



# Longboat Key News

December 26, 2025

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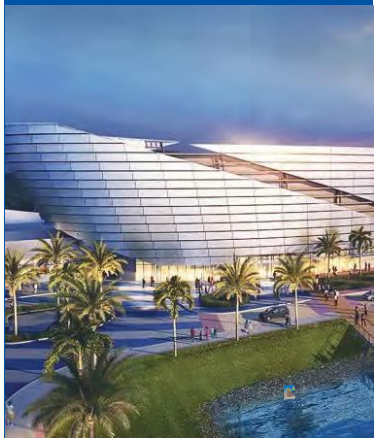
## InsideLook



*Flood money finally enroute ...page 3*



*Bullock leads City in 2025 ...page 4*



*A red ribbon future begins ...page 5*



*I will leave a negative review! ...page 10*

*This was the year of no hurricanes on Longboat Key and Sarasota. The good fortune allowed markets to recover, businesses to open and life to rebound. Mote opened its center out East, Longboat kept its road name despite pressure and the island also finalized the fundraising and approvals for a future County Library. Read the other major stories in our 2025 Year In Review edition.*



**2025**  
YEAR IN REVIEW

## Longboat Key Protects a Legacy: “Gulf of Mexico Drive” Retained

*After much contentious debate sparked by state action, Longboat Key’s Town Commission voted unanimously last October to keep the historic name Gulf of Mexico Drive for its main thoroughfare.*

This was after the President signed into law the renaming of Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America, and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) notifying Longboat Key officials that it would be removing all signage referencing “Gulf of Mexico Drive” from within the

**See Road Name on page 3**



## Longboat Library reaches milestone approval

*On June 4 of 2025, a long-anticipated vote by Sarasota County went the way the Longboat Key Commission hoped.*

The Sarasota County Commission agreed that Longboat’s fundraising had reached its goal of \$3.5 million and now the design phase for the new Longboat Key Public Library can move forward.

Longboat successfully raised the \$3.5 million to pay for the custom enhancements to the core library, which the county is building at Town Center Green between Publix and the public tennis center on the Island.

Additionally, Sarasota County agreed it would relax the requirement that 25 percent of the Library’s \$14 million total cost be required for the naming rights of the library.

Longboat Key resident, U.S. Congressman and founder of Sarasota Ford Vern Buchanan offered to donate \$1 million toward the library enhancements for Longboat Key if the county would agree to name the library after the Buchanan Foundation. Sarasota County agreed, and now the plan is

**See Library on page 3**



## Longboat record sale tops \$30 million

*For 2025, a new market threshold passed and a record set with the \$30.3 million sale of a 19,300 square foot estate on South Longboat Key named ‘Serenissima.’*

And while the opulence of the home is undeniable, the real significance of the transaction was the immediate infusion of confidence and excitement in the luxury market in Sarasota and the islands.

“The recent sale of the property at a competitive price point underscores the resilience and vitality of our local market,” said buyer’s agent Judy Kepecz-Hays following the sale.

The home, located on 145 feet of Gulf-front beach behind the gates on South Longboat Key at 845 Longboat Club Road, sold in 25 days after being listed for \$35 million.

In fact, the property brought six showings and the buyers acted quickly and decisively as interest mounted as they went from initial showing to executed contract within one day.

Originally from Indiana, the buyers already own property in Sarasota and had been considering Longboat Key for some time.

“They fell in love with the home immediately,” Kepecz-Hays said. “They loved it and within a few hours we had it under contract.”

The sale tops last year’s sale at Longboat’s St. Regis Residences, which

**See Home Record on page 4**





# Bird Key Yacht Club Demolished for New Vision

The 65-year-old Bird Key Yacht Club is officially a memory, having been completely demolished this year to make way for a \$27.5 million replacement.

The decision to rebuild was in part a strategic response to the increasing threat of hurricanes and flooding, a necessity highlighted by the “tropical weather events of recent years,” according to Club Commodore Tony Britt. The current rebuild came after an earlier, less comprehensive renovation proposal was narrowly rejected by members. Britt said that initial rejection was a “blessing in disguise,” as it provided the critical opportunity to reassess the club’s long-term viability.

“It started as a renovation, and then after more consideration and thought we realized that to make it FEMA-compliant, which is critical for the long term — given the club has been on the island for 65 years and we certainly intend to have it last another 65 years—that a renovation really didn’t make any sense,” Britt stated.

The new facility, set to open in late 2026 with the goal of hosting “the biggest New Years party Bird Key has ever had,” will be a 21,500-square-foot structure plus an additional 3,500 square feet of covered outside decks. It will replace the existing 22,300-square-foot clubhouse, which sat on the 4.99-acre site positioned in the middle of the Bird Key residences.

Designed by local DSDG Architects, the single-story clubhouse will be located in the exact footprint of the original, but will be elevated to meet FEMA standards. Architect Anna Keitel noted the plan also includes underground vaults to mitigate stormwater runoff. The structure itself will feature concrete block and steel, hurricane-rated components, and a standing seam metal roof. The construction company, Tandem, is currently sorting debris for recycling.

Enhancing the Member Experience. While safety and compliance drove the rebuild, the design also prioritizes an enhanced member experience and operational efficiency. The plan includes:

- Replacing the pool.
- Relocating two bocce ball courts.
- Adding a fourth tennis court with modern lighting, despite neighborhood concerns. To be a good neighbor, the club has agreed to a hard shut-off of the tennis lights by 9 p.m.
- A newly laid-out interior with better functionality. “The old club was not laid out efficiently for food serving. A big advantage to having a new club is operating efficacy,” said Britt. Collapsible walls will allow the entire length of the club to host larger, more integrated events.

The club, which currently has about 275-280 members out of a capped capacity of 425, raised \$20 million through a voluntary member loan program, with individual loans ranging from \$50,000 to several million, all secured by the land. The remaining \$7.5 million will be gathered through operations. New member fees to join the club have gone up to \$55,000.



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# Sarasota Authorizes \$13.5M to Keep St. Armands Dry and Passable

*On Dec. 16, the Sarasota County Commission moved forward to fortify areas in the region against future storms by approving approximately \$57 million in federal disaster recovery funding.*

The decision prioritizes hard infrastructure over aesthetics, and will deliver a \$13.5 million lifeline to St. Armands Circle. This move is celebrated not just by merchants, but by thousands of Longboat Key residents for whom the Circle represents the road to safety.

The funds, drawn from a larger U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) block grant tied to Hurricanes Debby, Helene, and Milton, were distributed among nine projects. The approval of the \$13.5 million for the St. Armands Resiliency and Flood Mitigation Project marks a decisive victory for the barrier islands, though it fell short of the city’s original \$24.5 million request.

The presence of Longboat Key Mayor Ken Schneier and Deputy Town Manager Isaac Brownman at the December Sarasota County Commission meeting signaled the gravity of the situation. Following two hours of public testimony from a coalition of residents, Longboat Key officials, and barrier island employers, the Commission approved the funding—but with strict caveats.

Acting on the advice of County Commissioner Mark Smith, an architect by trade, the Board slashed funding for “underground storage vaults” and “aluminum flood barriers.” Smith argued the barriers should be a private expense and calculated that the proposed \$500,000 vaults would hold only 528,000 gallons—roughly 0.6 inches of water across the 132-acre area—rendering them mathematically ineffective.

Instead, the \$13.5 million will be funneled strictly into “hard” infrastructure: new high-capacity stormwater pumps, backup generators, discharge piping, and hardened outfalls with check valves.

The debate over the St. Armands engineering specifics became so granular that County Administrator Jonathan Lewis had to summon Stormwater Director Ben Quartermaine back to the meeting while he was driving home.

Upon his return to the podium, Quartermaine validated the Commission’s skepticism



regarding the storage vaults. “Because these areas are so low... any storage of rainfall becomes problematic,” Quartermaine explained, noting that watertight vaults in such high water tables risk “popping up” or floating if not perfectly engineered.

Commissioner Teresa Mast drove the “infrastructure first” mandate home, refusing to support a requested \$2.8 million for design and architectural services. “The need is so great,” Mast argued, pushing to maximize the spend on physical pumps and generators. The County’s stormwater department will now assume responsibility for the design and construction, ensuring the project focuses on keeping the State Road 789 evacuation route dry.

St. Armands Key is a low-lying, bowl-shaped barrier island and is home to the vital commercial hub featuring more than 140 storefronts and restaurants that support approximately 1,100 jobs and generate \$135 million in annual sales. The island’s current stormwater system, which relies on pump stations due to its natural, flood-prone topography, has proven dangerously inadequate.

The pump stations were “overwhelmed and/or not fully operational” during severe flooding in both 2023 and 2024. Moreover, the Key serves as the sole mainland connection for SR 789, a crucial evacuation route handling 32,000 vehicles daily.

## Longboat hires Police Chief from Delray Beach to lead force

This year, Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton announced the hiring of a new Police Chief. Russ Mager, who recently served as Chief of Police of Delray Beach, is taking the helm at the top spot in the Longboat Key Police Department on August 4.

Longboat holds a certain cachet as a pinnacle endnote for police leaders nationwide to bring their skill sets for a final act to its toney shores. There were more than 76 applicants from across the country who wanted to work as a chief on Longboat Key. Frank Rubino, one of the applicants, had been serving as Longboat’s Interim Chief since George Turner resigned as Chief earlier this year.



Tipton said Rubino was an extremely strong candidate, but that Mager’s experience running Delray Beach brought a perfect skill set of community policing, storm preparedness and next generation practices that he wanted to see expanded and implemented on Longboat.

“I wanted someone who had a 21st-century policing attitude. Delray gave him a background in storm events, and Delray is also an accredited department, which is important. Chief Mager has an impressive set of skills, leadership and a track record as a team player,” said Town Manager Tipton.

Rubino will return to his role as Deputy Chief when major starts in August and Tipton went out of his way to complement Rubino for stepping up as needed.

Russ Mager spent 29 years with the Delray Beach Police Department – his entire policing

career. He was appointed as chief in August 2022.

Mager’s resignation came after about a year of contract negotiations between city officials and the Palm Beach County Police Benevolent Association. The union declared an impasse in February; a day after the city’s commission did not reach an agreement with the group on matters such as wages, retirement benefits and take-home vehicles.

Mager, born in Tallahassee, grew up in South Florida. He was raised in Pompano Beach and Coconut Creek, before leaving for Florida State University in 1987. As an officer, Mager served on the TACT Team, as an auto theft detective, SWAT Team member and Community Patrol Division member.

### Road Name, from page 1

State Road 789 (SR 789) right-of-way.

The decision was a clear victory for a decisive majority of residents, who argued that stability, history, and community consensus far outweighed the political impetus for a change. The current name has been in place since September 16, 1957, when the roadway, formerly known as John Ringling Boulevard, was officially designated Gulf of Mexico Drive.

The controversy was ignited when the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) removed existing road signs in August, a move Mayor Ken Schneier said “forced the town to address the issue.”

The Mayor ultimately summarized the outcome by stating, “I believe the case has not been made to change the name, and no law requires us to do so.”

Schneier cited the massive cost of changing approximately 5,140 addresses—mostly condominiums and apartments—and the “unprecedented volume of opinions” against the change as the rationale to keep the name. Mayor Schneier also confirmed that FDOT officials assured him the state agency would “remain neutral and not punish the town.”

The most compelling arguments against renaming the road centered on the administrative burden and the residents’ quality of life.

Longboat Key Club Manager Rick Konsavage was strongly opposed, arguing that from a business perspective, the changes with vendors and the administrative side would be “very difficult,” calling the prospect “a disaster.” He emphasized the “decades of marketing and awareness” built around the current name, suggesting, “We don’t need to do anything.”

This sentiment was echoed by Longboater Arlene Skverskey, who stood clearly opposed, arguing that the town was full of old people who are already sick and unhealthy, and would be “overwhelmed by the change.” She challenged the commission to “stand up to whoever is pushing or suggesting this.”

Planning and Zoning Board Chairman David Lapovsky, speaking for himself, called the entire process “an absolute waste of taxpayer dollars,” asserting that those who felt differently did so for “emotional reasons not practical reasons.”

Despite these arguments, several other residents passionately advocated for a new name.

Longboat resident Fred Laguno was direct, saying, “There is no name Gulf of Mexico anymore so the name Gulf of Mexico Drive is now nonsensical. Many people simply hate America. Many hate our president. We should not bow to this.”

About three residents spoke in favor of a change, with patriotism being a central theme. One resident advocated for changing it to Gulf of America Drive, calling it “a matter of patriotism. It would not cost anyone an ounce of blood and that it was pretty simple to do.”

Gulf of Mexico Drive was adopted as the local name for SR 789 on September 16, 1957, replacing the former name John Ringling Boulevard. Before settling on its current moniker, the Town Commission had considered Longboat Parkway. Today, the name is deeply ingrained in the identity of the island, associated with over 5,100 residential and business addresses, multiple resorts, and a vibrant local tourism industry.

### Library, from page 1

moving forward. The fundraising total was \$3.1 million, which was donated by 12 people with Buchanan being the largest donor.

Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton was tasked with spearheading fundraising for the project. Tipton met with Vern Buchanan and his wife, Sandy, as well as the library officials and said that Vern seemed absolutely thrilled that the project was moving forward and was excited to participate.

Mayor Ken Schneier and his wife, Cynthia, are major donors to the Library construction as well.

For Ken Schneier, it became an important, almost legacy project to see through. He had just started on the Commission eight years ago when the Town had a formal agreement with Ringling College to build and operate a community art center on Longboat at the same location. That agreement fell through when fellow commissioners disparaged the Ringling organization on several occasions in meetings and in writing. Schneier is pleased that after seven years, an agreement with the county has been forged, the fundraising completed and much of what the Town has sought for so many years is finally coming to fruition.

There are details to still be worked out such as the leasing of the Longboat Key land to the county for a 50-year term, but the town manager does not believe any of these housekeeping issues will present problems.

Tipton says the next act is the county will develop detailed designs for construction. The Town, says Tipton, will have tremendous input into that process, especially regarding the Longboat Key enhancements. The enhancements include a community room that can seat more than 200 for an event, or a class, or a lecture or a meeting. The other enhancement is an outdoor seating area, a terrace of sorts, that will be covered and will be a community gathering area where residents and visitors can read, surf the Internet on their devices as well as enjoying cappuccinos since there is talk of a coffee bar going into the project. The library construction is slated to begin in the spring of next year.





# Sarasota hires Longboat’s former Manager to lead City

*Back in May of this year, the Sarasota City Commission unanimously appointed former Longboat Key Town Manager Dave Bullock as its next interim City Manager.*

Bullock replaced former City Public Works Director Doug Jeffcoat, who has held the role since former City Manager Marlon Brown’s retirement. The agreement that the City Commission approved calls for Bullock to receive an annual salary of \$228,000.

Bullock also served on the Sarasota County Government staff from 1994 to 2011 as deputy county administrator for the majority of that time in which he dealt with all of the county operations. He specifically oversaw the budget development during his last 10 years with the county and helped run an operation of 2,300 employees serving the overall population, which is over 450,000 people.

In 2011, Bullock was hired as the Town Manager of the Town of Longboat Key where he remained in that position until 2018 when he retired.

In his six years as Town Manager of Longboat Key, Bullock made a strong and lasting impression on residents, the Town Commission and his fellow staff. “I agreed to three years, and it ended up being six,” said Bullock who described working with the commission and residents as a privilege.

Bullock said when he retired from Longboat, “I love because wherever I go on Longboat Key, I’m never the smartest person in the room.”

In 2019, Bullock was named the CEO of the Economic Development Corp. of Sarasota County — just for a three-month period.” Bullock’s tenure is uncertain, though a typical City Manager search takes anywhere from four to six months.



## Home Record, from page 1

until now held the record for the most expensive residential sale in Sarasota County when it closed at \$21,244,000 last year. “Such transactions help establish new market benchmarks, attract serious investors and generate renewed interest in our beautiful area,” said Judy Kepecz-Hays.

Built in 2005, Serenissima last sold in 2020 for \$16.5 million—then a record-tying price for Sarasota. The home is situated in Regent Court, a collection of a handful custom mansions tucked between the Islandside golf course and the Gulf of Mexico on the very South end of Longboat Key.

# Mira Mar Plan Approved for Downtown Landmark

A plan to preserve the historic façade of the Mira Mar Plaza in Downtown Sarasota cleared a hurdle this year in Sarasota City Hall.

The Sarasota City Commission voted unanimously to approve a comprehensive plan amendment that changes the land use designation for part of the Mira Mar Plaza property from “downtown core” to “downtown bayfront,” which will then allow an 18-story redevelopment behind the historic building on Palm Avenue.

The unanimous 5-0 vote followed a hearing that drew hours of public testimony and detailed presentations from the new project’s development team.

Proponents of the amendment, including architect Rick Gonzalez and the applicant’s legal counsel, argued that the land use change was essential to fund the rehabilitation of the nearly 100-year-old Mira Mar Plaza, which has fallen into disrepair. Gonzalez, who specializes in historic preservation, said that while the building needs new foundations and structural reinforcement, a full restoration is feasible and already underway in the design phase.

As far as the residential units, each tower will have 35 condos, for a total of 70, as allowable under the current density limits.

The historic Mira Mar Hotel, originally constructed in 1922 and located at 47 South Palm Avenue, was one of Sarasota’s earliest luxury accommodations and later served as apartments and commercial space. The hotel hosted the rich and famous, and a Sarasota Times article stated: “It is safe to say that the erection of the Mira-Mar Hotel has meant as much to the development of Sarasota as any one enterprise that has yet located here.”

Seaward Development plans to save the building, but increase the allowable height on the rest of the parcel to make the economics work. The applicant argued that a downtown bayfront land use designation was essential to realizing a financially viable plan for preserving the Mira Mar. Increasing the height allowance to 18 stories, they said, would allow two residential towers behind the historic structure. Seaward says the condominium units will help fund the estimated cost of rehabilitation.

## Longboat Key News Sarasota City News

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# Mote Marine cuts red ribbon on future

*Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium held the official grand opening of the new Mote Science Education Aquarium on Oct. 8. The new Aquarium marks decades of leadership and philanthropy that paved the way for the 146,000-square-foot facility at 225 University Town Center Drive in Sarasota.*

Former directors, longtime trustees, and the Benderson family, credited with a central role in funding the project, were recognized during the grand opening.

Dr. Michael P. Crosby, Mote’s president and CEO, called the aquarium a bridge between research, education, and public engagement. “Mote SEA is much more than just an aquarium; it stands at the intersection of paradigm-changing research, science education, and community engagement,” Crosby said.

Local, state, and federal officials also praised the project. Several lawmakers noted that while public partners played a role, the majority of the funding came from private donors. Leaders hoped the facility will draw visitors to the Sarasota-Bradenton area and inspire the next generation of scientists.

The new aquarium contains more than 1 million gallons of water and will provide free, hands-on STEM learning for more than 70,000 students annually, including 26,000 from Title I schools. Exhibits will showcase sharks, rays, manatees, otters, penguins, and reef species.

Education and research labs will focus on biomedical and microbiology, marine and coastal ecology, ocean engineering and robotics, aquaculture and fisheries, coral genetics and restoration, as well as veterinary diagnostics and conservation.

“We envision a future in which tens of millions of visitors will experience the transformative power of learning and discovery, changing the way they think about our oceans, conservation, and sustainable use,” Crosby said.



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# Editor Letters



Letters, from page 5

**Beach Access: Ohana**

To: Longboat Key Town Commission

The Ohana property has come up in conversation on several occasions in recent weeks regarding interest in gaining owner approval for the public to cross their property. I was not here when this was discussed back in 2021 and have found the attached information very helpful in trying to understand the options that have been previously explored and vetted. From the public record it appears that there has been extensive research and discussion on this subject. We’ve also shared this with our new Police Chief as the prior issues with trespassing on private property were/are a concern.

For Commissioners Karon, Coffin, Branham, and Commissioner-elect Gladding, this information may also be helpful in understanding the background as it will likely surface again with the new ownership. Isaac has also attached the Gulfside Road update on from June 2024 that shows some of the structural (groin) stabilization we’re planning to install in late 2027/early 2028. One of the groins will be very close to the Ohana seawall structure and we’ll likely need the owner’s cooperation as we look to move this project forward.

Maggie and Isaac are the best ones to reach out to if you have any questions as they have the history with this subject that I do not.

Howard N. Tipton  
Town Manager  
Town of Longboat Key

**Beach Access: Ohana**

To: Longboat Key Town Manager Howard tipton

Attached from December 2021 is a very good summary presentation to the Town Commission of the work done previously regarding beach access and the Ohana house (and others). The presentation includes images from the former property owner as well. Myself, Blake Gaylord (our Eminent Domain attorney), Maggie, and Tom were all involved in delivering parts of the presentation, so if you have any question on slide content, please let me know. Also attached is our Gulfside Road update on June 2024 which shows some details of the future structural stabilization. Even though not showing it specifically, the new structures should hold some level of sand in front of the Ohana seawall by our northern-most groin structure to be built as well.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Isaac Brownman  
Assistant Town Manager  
Town of Longboat Key

**Beach Access: Ohana**

To: Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton

Sounds like a cooperative and great move on our part to get ahead of this before next year. Cooperation, compromise and communication are so important in what we do. It’s a little discouraging that they are not able to offset some of our lost revenues this year in some fashion.

Gary Coffin  
Commissioner  
Town of Longboat Key

**Beach Access: Ohana**

To: Longboat Key Commission

Yesterday, Isaac, Sue, Allen, and I met with the Manatee Property Appraiser’s Office. The Property Appraiser (Charlie Hackney) and his leadership team were at the table.

The goals of the meeting were two-fold. First to understand better what happened with the mass devaluations. Second, to work together to keep this from ever happening again. You’ll recall that last week staff met with the Sarasota Property Appraiser’s Office to understand their processes and to ensure that we were all on the same page in the event of another emergency situation.

We began the meeting with Mr. Hackney by sharing the attached memorandum which we believe showed the degree of error in the valuation process. Mr. Hackney and his team readily acknowledged the miscalculation that was made and discussed how they would work with their software system to keep it from happening again. While this is a lost year and at this point there’s nothing to be done about it, our team was able to convey the hardship it caused and to Mr. Hackney’s credit he owned up to it and apologized for the impacts caused to Longboat Key.

The more important part of the discussion centered around improving communications and how we could work together in a future storm event. The Property Appraiser agreed to seek read only access to our permitting system, to ask for the Town’s damage assessment information (both preliminary and the more detailed information), and to share their initial damage assessments with Town staff so that we can verify and discuss any differences that we see. All of these efforts are best practices and we look forward to seeing these improvements move forward (although we all agreed to never having another hurricane like Helene).

Lastly, we confirmed again with Mr. Hackney that it is his intent to restore values to all properties that were deemed uninhabitable (as long as the repairs or rebuild has been completed by 12/31/2025). This move will greatly restore the values on the Manatee side of the island. We also agreed to assist their office in communicating this valuation information if they needed the help as it will be confusing to some of our residents and we’ll end up getting

See Letters, page 12



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BIRD KEY • SARASOTA

247 Robin Drive

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BIRD KEY • SARASOTA

605 Wild Turkey Lane

2,200 SF • \$1,995,000



L’AMBIANCE • LONGBOAT KEY

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3BR/2BA/1HB • \$4,795.000

JUST LISTED



BIRD KEY • SARASOTA

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BEACHES • LONGBOAT KEY

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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.*

## Dec. 19

### Suspicious incident

8:34 p.m.

Officer Pescuma was dispatched to Bay Isles Road in reference to a suspicious incident. The caller stated that the street lights on the southeast parking lot went out as guests were departing. Upon arriving on scene, Officer Pescuma observed the parking lot lights were out and met with the caller in front of the entrance. The caller stated that he checked the circuit breaker, however could not figure the issue. The security officer on scene, advised that some of the stoves were not working which is alluding to an electrical issue. Case clear.



residents of the association. The man also informed the officer he was not a board member, though, but there were no trespassing signs. Upon arrival, Officer Troyer made contact with the two men who were fishing but said they had permission from someone. They called the man via phone to confirm they had permission to fish there and were not trespassing. The homeowner stepped out the back door of his residence and said "It's fine," indicating they were okay to fish. Based on this, there was no crime of trespassing. After leaving, Officer Troyer was contacted by a board member whom did not want the men fishing which Officer Troyer informed him gave permission. The man said they handled the situation civilly because the board member said there was no fishing according to the by-

laws. Case clear, no crime committed.

## Suspicious

9:22 p.m.

Officer Butler was dispatched to Longboat Drive North regarding a suspicious person. The caller stated he is the owner of the residence that is currently under construction. While watching his security camera he saw an individual walking in and around his property. This supervisor arrived and located the suspicious person. The man stated his name and that the contractor gave him permission to stay on the property. Officer Butler spoke with the caller who said that the man was allowed to be on property. Case clear.

**Dec. 20**  
**Vehicle**

9:08 p.m.

Officer Pescuma while on patrol observed a vehicle parked in the right of way at the 4800 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive. Upon further investigation of the vehicle, it seemed as though it was abandoned. Officer Pescuma identified the owner who resides at the 6700 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive. Officer Pescuma made contact with the owner who said they called dispatch and informed them that the vehicle broke down and they were working on getting a tow, but the vehicle is not abandoned. Case clear.

**Dec. 21**  
**Citizen assist**

4:01 p.m.

Sgt. Montfort was dispatched for a citizen assist call at the resort. In sum, security was reporting an elderly man had left the resort and accidentally took the valet's credit card reader. Sgt. Montfort arrived at the resort and was greeted by a security manager who reported that a man who regularly patronized the restaurant at the resort had placed a credit card reader in his pocket accidentally and left the resort. The manager stated the credit card machine oddly resembles a cell phone and he thinks the man became confused. The manager provided a surveillance picture of the license plate to the van he left in, however, it was hard to decipher what the license plate numbers were. Sgt. Montfort attempted to run the license plate in several different sequences with negative results. Moreover, the security staff had no other identifying information to provide to law enforcement. The manager did not want to pursue criminal charges at the time and only wished to document the accidental theft of the credit card machine. The manager stressed again that the man is a regular and will make contact the next time he visits the resort. Case clear.

## Person

4:43 p.m.

Officer Troyer was dispatched to the 400 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to a suspicious person. The complainant contacted the Sarasota County dispatch and reported two men fishing off of the seawall and there were posted 'No Trespassing' signs. While enroute, Officer Troyer contacted the phone number for the complainant. Officer Troyer made contact with a man who said there were two men fishing off the seawall and did not believe they were

## Dec. 22 Incident

8:20 a.m.

Officer Nazareno was dispatched to Linley Street for a suspicious incident call. The caller stated that she is currently out of town and did not recognize the subject who appeared to be carrying buckets from the first floor of her house on camera. Upon arrival, Officer Nazareno made contact with the caller who stated he was working on stucco at the site. Officer Nazareno verified that he was authorized to be on site and spoke with the homeowner over the phone. The homeowner advised that she had contacted the complainant's supervisor over the phone and verified that it was one of his employees on site. Case clear.

**Dec. 23**  
**Phone call**

3:36 p.m.

Officer Smith responded to a complainant at the police department for a report of harassing calls. The complainant advised she is the property manager for a residence owned by her brother which is rented through Airbnb. The complainant stated she received a message from recent renters demanding a payment of \$1,500, advising that if payment was not made they would leave a negative online review of the property. The complainant did not report any threats of violence or other criminal acts. Officer Smith advised the complainant that the conduct described does not meet the elements of a criminal offense and is a civil matter related to a business or contractual dispute. The complainant was advised to address the issue through Airbnb's dispute resolution process and to consult civil remedies if desired. Case clear.

## Incident

9:45 p.m.

Officer Martinson was dispatched to North Shore on a call of burglary. Upon arrival, Officer Martinson observed a gray Nissan SUV parked in the driveway and noticed the lights were on inside the residence. Officer Martinson walked around to the rear of the property and observed a broom leaned up against the wall next to the sliding doors, cleaning supplies on the table in the lanai, and three bags filled with bed linens. Officer Martinson then saw a woman cleaning the dining room table with a cloth and a man vacuuming the hallway. There was also a small child approximately three years old sitting on the couch playing a game. Officer Martinson knocked on the sliding glass door and the woman answered. Neither the man or woman spoke English but Officer Martinson was able to speak with their boss over the phone. The woman said her cleaning company is contracted out by Prime Vacation located in Holmes Beach. The woman stated the home is a rental property and there had been a departure earlier this day and they were cleaning up before the next guests arrive. Officer Tillman made contact with the homeowner who stated he was unaware that the property was going to be cleaned. The man stated they could continue to clean the residence. Case clear.

## Dec. 24

### Vin verification

11:21 a.m.

Officer Zunz responded to the lobby of the police department to request assistance with a vin verification. The resident presented him with an out of state vin verification affidavit from Connecticut DMV for the purpose of having the vehicle's yearly smog requirement waived at her summer residence in Connecticut where the vehicle is registered, seeing as the vehicle is currently at her Longboat Key home. Officer Zunz ran the vin for wants/warrants with a negative result before signing her form; Officer Zunz then wished her a happy holiday season before sending her on her way. Case clear.

## Dec. 25 Alarm

1:22 p.m.

Officer Mathis was dispatched to Forest Way in reference to a residential alarm activation. Upon his arrival, Officer Mathis met with the homeowner who explained that he hasn't been on Longboat Key in over a year and his alarm control panel was not working to disarm the system. The complainant was on a call with ADT to resolve the issue. Officer Troyer and Officer Mathis then assisted the man in resetting the system. Case clear.

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# What’s Happening at The Education Center?

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**  
*The Education Center at Temple Beth Israel wishes everyone good health, joyful times and exciting adventures in 2026. We hope you plan to ring in the New Year with a yearn to learn new things and the desire to enjoy recreational pursuits and cultural enrichment.*

**SUSAN GOLDFARB**  
Guest Writer  
news@lbknews.com

The Winter Term at The Education Center begins Monday, January 5th. Here is a short list of programs starting in January that will stimulate your mind, invigorate your body, and lift your spirits.

Our popular annual Lecture Series, which is offered every Tuesday afternoon 3-4:30 pm January through March, features 12 distinguished speakers presenting lectures on diverse subjects. The series will begin on January 6 with U.S. POLICY IN A TURBULENT WORLD. Dr. Robert Lieber, professor emeritus of government and international affairs at Georgetown University and author of “Indispensable Nation: American Foreign Policy in a Turbulent Era,” will discuss America’s relations with its alliances and adversaries. Subsequent lectures in January will include THE GUT MICROBIOME: Conductor of the Body’s Organs with Dr. Isaac Kalvaria, gastroenterologist, January 13. Sandra Moulin, professional musician and public speaker will take the audience to Paris, past and present in THE FRENCH CONNECTION, highlighting famous American celebrities that were inspired by the City of Light. Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, Picasso, and Julia Child among others will be featured, January 20. Join Sarah Wertheimer, CEO of Embracing Our Differences, and Partick Arthur Jackson, VP of Learning & Engagement, for DIVERSE MINDS, POWERFUL INSIGHTS, an interactive exploration into the powerful synergy between varied perspectives and creative thinking, January 27.

January will bring: Yoga, Meditation, Qigong, The World’s Greatest Short Stories, Private Piano Lessons, The American Economy And Statistics, Bridge (All Levels), Mah Jongg, Canasta, Film Festivals, Movie And Book Discussion Groups, Jewelry Making, The Art And Architecture Of Three Great Monotheistic Religions, The Enchanting World Of Sufi Masters, Pearls Of Wisdom In The Bible, Neuroscience In The Courtroom, Opera Previews, How To Age In Place Successfully, American History, Aspire To Longevity, Iphone/Ipad, Fred Astaire, Women’s Voices, Life-Changing Poetry, Wine Tasting Workshop, Jazz Nights And Happy



Hours, Sunday Concerts....and much more coming up in February!  
For a brochure listing all the programs or for further inquiries, call 941-383-8222, email Admin@tbieducationcenter.org, or visit www.tbieducationcenter.org. The Education Center at Temple Beth Israel is located at 567 Bay Isles Road, Longboat Key, FL 34228. Classes begin at 9 am, school office hours are 10 am -5 pm. A secure and convenient Drop-Box is located at the entrance with registration cards when the office is closed.  
*The Education Center at Temple Beth Israel is a not-for-profit lifelong learning and adult enrichment center that offers over 150 non-credit courses for adults in the fine and applied arts, humanities, liberal arts, and natural and social sciences. Also available are recreational classes, performing arts programs, and special events. All adults are welcome regardless of religion or educational background. A desire to participate is the only prerequisite*

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# Editor Letters

Letters, from page 7

many of the calls anyway.

Overall, we appreciated the time with Mr. Hackney and his team. Emergency situations create opportunities for improvement, and we believe going forward that the relationship and communication between our two offices has been strengthened. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Howard N. Tipton  
Town Manager  
Town of Longboat Key

Beach Access:  
Ohana

To: Longboat Key Commission

The Ohana property has come up in conversation on several occasions in recent weeks regarding interest in gaining owner approval for the public to cross their property. I was not here when this was discussed back in 2021 and have found the attached information very helpful in trying to understand the options that have been previously explored and vetted. From the public record it appears that there has been extensive research and discussion on this subject. We've also shared this with our new Police Chief as the prior issues with trespassing on private property were/are a concern.

For Commissioners Karon, Coffin, Branham, and Commissioner-elect Gladding, this information may also be helpful in understanding the background to this discussion as it will likely surface again with the new ownership. Isaac has also attached the Gulfside Road update on from June 2024 that shows some of the structural (groin) stabilization we're planning to install in late 2027/early 2028. One of the groins will be very close to the Ohana seawall structure and we'll likely need the owner's cooperation as we look to move this project forward.

Maggie and Isaac are the best ones to reach out to if you have any questions as they have the history with this subject that I do not.

Howard N. Tipton  
Town Manager  
Town of Longboat Key

Suncoast Waterkeeper Sampling Results for Dec. 15

To: Longboat Key Commission, Sarasota City Commission

On December 15, Monday, the enterococci survey was carried out during an incoming high tide. The tide ranged from 1 to 1.25 feet, and high tide was recorded at 1.25 feet. There was no rainfall in the 24 hours prior to sampling.

The water was calm and clear at Caples Bayfront, Indian Beach, Palma Sola Bay, and Terra Ceia Bay. There was 1 dog on the shore at both Indian Beach and at The Bay Park. It was a windy day, with 10 to 15 miles per hour (mph) winds, which caused choppy surface waters and suspended solids in the water column in the following sites - Sarasota Sailing Squadron, Longboat Key Bayfront Park, Braden River, and Palmetto Bridge. There was wrack at Herb Dolan Park and Emerson Point Preserve. Horses were observed in the northeast corner at Palma Sola Bay, around 350 meters away from the sampling location. It was very windy (15 mph) at Braden River, causing the water to be very murky and brown in color with suspended solids. There were contractors at Longboat Key Boat Ramp who appeared to be removing an old boat from the water, so that site was inaccessible this week.

The results for sites sampled in the northern region (across Manatee & Sarasota Counties) are as follows:

- Caples: 10/100 mL
- Indian Beach: 10/100 mL
- The Bay Park, Boulevard of the Arts: Undetected
- Sarasota Sailing Squadron: 10/100 mL
- Longboat Key Bayfront Park (bay side): 122/100 mL
- Herb Dolan Park: 20/100 mL
- Palma Sola Causeway North: 20/100 mL
- Braden River: 2359/100 mL
- Palmetto Bridge: 30/100 mL
- Emerson Point: 10/100 mL
- Terra Ceia Bay: Undetected

Any count exceeding 71 is considered unsafe for swimming, indicating a potential health concern. The standard for enterococci in Class II and Class III Marine waters is "MPN or MF counts shall not exceed a monthly geometric mean of 35 nor exceed the Ten Percent Threshold Value (TPTV) of 130 in 10% or more of the samples during any 30-day period. Monthly geometric means shall be based on a minimum of 10 samples taken over a 30-day period," (62-302.500 F.A.C.). The two Longboat Key sites are located in Class II waters (<https://geodata.dep.state.fl.us/datasets/FDEP::surface-water-class-boundaries-areas/explore?location=27.336358%2C-82.433979%2C10.00>)

We are committed to bringing these critical issues to your attention and believe your active involvement is crucial. The official reports for this week's sampling activities, courtesy of Benchmark Enviroanalytical, are attached to this email. We want to encourage you to direct all questions, suggestions for additional analysis, and feedback to Dr. Abbey Tyrna at [Executivedirector@suncoastwaterkeeper.org](mailto:Executivedirector@suncoastwaterkeeper.org) and Pia Ronquillo-See at [waterquality@suncoast-waterkeeper.org](mailto:waterquality@suncoast-waterkeeper.org). Your input is invaluable in our collective efforts to address these water quality issues.

We are happy to report safe to swim conditions along most of our sites along the suncoast! I will continue with our enterococci survey during the next two weeks, but only in the northern region. The southern region sites will resume in the new year.

At this time, we are also compiling our year-end report from the 2025 enterococci results, analyzing our data with the Florida Department of Health Healthy Beaches Program criteria for swimmability and the Florida Administrative Code 62-302 regulatory standards for class II and class III waterbodies. We will be happy to share this with all of you in a couple of weeks, once we have completed the December 2025 sampling.

Pia Ronquillo-See  
Suncoast Waterkeeper

Archival material and maybe dinner

To: Lisa Shapiro

All good. Trish is our wonderful Town Clerk and can help in any way necessary. She is always working at Town Hall whereas I am not.

Ken Schneider  
Mayor  
Town of Longboat Key

Archival material and maybe dinner

To: Longboat Key Mayor Ken Schneider

That's excellent news and very appropriate groups to receive the documents. My mom would have been pleased that her hard work might find a home. I'll reach out just after the new year to plan a time to get together. Just an FY: before I emailed you, I emailed Trish Shinkle, who expressed interest. I'll follow up with her to let her know I'll go through you on this.

See Letters, page 13

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# Editor Letters



**Letters, from page 12**

Lisa Shapiro  
Longboat Key

**Archival material and maybe dinner**

Lisa: Good to hear from you! I would be happy to take the Longboat Key materials you have and get them in the right hands. We have a historical society that needs a reason to re-activate and a Green Team very involved in all things environmental on the island. We will be around the first week in January and can plan a meal whenever you are free.

Ken Schneider  
Mayor  
Town of Longboat Key

**Archival material and maybe dinner**

To: Longboat Key Mayor Ken Schneider  
Hi, Ken. I hope you and Cindy are well. She may remember me from camp days (either Eagle Island or Lenoloc) and I knew you from Livingston, most recently at the LHS reunion. The reason I'm writing is that I have a box of original material including notes of meetings, research, and two manuals from that time, pertaining to the health and dynamics (erosion, development effects, etc.) of the beaches. The group was intensively interacting with Arvida at the time. Please let me know if the city or beach ecologists might have any interest in some or all of these archival materials.  
We are coming to the area in early January and I'd be glad to bring at least the manuals for someone to look at.  
Of course, if you and Cindy happen to be free for dinner some time between Jan 4 and Jan 9, do let me know...it'd be great to see you. We do just love the area. Again, Happy Holidays.  
Lisa Shapiro  
Longboat Key

**Fact Checking Hurricanes and The St. Regis Groin Sign**

To: Longboat Key Commission  
I just want to clarify a point that was raised at your December 8 Regular Meeting regarding the sign on the St. Regis Groin.  
As you know, the sign on the St. Regis groin was erected in August 2025; hurricanes Helene and Milton were 2024 events. At that meeting Commissioner Gold asked about the statement in Brenda Patten's letter of October 17 regarding the groin sign having withstood two hurricanes. The response at that meeting was that the letter was referring to the groin, not to the sign.  
In fact, the actual text of the letter reads: "For your information, the existing groin sign has been through 2 hurricanes without moving or creating any damage."  
As the sign has not, in fact, withstood two hurricanes there is no basis to believe that there would be no movement or damage in a hurricane. So both the letter, and the response to Commissioner Gold's question, are incorrect.  
David Lapovsky  
Longboat Key

**Fact Checking Hurricanes and The St. Regis Groin Sign**

To: David Lapovsky  
One of the reasons the number of parking spaces is inadequate Downtown and in Rosemary District is that developers of multi-family dwellings don't provide adequate parking for residents' guests and service workers. Many of the structures are like CitySide, where I live: there's more than enough parking for residents behind restricted-access gates, but all but a handful of visitors must avail themselves of street parking.  
The requirement for the developers to provide parking is likely designed to shield the City from the expense of meeting the parking needs of a private development. But, under the current scheme, the City still has the burden of providing parking for guests and service workers. This also places a burden on local businesses whose patrons have to compete for limited public parking. (We see greater pressure during the holiday season when residents are entertaining friends in their homes and restaurants are serving holiday meals.)  
I propose that the formula be adjusted so that a percentage of the total number of spaces must be accessible to the residents' guests. Perhaps you could direct Planning to look into this. If this needs to be an Agenda Item, please consider this a request.  
Debbie Trice  
Mayor  
City of Sarasota

**Urgent Assistance Requested, North Tamiami Construction Site Impacting Local Businesses**

To: Sarasota City Commissioner Liz Alpert  
My name is Andrea Ronchini, I had your contact information from Vanessa Bough, I am the owner of RONC (Ronchini Food Inc.), a small, locally owned food business located on North Tamiami Trail in Sarasota.  
I am writing to bring to your attention the severe economic impact that the ongoing construction on North Tamiami Trail is having on my business. Since the construction began, customer access, visibility, and traffic to my location have been dramatically reduced. Despite my best efforts to adapt, sales have dropped to a level that is no longer sustainable.  
RONC employs local workers and serves the surrounding community with freshly made

food and coffee. Like many small businesses, we operate on tight margins, and this prolonged disruption is putting us at serious risk of closure. Without some form of assistance or intervention, I may be forced to shut down, which would mean job losses and the disappearance of another local small business.


I fully understand that infrastructure improvements are necessary, but I respectfully ask for the City's help in mitigating the damage being caused to businesses like mine. This could include:

- Improved signage directing customers to open businesses
- Temporary financial or tax relief
- Rent or utility assistance programs
- Any other support the City can offer to help us survive this period


I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak with you or a member of your team to discuss possible solutions. My goal is simple: to stay open, keep my employees working, and continue serving the Sarasota community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope the City will stand with its small businesses during this difficult time.  
Andrea Ronchini  
Sarasota

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# WineTimes

## Wine Stars Under the Southern Cross 2023

*No question, the Southern Hemisphere has co-opted a number of bit players among European wines and made them wine stars abroad.*

S.W. and Rich Hermansen  
Guest Writers  
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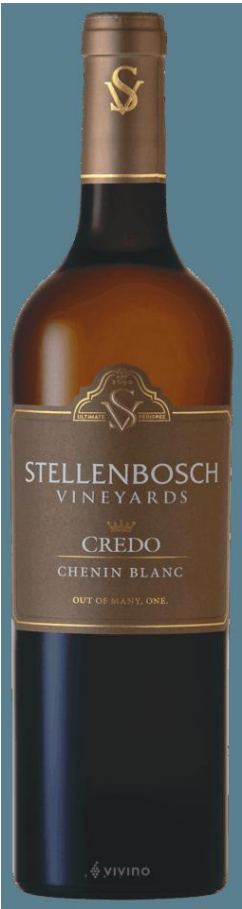
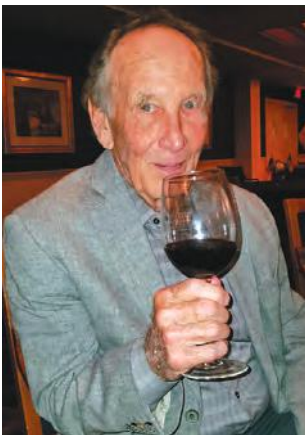
Wines from the Southern Hemisphere have a character all their own. Do the Southern Cross and other constellations in the sky below the equator (or above, as in some of the maps printed in Australia) change the usual European grapes grown in the Northern Hemisphere for better or worse?

Wine experts may argue about the strengths and liabilities of European vs. Southern Hemisphere wines, but, no question, the Southern Hemisphere has co-opted a number of bit players among European wines and made them wine stars abroad. Winemakers have planted seeds or clones of these *Vitis vinifera* grapes in all of the continents except Antarctica.

We focus here on wines that have become prominent in the international wine market. Some of these transplants have attained much greater popularity in their adoptive Southern Hemisphere countries than they have enjoyed in their countries of origin.

Many wine buyers believe that the Malbec grape originated in Argentina. While French winemakers in Bordeaux traditionally blend small proportions of Malbec into Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot to enhance the hue and depth of these wines, winemakers in the Cahors region east of Bordeaux in France use juice from the Malbec grape primarily or exclusively to make a Cahors Malbec. The soils, climate, and higher elevations of Argentine wine regions, especially the Mendoza region, favor growing the Malbec grape in large volumes for mass-market retail outlets. The most widely planted wine grape in Argentina, Malbec wine production far exceeds that of other country. In 2018, Argentina accounted for 84% of exports of Malbec worldwide. The 2020 Altalend Malbec Mendoza By Catena Family Wines (\$20) offers a step up from Catena and other mass-market Malbec. Open and let the wine breathe for an hour or two before serving with red meat or strong cheeses.

The most widely planted wine grape in South Africa, Chenin Blanc, comes originally from the Anjou region in France's Loire Valley. The nearby Vouvray region produces the best known 100% Chenin Blanc white wine, Vouvray; nonetheless, South Africa's production of Chenin Blanc, called Steen since planted in South Africa in 1655, now exceeds that of any other country, including France. No question that the popularity of Chenin Blanc in South Africa far exceeds its popularity in France. Chenin Blanc from the Western Cape of South Africa rivals Loire Valley Vouvray in quality. The 2021 Stellenbosch Vineyards Credo Chenin Blanc (\$19) stands out among competitors. It has complex tree fruits in first tastes and hints of oak, honey, and wet stone on the finish. We find South African Chenin Blanc at price points around \$10 easy to drink and a great pairing with delicate Dover Sole, crabmeat, and sauteed bay scallops. At \$10, it makes a good substitute for light beer or gin and tonic.



The French Sauvignon Blanc grape has major roles in White Bordeaux, often blended with Semillon, and in Sancerre, Pouilly-Fume, and other Loire Valley wines. France remains the largest producer of Sauvignon Blanc worldwide, followed by New Zealand.

In New Zealand, during the 1980's young winemakers from the Marlborough region began spending half a year in the Loire Valley and other regions of France and the other half in New Zealand making Sauvignon Blanc. They developed an impressive understanding of Sauvignon Blanc winemaking. When growers began planting new vineyards in Marlborough, the Sauvignon Blanc grapevines had this advantage. Now the most widely planted wine grape in New Zealand, Sauvignon Blanc has impressed

*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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