voted in support of creating the TIF and, just this past year, the county deposited less than half of its portion of tax dollars generated by the TIF into the improvement district.

If the county pulls out, the city and the Sarasota Performing Arts Foundation would be left to shoulder the entire cost of the new center.

The city is at a critical juncture, with commissioners set to discuss moving forward Monday with an implementation plan from the architecture firm designing the new facility.

If approved, the city would commit to a \$36 million contract with that firm – Renzo Piano Building Workshop – which includes a \$3.6 million termination fee.

Some say the City Commission should wait for the recommendations of the Van Wezel Purple Ribbon committee, which are only a few months away.

Playing a central role in the debate over the new performing arts center is the Van Wezel.

The Van Wezel has hosted a wide range of performances – from Broadway shows to ballet, opera, and concerts. But the aging structure, built in 1970, faces several challenges from storm-water intrusion to lack of a center aisle.

The Van Wezel's 1,741-seat capacity is less than asquate for many shows. Then there's the damage it sustained during Hurricane Milton, when 4 feet of storm surge flooded several parts of the building, leading to the cancellation of shows through the end of 2024.

A recent engineering report estimates it would cost about \$17 million in repairs and upgrades to preserve and protect the 55-year-old facility.

The first phase of The Bay, completed in 2022 for \$40 million, was financed almost exclusively through private donations. The second phase, launched last year, required \$48 million in bonded debt funded by the TIF.

At an estimated price tag of \$407 million, the performing arts center would require substantially more money from both public and private sources – \$203.5 million from philanthropic contributions and \$203.5 million split between the city and county from the TIF.

Within the TIF agreement is a provision allowing either the city or county to decide how their share of the funds is spent, with the option to withhold their portion for specific projects or even withdraw entirely during the 30-year period.

If the county pulls out, the city's financial burden for the center would increase to the full \$203.5 million – and possibly much more as cost estimates suggest.

TIFs work by designating a geographic area as a TIF district and as property values inside that district rise from redevelopment or improvements, the extra taxes they generate are diverted from the general fund and placed instead into a special fund that finances further infrastructure improvements within that area.

When the Bay Park TIF was created, officials set the district's 2019 property values as its baseline. Any increases in those values above that benchmark have been designated for The Bay Park, the performing arts center and connectivity between the park and surrounding neighborhoods.

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EN PROVENCE • \$4,995,000
2161 GULF OF MEXICO DR., #3
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
3BR/3.5BA • 3,800 SF • Gulf front terrace



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415 L'AMBIANCE DR., #C404
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
3BR/3.5BA • 2,820 SF • Furnished



ORCHID BEACH CLUB • \$2,850,000
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SARASOTA, FL
3BR/3.5BA • 3,242 • Beach/Bay views



COREY'S LANDING • \$2,800,000
3444 MISTLETOE LANE
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
4BR/3.5BA • 2,836 SF • Upgraded



MARINA BAY • \$2,695,000
2410 HARBOURSIDE DR., #121
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3BR+FAMILY ROOM/3.5BA • 3,825 SF



PROMENADE • \$2,250,000
1211 GULF OF MEXICO DR., #401
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
3BR/3BA • 2,100 SF • Gulf & Bay views



MARINA BAY • \$1,999,000
2550 HARBOURSIDE DR., #322
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
3BR/2.5BA • 2,830 • Updated



EMERALD POINTE NORTH - \$1,899,000
2065 HARBOUR LINKS DRIVE
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
3BR/3.5BA • 2,865 SF • Updated



GRAND BAY • \$1,795,000
3010 GRAND BAY BLVD. #482
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
3BR/3.5BA • 2,250 SF • Furnished



LONGBOAT KEY TOWERS • \$1,595,000
603 LONGBOAT CLUB RD., #1102N
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
2BR/2BA • 1,458 SF • Gulf & Bay views



THE MARK • \$1,350,000
111 S. PINEAPPLE AVE., #1004
SARASOTA, FL
2BR/2.5BA • 1,513 SF • City views



HARBOR OAKS • \$1,095,000
2129 HARBOURSIDE DR., #901
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
3BR/2.5BA • 2,219 SF • Golf views



FAIRWAY BAY • \$995,000
1900 HARBOURSIDE DR., #102
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
2BR/2.5BA • 1,590 • Updated • Boat Dock



BAYPORT BEACH & TENNIS CLUB • \$895,000
520 BAYPORT WAY
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
2BR/2BA • 1,456 SF • Gulf to Bay



LBK YACHT & TENNIS CLUB - \$869,900
4215 GULF OF MEXICO DR., #103
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
2BR/2BA • 1,497 • Furnished



ISLANDER CLUB • \$799,000
2301 GULF OF MEXICO DR., #85N
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
2BR/2BA • 1,235 SF



FAIRWAY BAY • \$649,000
1932 HARBOURSIDE DR., #242
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
2BR/2.5BA • 1,192 SF • Bay views



REGENT PLACE • \$4,495,000
675 LONGBOAT CLUB RD., #22A
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
3BR+DEN/4BA • 3,654 SF • Beachfront



FAIRWAY BAY - \$649,000
1922 HARBOURSIDE DR., #1102
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
2BR/2.5BA • 1,590 SF • Furnished



GRAND BAY • \$1,530,000
3060 GRAND BAY BLVD., #124
LONGBOAT KEY, FL
2BR/2.5BA • 2,550 SF • Updated

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595 BAY ISLES ROAD, SUITE 250 • LONGBOAT KEY, FL 34228