



Longboat Key News

June 5, 2026

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InsideLook



Bird Key Soars Past \$6.5M ...page 9



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The Pill Count Doesn't Add Up ...page 10

Tax Cut, or Tax Shift? The Property-Tax Amendment That Could Remake Longboat Key

On November 3, Floridians will vote on the largest rewrite of the property-tax system in a generation. Few towns in the state have more riding on the outcome than one where three of every four budget dollars — and the firefighters, police officers and seawalls they pay for — flow from the very tax now on the chopping block.

STEVE REID
Editor & Publisher
sreid@lbknews.com

On the morning of June 2, in a marble chamber 200 miles north of the Gulf, the Florida Legislature did something it had spent the better part of a year circling and then backing away from. By a vote of 75-26 in the House and 30-9 in the Senate, lawmakers agreed to put before voters a constitutional amendment that would more than quadruple the state's homestead exemption and set Florida on a path toward eventually erasing property taxes on primary residences altogether.

For most of Florida, the proposal — branded by Gov. Ron DeSantis as "Save Our Homes from Excessive Property Taxes" — reads as a tax cut, and a

generous one. For Longboat Key, it reads as something more complicated, and potentially more dangerous: a question about who, in the end, will pay to keep the lights on, the engines running and the island standing.

Three of Every Four Dollars

Because here is the uncomfortable arithmetic of this barrier island. Roughly three of every four dollars in the Town's general-fund budget come from property taxes — about \$18.3 million of a budget that runs around \$24 million, according to the Town's own FY2026 figures. And of what the Town spends, well over half goes to a single category that residents tend to assume is untouchable: police and fire. Running those two departments alone costs Longboat

See Taxes, page 12



Silent but Deadly: Inside Longboat Key's Great E-Bike Reckoning

Are they the silent killers — e-bikes and e-scooters whisking quietly over our island, where even the Mennonites race around over the bridge — and there seems to be no stopping them, or at least no hearing them.

STEVE REID
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I bring this up because that is precisely how it feels at 8:15 on a Tuesday, when you are ambling along the sidewalk on Gulf of Mexico Drive, contemplating nothing more dangerous than whether to risk supermarket Sushi for lunch, and a 70-pound electric machine roughly the size of a Vespa passes eighteen inches off your left hip at the speed of a moving violation. It is piloted by a silent figure in wraparound sunglasses who does not say "on your left," does not ring a bell, does not brake, and does not appear to register your existence as a fellow mammal.

There is no stopping them. There is definitely no hearing them. By the time you hear anything, it is the Doppler whoosh of a man who is already gone, leaving behind a faint breeze and the lingering scent of moral superiority.

See E Bikes, page 11



13.7 Inches in the Hole: Sarasota's Driest Stretch in Years, and its Impact

It is reaching every lawn, every flower bed, and, as a great many residents are now discovering when they open the mail, every water bill.



You do not need a government index to know something is wrong. You can see it on the morning walk.

The St. Augustine that used to be a smug emerald carpet is going the color of a paper bag. Hibiscus hedges that should be throwing out red and yellow trumpets all summer are dropping buds, curling leaves, and generally sulking. Ixora looks

See Drought, page 2

From Tension to Pension: After 40 years in public service, the steadiest heart in Town Hall is going home

Trish Shinkle has long hair and deep blue eyes and a steadiness that 20 years of commission meetings could not wear down. She loved the work, and she regrets none of it.

STEVE REID
Editor & Publisher
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The phone on her desk at Longboat Key Town Hall rings, and Trish Shinkle answers it mid-sentence — mid interview with Longboat Key News — without losing her place. A resident needs something; she listens, fixes it, and

See Trish, page 5

Drought, from page 1

tired. The impatiens have given up entirely.

Across Sarasota County and out onto Longboat Key, the landscape is telling us the truth: we are in a serious drought — officially one of the worst this region has seen in years — and it is reaching every lawn, every flower bed, and, as a great many residents are now discovering when they open the mail, every water bill.

By the Numbers: D3 and Counting

The hard data backs up the eyeball test. The U.S. Drought Monitor currently has Sarasota County in D3 — Extreme Drought, the second-highest rung on a five-tier national scale. Only one category, “Exceptional,” sits above it. According to UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County, the last time the region saw drought in this league was the stretches of 2011–2012 and 2000–2001; the county brushed D3 only briefly after Hurricane Ian in 2022.

How did we get here? By simply not raining. Local meteorologists describe this past fall and winter as one of the driest in over a century. When the Southwest Florida Water Management District tightened the screws this spring, the region was carrying a 13.7-inch rainfall deficit against its average 12-month total — and April alone came in 11.4 inches short. February through May is normally our driest window anyway, which means we limped into the dry season already parched and then got almost nothing to drink.

One Day a Week: Living Under Modified Phase III

In response, SWFWMD’s Governing Board escalated all the way to a Modified Phase III “Extreme” Water Shortage, in effect April 3 through July 1, 2026, and extendable if the dry conditions hang on. It is the District’s most serious water-shortage declaration in years, and it blankets all of Sarasota and Manatee counties — plus a dozen others — covering everyone, including private well owners.

The headline rule is simple and strict: outdoor irrigation is limited to one day per week. Watering is allowed only in a single window — roughly before 8 a.m. or after 6 p.m. — to cut down on midday evaporation, and properties under an acre must pick just one of those windows. Hand-watering and low-volume micro-irrigation or drip for shrubs and beds are still allowed any day. (Longboat Key takes its cue from its water provider, Manatee County, so confirm your exact assigned day with the Town before you turn on a hose.)

This is not a polite suggestion. In Manatee County, utili-

ties and code enforcement began issuing citations on April 17 — with no warning first. On Longboat Key, violations go to Code Enforcement at 941-316-1966.

Why Your Water Bill Is Climbing

Here is the part that stings in the wallet.

The Town of Longboat Key buys its potable water wholesale from Manatee County and bills residents on a tiered rate structure: the more you use, the more each additional gallon costs as your consumption climbs into the higher tiers. In a normal summer, the afternoon thunderstorms do much of your irrigating for free. In this drought, with the sky withholding and lawns going crisp, the natural instinct is to run the system harder to rescue the turf and the hibiscus.

That instinct collides head-on with the rate card. Outdoor irrigation can account for more than half of a household’s total water use, so every extra cycle drives consumption — and the bill — straight up the tiers. The result is a trap of dueling incentives: the lawn wants more water, the order allows it only one day a week, and the meter charges a premium for every gallon you do pour onto it. Plenty of residents are seeing summer-level bills arrive early, and the cause is rarely a mystery once they look at the gallons.

The Hidden Half: Aquifers and the Saltwater Problem

The browning yards are the visible damage. The more worrying damage is underground.

Roughly half of Sarasota County’s water supply is drawn from groundwater wells, and during an extended drought those aquifers can’t recharge fast enough. SWFWMD reports that regional water levels in aquifers, rivers, and lakes are “severely abnormal” and still falling. When freshwater levels in coastal aquifers drop far enough, saltwater intrusion from the Gulf can creep in, contaminating wells and rendering the water useless for irrigation or household use. UF/IFAS warns that once that intrusion happens, it is extremely difficult to reverse. In a barrier-island community ringed by salt water, that is not an abstract threat.

What the Plants and Wildlife Are Telling Us

So far the casualties are mostly cosmetic — stressed lawns, stalled flowers, thirsty container plants. But UF/IFAS cautions that if conditions slide into the top “Exceptional” (D4) category, the damage spreads past turf to established native shrubs and even mature trees. Extension staff recall a past severe drought on Florida’s east coast where mature native

trees were dying outright, and birds were lining up to drink the condensation dripping off a camper’s air conditioner because the natural water was simply gone.

The takeaways for residents are gentle and specific: young trees and shrubs under about four years old are the most vulnerable and may warrant careful, as-needed supplemental water even now; a clean, shallow birdbath does real good for wildlife in a developed area where wetlands have been paved over; and a few inches of mulch will hold soil moisture far better than another irrigation cycle ever could.

About That Weekend Rain...

And here is the part to keep in perspective.

If the sky finally cracks open between now and Monday — if it absolutely pours — by all means enjoy it. But don’t mistake a good soaking for the end of the drought. According to the Florida Climate Center, the region needs on the order of 19 inches of rain to climb out of the hole we’re in. A generous two- or three-inch weekend downpour would erase only a tiny bit of that unmet need; the rest of the deficit stays right where it is, sitting in the aquifer’s empty seat.

The longer-range news is cautiously better. The rainy season is arriving, and the early-summer outlook leans wetter than normal, though forecasters expect the back half of the season to run dry again. A developing El Niño is expected to mean fewer Atlantic hurricanes this year, followed by a wetter, stormier fall and winter. Translation: relief is probably coming — gradually, over months, one ordinary afternoon thunderstorm at a time — not in a single dramatic weekend.

What You Can Do Right Now

Until the rain does the heavy lifting, the savings — for the island’s water supply and for your own bill — come from using less:

- Know and follow your one-day watering schedule, and water only in the early-morning or evening window.
- Convert thirsty turf to low-water landscape beds, and switch overhead sprinklers to drip or micro-irrigation.
- Mulch generously to lock moisture into the soil.
- Fix leaks promptly — a small drip wastes gallons a day and quietly inflates your bill.
- Take advantage of free irrigation and landscape evaluations and rain-barrel programs offered through Manatee County Utilities and UF/IFAS Extension.
- Report sprinklers running on the wrong day to Code Enforcement (941-316-1966) — and, just as usefully, tell a neighbor who may not realize the rules have changed.



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ALPHA FEMALE **Hoping This Has Your Attention!**



All of us - WHO are we? Are all of us a combination? How do people effect us? How de we effect others?



Alpha Ladies - are:

1. dignity
2. humility
3. diligence
4. tenacity
5. a strong sense of self
6. strong sense of purpose
7. hope
8. perseverance
9. commitment
10. loyalty
11. truth
12. empathy
13. opposes injustice against herself and perhaps more importantly opposes injustice to others
14. guard your heart until you have belief the male will be just as committed to you as you will be to him - and it is with mutual choice

Are us guys Honorable Gentlemen? Do we behave in manners which honor the Alphas in our lives?

Life Brings Choices and Decisions

Defenses of invasion of the Alpha Female Borders:

1. Shield of Hope and Faith
2. Using Peace as a tool
3. Keeping the mind clear and free from broken boundaries
4. Seeking the adherence to her boundaries
5. Finding Truth; shield defending against attacks of manipulation and deceit
6. Seeking wise friends and counsel - using hope and faith

A hint: What does the Alpha Female use to defend her boundaries from manipulation, deceit, lies? --- Truth.

The Alpha Female searches for Truth

The Alpha Female seeks wisdom and wise counsel (wisdom is experience guided by love and faith)

The Alpha Female knows her boundaries and believes others should have the same respect

The Alpha Female understands broken boundaries will always be in her memory, and

The Alpha Female chooses to keep her mind clear from broken boundaries

The Alpha Female knows her faith and her hopes of the future

The Alpha Female uses peace as a guide and chooses relationships which respect her boundaries and peace with her boundaries

The Alpha Female - seeks to get results by using decisions and actions which build

1. love,
2. joy,
3. peace,
4. patience,
5. kindness,
6. goodness,
7. faithfulness,
8. gentleness,
9. self-control
10. some add modest / humble; no pride or arrogance
11. some add temperance / self-control / moderation (moderation in thinking, moderation in social activities,)

Many of the skills can be summarized as an instruction to use old-fashioned Social Etiquette and having a broad education.

TIMES IN LIVES WHEN ---

Perhaps in life, at times, we are given a gift of stopping, or easing a rush. Maybe we are in the right place at the right time. Maybe we are already at the end of the proverbial rainbow. Maybe we should cherish the slow lines and red lights, and open our thoughts to what a life-long friend wants us to hear. A friend asking for nothing, but waiting and watching for a friend who understands. REALLY feels, really understands and is responding without anything asked for in return. Seeking more than a moment in time - but building trust, true understanding, common understood emotions with the trust of known silence for all of eternity. All those future memories are always full of truth, understanding, common borders, any hurt is always followed with "I have learned the best way to apologize is to make certain I never have to apologize again - I have changed...."



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.

Request for Town Assistance to Expedite FEMA

To: Longboat Key Assistant Town Manager Isaac Brownman
I just wanted to let you guys know that I spoke with Scott Jochum and advised him that I have put in a request for updated contact information for him at FDEM and FEMA Region 4 in Atlanta. Mr. Jochum is one of four homeowners who have gotten to the final stage of the Elevate Florida program just waiting for the potential awards to start their projects and mitigate these properties. I will keep you all posted accordingly on our progress. Thanks.
Neal Mazzei
Chief Plans Examiner & Floodplain Manager
Town of Longboat Key

Request for Town Assistance to Expedite FEMA

To: Longboat Key Chief Plans Examiner & Floodplain Manager
The Town has followed up with Mr. Jochum.
Howard N. Tipton
Town Manager
Town of Longboat Key

Request for Town Assistance to Expedite FEMA

To: Longboat Key Planning and Zoning Director Allen Parsons
Thank you!
Isaac Brownman
Assistant Town Manager
Town of Longboat Key

Request for Town Assistance to Expedite FEMA

To: Longboat Key Assistant Town manager Isaac Brownman
Thanks all. Neal is reaching out to Mr. Jochum directly on his questions. Neal's also been in contact with Mr. Jochum in the past too.
Allen Parsons
Planning and Zoning Director
Town of Longboat Key

Request for Town Assistance to Expedite FEMA

To: Longboat Key Assistant Town manager Isaac Brownman

Sir, I think Neal did this for some of the neighboring properties in the past. See attached.
Charles Mopps
Public Works Director
Town of Longboat Key Public Works

Request for Town Assistance to Expedite FEMA

To: Longboat Key Planning and Zoning Director Allen Parsons
Allen and Charlie, please read all below. Tip committed to Mr. Jochum that staff would get back to him this week to discuss his requests. Please review Mr. Jochum 3-point request below and let me know responses to each one based on your perspective.
Do we have contacts with FEMA Region 4 and/or FDEM for the Town to reach out to on behalf of all residents who have submitted to this program?
Any concerns about a letter from the Town for this person's particular case, or even just a general letter about residents who are waiting for outcomes from this program?
Any thoughts on his third request? Thank you.
Isaac Brownman
Assistant Town Manager
Town of Longboat Key

Request for Town Assistance to Expedite FEMA

To: Longboat Key Mayor Debra Williams
Thank you Mayor for sharing this email.
Howard Tipton

See Letters, page 6

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Trish, from page 1

picks up exactly where she left off. In 45 minutes it rings more than three times, and each time the choreography is the same — the reflex of a woman who has spent two decades being the human voice a great many frightened, frustrated, or simply curious people on this island reached.

For 20 years she has been that voice. After June 19, she won't be.

Shinkle, the town clerk, is retiring — capping more than 40 years of public service, the last 20 at Town Hall, where she climbed from deputy clerk to a department head who answers to no one but the town manager. Hers was the quiet kind of power: not the official who gives the speeches, but the one who makes sure they're recorded, lawful, and still findable a decade later. The gatekeeper. The keeper of the record. The town's Switzerland.

“Because of you”

The tributes have started, and they don't read like form letters.

“The honor has been all mine for sure,” Commissioner Gary Coffin wrote to her. “Our town is what it is, respected as it is and forward thinking that it is, because of you. ... You will be missed and definitely not forgotten.”

Shinkle announced her own news the way she's done most things — in writing, for the record. “Public service has been more than a profession to me,” she told Town Manager Howard Tipton. “It has been a calling.” Of the island where she spent the last and longest chapter, she allowed herself a single line: “I definitely feel that I saved the best for last.”

A New Year's baby from Bradenton

You cannot get more local than Trish Shinkle, and she'll tell you so. She was born at Manatee Memorial Hospital on New Year's Day — a “baby Capricorn” who arrived during the Orange Bowl and has been working straight through her own birthday ever since. She grew up in Bradenton, eight years at St. Joseph Catholic School and then Manatee High, and today, almost too neatly, lives in the very family home where she was raised.

Home was loud and full: the second-youngest of eight children — three brothers, four sisters, a household she calls a commission of its own — with a Korean War veteran father who never sat still, and a daughter who took after him in soccer, softball and basketball. The Longboat Key of her girlhood was wilder and smaller, with bigger trees and more forest. The family went out to Beer Can Island, stayed in mom-and-pop cottages, and fished — she still loves to fish — two blocks from the river.

The babysitting break

Her career began not in an office but in a living room. As a teenager she babysat for R.B. “Chips” Shore, the legendary Manatee County clerk of court — her first brush with the people who keep the public's records. At 17, Shore offered her a job, and she was off, soon working accounts receivable at Manatee Memorial Hospital and, by the 1980s, serving as an assistant vice manager at Exchange National Bank.

She didn't, she points out, spend four years drifting through college; she was holding down serious jobs while her peers chose majors. She learned everything on the job, through sheer dedication — admin, accounting, numbers — and the promotions kept coming because she kept earning them. “I'm a numbers person,” she says, which from a self-effacing woman counts as bragging. She is organized, she is tireless, and yes, she works on her birthday.

Forty years, three governments

Her public career traces the region that raised her: eight years with the City of Sarasota, 13 with Sarasota County, 20 with the Town of Longboat Key — and she'd do every day again. She arrived in 2006 as a deputy clerk under then-clerk Jane O'Connor and rose to the top of an unusual office: the town clerk is one of the few jobs Longboat Key can't simply eliminate, written into the charter and hired by the town manager alone. She always knew what her chair was worth.

Out of the Twilight Zone

When she got here, she says, she thought she'd wandered into the Twilight Zone: commission meetings were still captured on old cassette tapes, undigitized, one coffee spill from oblivion. She changed all of it, never stopped modernizing, and turned out public-records requests on demand the whole time.

She is, above all, big on the record — and she kept it for an island full of type-A personalities, where nearly everyone has run something. Some of her proudest work was invisible: she got the town to codify that an ordinance becomes law upon adoption, ending the months of limbo such measures used to sit in, and pushed the commission to start formally approving its workshop minutes. She credits much of it to David Persson, the town attorney she came to love across his 23 years — a man with no patience for anyone who wouldn't tell the truth, a sharp wit, and the instinct to trust her.

Switzerland

She is the gatekeeper, she says — every record, every phone call, every scrap of commission direction flows through her office, where she is both the front line at the counter and the spine in the back, adapting to the personalities who come and go while she stays. What she never did was tell anyone what to think. The clerk's office is Switzerland; she has opinions, but the integrity of the record depends on her swallowing them, and in 20 years of charged meetings that discipline never cracked.

How does a person carry that much tension and stay so calm? The bridges, she says. Every time she drives the spans off the island, something in her resets. The bridges cleanse and de-stress the soul.

Four managers, one steady hand

Over 20 years she served four town managers, and offers a clear-eyed, affectionate report on each. Bruce St. Denis leaned on his department heads and hired the strongest he could find. Dave Bullock was a micromanager, into every last detail. Tom Harmer was a mixture of the two. And Howard Tipton she plainly adores. The team around her now she calls the best she's ever had — for their skills, their attitudes, the way they actually work together — and Tipton, she notes, trusts them. After two decades of watching people pass through, she doesn't say that lightly.

She saw it all

To sit where Shinkle sat is to watch a small island endlessly remake itself. She saw the beach groins go in and the utilities vanish underground. She sat through the bruising fight over the Longboat Key Club's Islandside expansion — the resident lawsuits against the town, the club's eventual sale to Ocean Properties. And she had a front-row seat for the saga that defined a generation: the slow fall of the Colony Beach & Tennis Resort, once the country's top tennis resort, into bankruptcy, closure and years of litigation — and then, on the same sand, the rise



Police Chief Russ Mager says goodbye to Trish.

and 2024 opening of the St. Regis. A full cycle, recorded the whole way.

They needed to hear a voice

If one chapter undoes her a little, it's the 2024 hurricane season — back-to-back storms that scattered the island. Her staff worked remotely, around the clock, hour after hour. And they found that for residents who'd lost a home, or were just desperate to know how bad it was, the town clerk's office was the first place they could reach a living person. Between the two storms, Shinkle's team — Trish herself, with Savannah, Cece and the utilities staff — answered some 7,000 calls, staying late, day after day.

“They needed to hear a voice,” she says. It is, in four words, the entire job.

The ones she'll carry

Ask after her favorite commissioners and the names come fast: Joan Webster, Lee Rothenberg, Jeremy Whatmough, George Spoll, Randy Clair, Bob Siekmann. She loved Webster, a former mayor who backed the staff fiercely — who'd call you out if you were wrong but treated everyone as the professional they were. Spoll, she laughs, liked her for reasons she could never name, and was always blessedly to the point. Among today's commission she singles out B.J. Bishop, for her persistence and for keeping the real good of the town at heart.

The losses are part of the record too. She adored the late Al Hogle, the police chief killed in 2012 when his Ducati went off a fog-bound North Carolina mountain road — down to earth, a people person, with the same easy energy she sees now in Chief Russ Mager. And she ranks Fire Chief Paul Dezzi at the very top: she doesn't believe anyone could serve this community better — so devoted, so quick with a joke, forever trying to make his department better.

The hard part

Not every memory is warm. Over 20 years she had to let perhaps half a dozen people go, and her read on why is unsentimental: the ones who didn't last, she says, treated the work like a job rather than a commitment — to the team, and to the mission.

Home

For all the weight she carries, her home life is happily ordinary. There's family in town — a daughter, Stacie, and twin grandsons — and a soft spot for her two dogs, a boxer mix and a chocolate lab, who could not care less that she keeps the public record.

The second act

Now begins the second act, and she's starting at a sprint: a family cruise to Alaska in June, then a bolder leap in September — Panama, to visit Sandi Henley, a former Town Hall colleague who retired to the tropics and loves it, and who happened to be one of the first to welcome Shinkle in 2006. Another full circle. Because her last official day is June 19 but she's banked a stockpile of leave, the coming weeks will go to shopping and packing rather than the front counter.

Tipton has already hired her successor — Celine Kidwell, from Eloy, Arizona — a choice Shinkle, true to form, had no part in; the job, she notes, is mostly dictated by statute anyway. Her friends swear she'll be bored by year's end. She has a plan: her brother works for the Sarasota Police Department, and if it gets too quiet, maybe she'll become a crossing guard — blow a whistle, throw up a hand, walk a few kids safely across. After 40 years, it would be a gentle shift.

From tension to pension

Last Tuesday, employees and residents packed Town Hall to share a cake beneath a banner that read, perfectly, “from tension to pension.” Tipton has said he truly admires her, that she cares deeply about her staff, that she'll be missed — ordinary words, made true because, this time, everyone means them.

Trish Shinkle has long hair and deep blue eyes and a steadiness that 20 years of commission meetings could not wear down. She loved the work, and she regrets none of it. When she drives off the island for the last time as town clerk — over the bridges that always cleansed the soul — the record will be in order, because she built it to be. The minutes will be approved. And somewhere, a phone will ring at the front desk of Town Hall.

For the first time in 20 years, someone else will answer it.

EditorLetters



Letters, from page 4

Town Manager
Town of Longboat Key

Request for Town Assistance to Expedite FEMA

To: Scott Jochum

Thank you for sharing your information. Staff will review the information you've submitted and get back with you this week to discuss. However, I feel compelled to share that you are not alone and that this program generally has (for whatever reasons) not been very responsive. The Town is also waiting for our more than \$20 million in outstanding FEMA reimbursements and it has been a very slow process as well.

Howard N. Tipton
Town Manager, Town of Longboat Key

Request for Town Assistance to Expedite FEMA

To: Scott Jochum

Thank you for your email. I am sorry to hear about your repetitive losses and lack of response from various authorities. I am copying the town manager and assistant town manager to see if they are able to assist you in any way.

Debra Williams
Mayor, Town of Longboat Key

Request for Town Assistance to Expedite FEMA

To: Longboat Key Mayor Debra Williams

I am a resident and property owner on Longboat Key writing to request the Town's direct

assistance with a matter of urgent personal safety and community concern. My home has flooded five times in four years. Hurricane season is now underway, and I remain without a solution while my Elevate Florida application for home elevation sits in a federal approval backlog with no clear timeline for resolution.

I applied to the Elevate Florida program, the state's FEMA-funded residential mitigation program, in good faith and have met every requirement asked of me. My property qualifies as a severe repetitive loss property under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), a designation that is supposed to prioritize my application for funding. Despite this, FEMA has not yet issued a final approval decision, and I have been told by the Florida Division of Emergency Management to seek assistance through my elected officials.

I am aware that flood mitigation is a top priority for this Commission. The Town's Capital Improvement Plan reflects a serious commitment to drainage and resilience projects across the island, and I have seen firsthand the Town's efforts to work with residents on these challenges. That is precisely why I am turning to you.

I am respectfully asking the Town of Longboat Key to:

1. Formally contact FEMA Region 4 and/or the Florida Division of Emergency Management on my behalf, advocating for expedited review of my Elevate Florida application given my severe repetitive loss status and the active hurricane season.

2. Consider whether the Town can provide a letter of support for my application that documents the flooding history at my property and affirms the community-level flood risk on Longboat Key, such letters can carry meaningful weight in FEMA's prioritization process.

3. Connect me with any Town staff, grant liaisons, or county emergency management contacts who may be able to help escalate my case or identify alternative funding paths if Elevate Florida does not move forward in time.

I understand the Town cannot compel FEMA to act. But formal communication from municipal leadership, a community that FEMA and the state already recognize as a high-

See Letters, page 7



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Sandra Smith | 941.383.3388

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Editor Letters



Letters, from page 6

priority flood-risk area, could make a meaningful difference in how my application is treated. My property details and application information are below. I am also happy to present my situation in person at a Town Commission meeting or to speak directly with Town staff at any time.

Thank you for your continued leadership on behalf of Longboat Key's residents. I hope the Town will stand with me in pressing for a resolution before another storm season puts my home and family at risk again.

Note: I also wanted to bring to your attention that the Town has my home incorrectly categorized as repetitive loss and not severe repetitive loss. That's an important differentiator in the FEMA approval process. I have attached a letter from my former insurance provider and NFIP direct for reference.

Scott Jochum
Longboat Key

Publix pricing

To: Longboat Key Commission

I feel then need to offer owners and residents of Longboat Key an alternative to Publix. I am for sure not the first person to notice, excessive margins make Longboat Keyers, pay through the nose. This is one tiny thing against 1,000s of massive Publix over pricing. This week, just one small issue amongst 1,000s. Yesterday, exactly the same product: Publix Fresh 'never frozen' cod fillets: \$27.47/lb. Detweilers Fresh not Frozen cod fillet: \$9.95lb.

This literally is only one of 1,000s of massive price differences. I can take and show if you have any interest. Publix are aided and abetted by the Town of Longboat Key, failing residents by their ridiculous pricing, there are 1,000s.

Who do I contact to further this request to invite another operator on the island? Failure to consider leaves questions of favouring Publix. They are just a supermarket and nobody cares to see, they give residents value against robbery.

Trevor Gillott
Longboat Key

Town Clerk retirement

To: Longboat Key Town Clerk Trish Shinkle

Trish, the honor has been all mine for sure. Our town is what it is, respected as it is and forward thinking that it is because of you. Your attention to our employees and residents isn't by chance. Your leadership and keeping us all on track is commendable. Thank you for your time and direction over the years. You will be missed and definitely not forgotten.

Gary Coffin
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

Town Clerk retirement

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Gary Coffin

Just a quick note to say thank you for all your support over the past years.

Trish Shinkle
Town Clerk, Town of Longboat Key

Grants Assistance Program: May Round-Up

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Gary Coffin

Not at all. We would be glad to assist with another mass deployment of VOGs. Right now, we source them from Manatee County or the Oyster Boys. We can connect Jeff with both and potentially provide a sponsorship for the project. I look forward to hearing from him.

Megan Barry
Public Outreach Manager, Sarasota Bay Estuary Program


Grants Assistance Program: May Round-Up

To: Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Public Outreach Manager Megan Barry


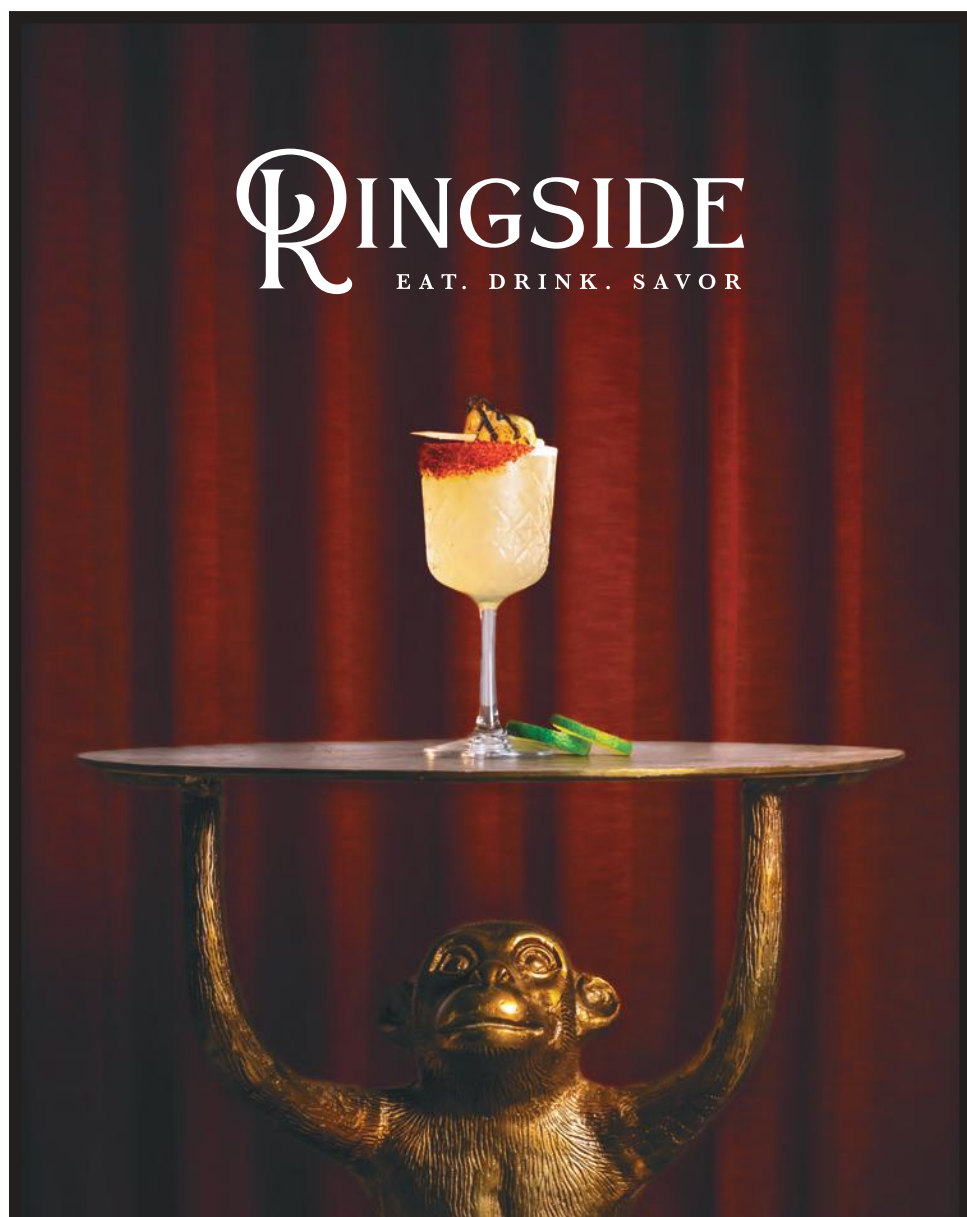
Also, today I met with a Jeff Hecklau who lives in the Spanish Main neighborhood on Longboat Key. Jeff is very active in Longboat Keys community affairs. This particular property has its own Marina that is maintained by the residents, with some 4,000 feet of seawall. Jeff was very interested in learning more about the oyster garden program. He may be able to assist with installing them throughout the Marina. I informed him, someone from the Sarasota Bay Estuary program would

See Letters, page 8

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EditorLetters



Letters, from page 7

get in touch with him and give him the scoop. I hope I didn't overextend?

Gary Coffin
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

Grants Assistance Program: May Round-Up

To: Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Public Outreach Manager Megan Barry
Megan, I wanted to make sure you guys saw this. All of these issues are right in your wheelhouse. Please let me know if we can offer any assistance at our level.

Gary Coffin
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

Ebikes on Longboat Key

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Gary Coffin

Thank you for giving me your card but you may be sorry you did! I would like the issue of ebikes on the sidewalks of Longboat Key to be on the town's agenda for regulation.

As a frequent walker on the sidewalks (as are many others), we are routinely having very close calls with ebikes that neither have bells like regular bikes nor observe the 10 mph speed limit. They are basically silent and give no warning of their approach from behind and have little to no regard for the pedestrians lawfully using the sidewalks.

Until they are prohibited from using the sidewalks and restricted to the bike lane on Gulf of Mexico Drive, it is just a matter of time until one of them collides with a pedestrian with the potential of causing serious bodily harm. The same goes for scooters!

Richard B. Perlman
Longboat Key

Ebikes on Longboat Key

To: Richard Perlman

Agreed Richard, I know the staff is on it and working with the state to come up with a safer solution. Thank you for your input. It is critical to our governmental process. With this reply, I have forwarded to the town manager and police chief for additional comments and direction.

Gary Coffin
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

Ebikes on Longboat Key

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Gary Coffin

I really appreciate your immediate response to this matter.

Richard Perlman
Longboat Key

Protect Local Services—Reject the Property Tax Proposal

To: Representative Leonard Spencer

I'm writing to urge you to reject the property tax constitutional amendment proposal.

Property taxes fund the services Floridians rely on every day: police, fire, emergency response, road maintenance, and stormwater infrastructure.

Using the most recent state tax rolls and public safety expenditure data available, an analysis

of a \$250,000 homestead exemption found that 85 Florida cities could not fund public safety at current levels, even if they cut every other service. Smaller communities would face the steepest impact.

The proposal includes a state trust fund to backfill local budgets. That alone is a warning sign: if cities need state grants to keep the lights on, the proposal is admitting that local resources won't be enough. It also reroutes local funding decisions through Tallahassee, a fundamental change that deserves more careful study than a three-day special session can provide.

Florida's property tax system already works. Please reject any proposal that defunds local public safety or shifts local decision-making to the state.

Penny Gold
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

Protect Local Services—Reject the Property Tax Proposal

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Penny Gold

I appreciate you reaching out to my office. Serving House District 45 is an honor, and I value the opportunity to hear your thoughts, concerns, and ideas.

My team and I are committed to advocating for our community and ensuring that every constituent has access to the resources they need. If your inquiry requires a response, a member of my team will follow up as soon as possible. Your engagement in the legislative process is important, and we value your voice!

Representative Leonard K. Spencer
Florida State House District 45
Tallahassee

Property Tax Reform Proposal and Implications for Local Government

To: Representative William Robinson

The Town of Longboat Key has enjoyed a collaborative and positive relationship with our state delegation, resulting in positive outcomes for our region and our state. In your role as the Chair of the State Affairs Committee, it is of great importance that we have the opportunity to emphasize the significance of potential property tax legislation to be considered. The Town of Longboat Key has a long and consistent history of aligning outstanding services with community expectations and fiscal responsibility. Our taxpayers understand the framework we have while consistently working hard to minimize property tax impacts and implications. As we understand the latest property tax reform proposal, it includes a \$250,000 homestead exemption, with the potential for a future \$500,000 homestead exemption consideration, a 5% cap on non-homestead residential properties and commercial properties, and a 5-year threshold for new residents coming into the state before they could take advantage of such exemptions. It is troubling that the incomplete details of such a massive change to local government funding are shared just a few days before a 3-day special session is to convene to consider these, and potentially other, proposals. For months, there has been ample opportunity to disclose to the public and the local governments impacted the details of any tax reform. That would have provided full transparency and the opportunity for public engagement prior to the special session. Instead, we are treated to political theater and something that's been crafted to achieve the 60% threshold, rather than making Florida and its local governments stronger and more resilient.

As a reminder, there is in the Florida Constitution a Taxation and Budget Reform Commission (TBRC) that is established every twenty years to consider and recommend changes to the taxing mechanisms at both state and local levels. This would be a thoughtful alternative that would allow all sides of the issue to weigh in before anything is placed on the ballot. The obvious problem with this thoughtful and inclusive approach is that the Commission doesn't meet until 2027, and that is a timing issue for our outgoing Governor. Page 1 of 2 to The Town of Longboat Key is proud to be a premier community, and as an incorporated municipality, the closest level of government to the people, we strive constantly provide exceptional service. The services we offer are the exact services desired by the community. In a small, efficient, and well-run Town, all services are "core services." Our businesses on the island appreciate Town services as well, and in fact, enjoy an excellent working and collaborative relationship with the Town.

What has been proposed will cripple or bankrupt a number of cities and counties across the state without thinking as to how critical services (including public safety) will be provided. It will also jeopardize credit ratings and borrowing costs. It is of vital importance that the merits of any tax reform proposal have time to be examined and debated, with the best of whatever is warranted placed on the ballot for the public to decide. The Taxation and Budget Reform Commission is the right vehicle to utilize for this, while a quickly convened three-day special session is clearly not. Public officials must conduct themselves in ways that maintain public trust and confidence. Public trust is the currency that allows all levels of government to function, and without it, we are bankrupt. What's been proposed, to the best we understand it, is not just a financial issue but also an ethical one. As local government is the government the people know the best, if we don't stand up for the ethical principles that serve as the foundation for the greater good, who will? We respectfully ask that you do not endorse the Governor's plan, and if you are so inclined, to charge the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission that meets in 7 months to perform the necessary review. Thank you for your service to our State and our region, and please do not hesitate to contact the Town of Longboat Key with any questions.

Debra Williams
Mayor
Town of Longboat Key

Visit Sarasota County

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Gary Coffin

Greetings from Visit Sarasota County. My team at our downtown Visitor Center informed me that you are looking for the latest tourism data. Please find both March and April's numbers below, with full reports attached for a deeper dive.

If you need any additional information, please feel free to reach out to me or my team. Erin is away on vacation through the second week of June.



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Address	Sq. Ft.	List Price	Bed/Bath/Half Bath	Days On Market	Sale Price
119 N WARBLER LN	5,099	\$6,925,000	3 4 0	82	\$6,550,000
1255 N GULFSTREAM AVE Unit#1501	3,943	\$3,875,000	4 3 1	23	\$3,475,000
35 WATERGATE DR Unit#1005	3,659	\$2,900,000	4 4 0	104	\$2,850,000
1350 MAIN ST Unit#PH1600	2,165	\$1,895,000	3 3 0	86	\$1,775,000
800 S BLVD OF PRESIDENTS Unit#12	1,090	\$499,900	2 2 0	458	\$430,000
800 N TAMIAMI TRL Unit#405	1,070	\$475,000	1 1 1	118	\$420,000
1001 BENJAMIN FRANKLIN DR Unit#403	813	\$399,000	1 1 1	76	\$385,000
765 JOHN RINGLING BLVD Unit#23	816	\$379,000	2 1 1	79	\$367,000
170 ROOSEVELT DR Unit#2	294	\$375,000	1 3 1 0	326	\$300,000
545 SANCTUARY DR Unit#B204	3,115	\$2,799,000	3 3 0	179	\$2,600,000
581 YARDARM LN	2,192	\$2,250,000	3 3 0	7	\$2,075,000
1485 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#110	1,971	\$1,495,000	2 3 0	76	\$1,430,000
7030 POINSETTIA AVE	1,402	\$995,000	2 2 0	39	\$800,000
691 GULF BAY RD	1,581	\$950,000	3 2 0	196	\$885,000
1925 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#G8-303	1,068	\$799,000	2 2 0	3	\$775,000
5757 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#115	1,561	\$709,900	2 2 0	56	\$625,000
1932 HARBOURSIDE DR Unit#254	1,192	\$585,000	2 2 0	150	\$530,000
1930 HARBOURSIDE DR Unit#145	1,270	\$549,000	2 2 0	23	\$515,000
1965 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#G5-400	1,257	\$506,000	2 2 0	0	\$506,000
4840 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#Villa 15	1,084	\$445,000	2 2 0	304	\$399,999
620 SPANISH DR N	1,357	\$370,000	2 2 0	134	\$320,000
549 SUTTON PL Unit#t 19	1,248	\$329,000	2 2 1	92	\$320,000
408 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#2112		\$35,000		243	\$32,500

Letters, from page 8

April numbers comparing 2026 to 2025:
 Visitors were 113,400 compared to 115,700 in 2025
 Visitor direct expenditures were \$189,474,400 compared to \$183,768,700 in 2025
 Lodging occupancy was 64.2% compared to 68.0% in 2025
 Lodging average room rate was \$376.81 compared to \$348.60 in 2025
 There were 302,400 room nights sold compared to 311,500 in 2025
 March numbers comparing 2026 to 2025:
 Visitors were 158,500 compared to 155,800 in 2025
 Visitor direct expenditures were \$234,302,600 compared to \$234,521,100 in 2025
 Lodging occupancy was 81.5% compared to 83.3% in 2025
 Lodging average room rate was \$402.36 compared to \$386.00 in 2025
 There were 365,800 room nights sold compared to 373,000 in 2025
 Additional Reports: You can view our latest measurement reports and quarterly recaps on demand at www.VisitSarasotaCountyTransparency.com.
 Hunter Carpenter
 Director of Community Relations
 Visit Sarasota County

of painted driftwood at Beer Can as they apparently are trying to start a "tradition."
 Sandy Leland
 Longboat Key

Paint on driftwood at Beer Can

To: Longboat Key Mayor Debra Williams
 This is not unusual. Kids making art, and Public Works addresses when it pops up. It is typically not propagated like a NY subway tunnel nor does it tend to be gang or violence related material. I have copied Charlie to have his team address.
 Isaac Brownman
 Assistant Town Manager
 Town of Longboat Key

Paint on driftwood at Beer Can

To: Longboat Key Mayor Debra Williams
 Hello! I'm curious as to when it became acceptable to paint graffiti on the driftwood at Beer Can. Not only is it hideous, but it can be dangerous to the ecosystem and wildlife. I know this place has changed drastically since my family first
 Hello! I'm curious as to when it became acceptable to paint graffiti on the driftwood at Beer Can. Not only is it hideous, but it can be dangerous to the ecosystem and wildlife. I know this place has changed drastically since my family first came here over 100 years ago, but defiling the driftwood and going on Facebook and advertising it should not be tolerated. Hanging shells from the branches is one thing, but painting graffiti should not be allowed.
 Sandy Leland
 Longboat Key

Paint on driftwood at Beer Can

To: Sandy Leland
 Thank you for your email and concern about graffiti on Longboat Key. Could you provide more details (location, photo) so that it can be properly addressed?
 Debra Williams
 Mayor
 Town of Longboat Key

Paint on driftwood at Beer Can

To: Longboat Key Mayor Debra Williams
 Thank you for your response. Here is the picture from the Facebook page "We Love Longboat Key." Several people think this is "art." It looks like vandalism. As one commenter said, "It looks like you're trying to make Beer Can look like a NY subway." I truly hope this can be stopped. The author of the post, Natasha Young, is the "artist." Others also posted pics

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CHOICE AWARDS
Sarasota
WINNER

2024
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WINNER



OnPatrol



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

May 29

Vehicle

7:25 p.m.

Officer Miklos and Officer Tillman were dispatched to the intersection of Bay Isles Parkway and Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to a disabled vehicle. Upon arrival, Officer Miklos observed the silver Cadillac SUV parked in the middle of the intersection. Officer Tillman and Officer Miklos attempted to get the vehicle into neutral without success. The driver advised he had a tow truck coming with a 20-minute estimated time arrival. The tow truck arrived on scene and removed the vehicle from the roadway. The three occupants of the vehicle were given a courtesy transport to the restaurant by Officer Tillman. Case clear.



three times today stating he was going to spend the night with the tenant whom he did not know. The employee confirmed the complainant's account of the event and stated the man gave his phone number. He was wearing a black jacket, black sunglasses, black shorts and riding a black Harley style motorcycle. The man was talking to the woman about having a sexual issue and was straightforward about what he wanted to do with her sexually. Both the women did not feel threatened but thought the individual was off his medication, which he claimed to have left his medical marijuana on the beach. The man was also seen swimming in the pool and doing tricks with his motorcycle in the parking lot. The subject left prior to Officer Maple's arrival and headed northbound

on Gulf of Mexico Drive. Search of the island wide flock system for bicycles and motorcycles did not provide any matching results. Officer Maple left a voicemail on the phone number, additionally, the complainant and mentioned person were instructed to call 911 immediately if the man returns. Both also confirmed no threats were made and the subject just seemed to be seeking attention. Case clear.

May 30

Incident

9:42 a.m.

Officer Maple and Officer Nazareno were dispatched to Sands Point Road for a 911 hang up call. Upon arrival, Officer Maple met with the manager who contacted the guest who stated her children had been playing with the phone and no emergency was present. Officer Nazareno and Officer Maple met with the person to confirm the situation. Case clear.

May 31

Disturbance

7:17 a.m.

Officer Nazareno was dispatched to the 5300 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for a civil disturbance call. The call was in reference to a possible trespass. Upon arrival, Officer Nazareno met with the complainant who stated she was at her business this morning and was confronted by the subject who had previously been arrested for trespassing at the location. The complainant stated she was preparing to leave town for a few days when the subject showed up and became argumentative with her. The complainant stated the subject was homeless and when he drinks he becomes verbally abusive. The complainant also confirmed she has given him access to the property with keys and biometrics access. Additionally, the complainant recently paid bond to allow subject release from custody. The subject reportedly beds down in the vegetation between the Publix and CVS. After interviewing the complainant, Officer Nazareno canvassed the area of her business and the reported area near Publix with negative results. Prior to departing the area, the complainant stated she had locked her business and no one should be in the establishment for the next few days. Upon her return she intends to change the locks but based on continued patterns between the two, Officer Nazareno did not believe the course of action would be followed through. Numerous contact between the two and the police department has occurred in the past with the same recommendations. Since the subject could not be located, the complainant was advised to immediately call 911 for any further interactions and more frequent business checks in the area will be completed by this officer today. Case clear.

Person

11:50 a.m.

Officer Maple was dispatched to the 5500 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to a 50-year-old man who was on the property of the hotel and acting strange. Upon arrival, Officer Maple spoke to the complainant who stated a white male and been around her unit and other's

Vehicle

8:45 a.m.

Officer Miklos while on patrol in the 6000 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive when he was approached by a woman who lives on North Shore Road. She said she has noticed an SUV parked in the parking lot that does not belong to any resident or guest. The woman believed that the occupants are young men who fish and smoke off a private dock behind the condos. Upon arrival, Officer Miklos conducted a check of the parking lot and was not able to find the SUV. Officer Miklos spoke to the woman in the parking lot who confirmed the vehicle had left prior to the officer's arrival. Officer Miklos advised the woman that the HOA can tow the vehicle due to it being on private property. Additionally, Officer Miklos spoke to the woman about issuing a trespass warning to the men due to them being on private docks fishing. The woman was advised to call dispatch next time she observed the men or the vehicle in the area. Case clear.

June 1

Citizen assist

11:00 a.m.

Officer Castro was dispatched to Bay Isles Parkway in reference to a broken water line. Upon arrival, Officer Castro confirmed that a water line was accidentally broken by a company named Cable Link, installing a fiber optic cable. Officer Castro notified the Public Works about the incident and they immediately responded to the area. The scene was turned over to Public Works. Case clear.

June 2

Medication

5:00 p.m.

Officer Troyer responded by phone to the hotel in reference to a missing prescription. Officer Troyer spoke with the complainant who reported on May 29 she noticed some of her prescription was missing. She said she brought 90 pills and should have 60 pills, but she could not confirm this because she did not count the pills either. The complainant said the following day, she noticed her pills were gone. The complainant could not find the pills and looked everywhere. The woman said she asked her daughter and husband if they could find the pills, but was unable to locate them. The woman said they were the only people with access to the room, as they did not elect to have a cleaning service. The woman said she contacted the hotel office and they did not have any pill bottles turned in either. Officer Troyer responded to the hotel and spoke with the front desk staff. The staff reported no pill bottles were turned in either. Case clear.

Person

8:42 p.m.

Officer Miano responded to Channel Lane for a suspicious person. On scene and interviewed the complainant on scene. The complainant related an unknown woman approached his property and requested she exit the property. The complainant further related the woman appeared to be intoxicated and described her as a 60 year-old white woman wearing a Penn State sweatshirt. He further advised she was last seen walking northbound on Gulf of Mexico Drive from his property. Officer Miano searched the surrounding area with negative results. No further calls in the area for the woman, case clear.

June 3

Disturbance

3:30 p.m.

Officer Maple was dispatched to the 1600 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for a disturbance call in reference to a man in his 40s acting strange in one of the rooms. Upon arrival, Officer Maple met with the complainant who stated the man who was in one of the rooms was acting strange. This morning, the staff had done a previous welfare check on the man who became upset, took off his t-shirt and became verbal with staff. Officer Nazareno and Officer Maple

See On Patrol, page 11

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Editorial Opinion



E Bikes, from page 1

A Brief and Terrifying Physics Lesson

Let's be real. Longboat voters or not, the bendable young sprite youth of the planet do not live here. We do. Our bodies are calcified, often with osteoporosis, and we are ambling up the walking path with muted reflexes commensurate with our age. This is not an insult; it is an actuarial table wearing orthopedic sandals.

The whole catastrophe comes down to a speed differential. A pedestrian moves at roughly 3 mph. The object overtaking that pedestrian from behind is doing 28. When a sprite youth gets clipped at that speed, the sprite youth tucks, rolls, bounces up, films a TikTok, and is eating a burrito by noon. When one of us gets clipped, we do not bounce. We shatter like a dropped chandelier — and we become a feature in this very newspaper, and not the fun kind with a wine review.

The Tennis-Center Death Run

The danger reaches peak absurdity out at the Longboat Key Tennis Center, where e-bikers are whisking 30 and 40 mph to the courts — or, far worse, away from them.

Picture the gentleman who has just suffered a monumental loss, 6–love, 6–love, to a man he beat easily in 2019 and has privately referred to as “no real threat” ever since. He is filled with a bit of cortisol mixed with sunshine in his eyes, forming a most dangerous glint. He is now astride 750 watts of German engineering — fully charged battery, freshly bruised ego, graphite racquet strapped across his back like a quiver. He is not, in this precise moment, a safe operator of heavy machinery. He is a class-action lawsuit with excellent groundstrokes.



REID

A Field Guide to the Whizzing Menace

For the uninitiated, the island's e-bikers sort into several distinct subspecies:

- **The Silent Assassin.** Wears wraparound sunglasses. Owns a bell. Has never once touched the bell. Regards “on your left” as a sign of moral weakness.
- **The Smug Pedaler.** Radiates the serene calm of a man who is simultaneously rescuing the planet and doing 28 mph past your grandmother. More on him shortly.
- **The Post-Match Cortisol Casualty.** See above. Lost in straight sets. Should not, at present, be trusted with a toaster, let alone a vehicle.
- **The Mennonite.** Has, by reliable local report, joined the arms race and now races around over the bridge with the rest of us. When even the Mennonites have gone electric, the moped-era ordinance is officially a museum piece.

Enter Mr. Perlman, Folk Hero of the Sidewalk

One resident did the single bravest thing a Longboat Key citizen can do: he respectfully asked for some help. Richard B. Perlman wrote to Town Commissioner Gary Coffin and opened with a sentence that deserves to be chiseled over the door of Town Hall: “Thank you for giving me your card but you may be sorry you did!”

He was not bluffing. Perlman, a frequent walker like many of us, laid out the case: routine close calls with e-bikes that have neither bells like regular bikes nor any working relationship with the 10 mph speed limit. They are basically silent. They give no warning from behind. And, he warned, until they are prohibited from the sidewalks and restricted to the bike lane on Gulf of Mexico Drive, it is just a matter of time until one of them collides with a pedestrian, with the potential of causing serious bodily harm. “The same goes for scooters!”

Commissioner Coffin replied like a man who has received this exact email roughly nine hundred times. He agreed. He said staff was “on it” and working with the state on a safer solution, thanked Perlman for input “critical to our governmental process,” and forwarded the whole thing to the town manager and police chief “for additional comments and direction.” Perlman, a gentleman to the end, wrote back to say he really appreciated the immediate response.

And that, friends, is the entire functioning Longboat Key e-bike enforcement apparatus as it exists today: one exceptionally polite email thread, now filed.

So What ARE the Rules? (Sit Down First)

Here is where this column is contractually obligated to become real news, so grip the walker firmly.

Under Florida law, an e-bike has the same rights and duties as a regular bicycle. Translation: it may legally operate on the sidewalk, in the bike lane, or on the side of the road. In the eyes

On Patrol, from page 10

spoke with the man who acted as he had been drinking. The man stated he was waiting for his meal (staff confirmed food was never ordered) and had got upset with staff for bothering him without his food. The hotel staff went inside the room as Officer Nazareno and Officer Maple stood by to check for damage. Minimal damage to curtains were observed. The man was not a disturbance outside his room and was eating, drinking and was taking minimal but acceptable care of himself. Officer Maple informed the man that any further incidents could result in possible legal action. The hotel staff agreed to watch over him and call 911 in the event of any additional incidents. Case clear.

June 4

Health, safety and welfare

3:18 p.m.

Officer Nazareno was dispatched to Evergreen Way for a welfare check. The caller reported a boy inside a home alone crying with a dog barking. Upon Officer Nazareno's arrival, he heard the dog barking and observed a dog jumping up and down at the front door. No responses to their knock at the door, and nothing seemed to be out of place. A neighbor called tenants at the pool to inform them of the police at the front door. The mom arrived and said her son was at the pool with her. Officer Nazareno found the son and he was safe with no issues. The mom explained that they were up in the room throwing a ball against the wall which caused the dog to bark. The noise alerted a neighbor who knocked on the door and asked if the boy was safe, to which he replied ‘no.’ When he was questioned, the boy said he was joking with his mom and did not know who was knocking on the door. Case clear.

of the state, the whizzing menace is simply a bicycle that has been to the gym and started taking supplements.

Longboat's town code does set a sidewalk speed limit of 10 mph and — I am not making this up — requires every bicycle to carry a working bell or other audible signal and to yield to pedestrians. That 10 mph limit is currently enforced with all the ferocity of a laminated suggestion. Officers point out that radar is useless at those speeds and the department has no manpower to put cops on bicycles, which conjures the magnificent image of a Longboat officer pedaling grimly after a fleeing 71-year-old, the two of them topping out around 9 mph in the most leisurely pursuit in the annals of law enforcement — a chase you could comfortably watch while eating a sandwich, because it would last the entire sandwich.

The Ordinance That Time Forgot

Part of the problem is practically geological. Longboat's biking rules were written back when mopeds were the menace — the 1980s and early '90s, the golden age of teenagers buzzing around on low-powered Yamahas and Motobecanes. The town code contains, to this day, exactly zero mentions of e-bikes. As Town Manager Howard Tipton has conceded, the old rule “might have been more for mini-bikes.”

He is being generous. We are policing 30-mph electric machinery with a law drafted to handle a 15-year-old named Kevin doing wheelies on a Honda Spree outside the Dairy Queen. Kevin is now 58 and has a hip replacement. The ordinance, somehow, has not aged a day.

The Smug Factor

We must also address the cultural dimension, because a meaningful percentage of e-bikers ride with what can only be described as a “we don't pay taxes, but we are ecologically sound and superior” countenance and attitude — which is, in its own way, deeply intimidating.

There is no helmet on earth rated for that level of moral certainty. You cannot win an argument with a man who is, at this very moment, rescuing the planet at 28 mph with your grandmother's hip hanging in the balance. He has the high ground. He has the throttle. He has an electrolyte beverage in the cupholder and a cause in his heart. And should you object — should you suggest, meekly, that he perhaps ring the bell — he will look at you the way a Tesla looks at a horse.

Rules on the Horizon (No, Really)

There is, mercifully, motion — proceeding at the stately pace of all things governmental.

The Florida Legislature recently handed towns the power to regulate e-bikes, golf carts, scooters and the like on their sidewalks. But there is a catch worthy of a Coen brothers film: the enabling law says any such ordinance “must restrict such vehicles or devices to a maximum speed of 15 miles per hour” — a full five miles per hour faster than the 10 mph limit Longboat already wants. Read that again. The state has graciously authorized us to set a speed limit that is higher than our speed limit. We asked for a leash; the state handed us a slightly longer leash and called it reform.

Town staff, to their credit, are drafting something. Police Chief Russ Mager — who takes pains to stress he is “not anti e-bike” — favors some form of speed-governing on the sidewalk and notes, accurately, that no injuries or collisions have been reported here yet. The operative and quietly terrifying word being “yet.” Public Works Director Charlie Mopps puts a finger on the inconvenient fact at the center of everything: “we don't have a real true multi-modal trail.” What we have is one six-to-eight-foot sidewalk asked to serve as a bike lane, a jogging path, a dog-walking route, a stroller highway, and a senior speedway all at once — a ribbon of concrete doing the job of a six-lane interchange.

Meanwhile, the cavalry may be riding in from Tallahassee. A bill that has cleared both chambers and is, as of this writing, awaiting the Governor's signature would require any cyclist to slow to 10 mph whenever a pedestrian is within 50 feet, with violations treated as a roughly \$30 nonmoving infraction and penalties set to begin in July. Thirty dollars. For nearly liquefying a retiree. On Longboat Key, \$30 is the tip you leave the valet for not scratching the Lexus. It is not, let us say, a fine that keeps anyone awake at night.

Our neighbors in Manatee County have already acted, barring kids under 16 from the fastest class of e-bike on public paths after residents complained of teenagers — and I am faithfully conveying the spirit of it — taunting them. Taunting. We have not reached the taunting stage on Longboat Key, because taunting takes the energy of youth, and we are a more passive-aggressive people. We do not taunt. We write strongly worded letters, and then we thank one another warmly for the prompt reply.

What Can Actually Be Done

The honest menu is short, and most of it the town already has the power to do tomorrow:

- Pass the ordinance, cap sidewalk speed at the lowest number the state will allow, and — radical concept — actually enforce the bells the law has required all along.
- Post real speed-limit signs. Several have gone up; the machines keep blowing past them as though the signs were a charming local art installation.
- Pick a lane, literally. Decide once and for all whether this army of e-bikes belongs in the bike path, on the sidewalk, or relegated to the roadway — where, let's be honest, they can't quite keep up with traffic and nobody, in any lane, is happy.
- Enforce something. Occasionally. Ideally before the first headline none of us ever wants to write — the one that begins, “A Longboat Key woman, 74...”

Will any of this happen quickly? It cannot. By law, a Longboat ordinance must pass at two separate commission meetings before it becomes real — a stately, dignified, double-locked process scientifically engineered to guarantee that nothing on this island is ever accomplished in fewer than two attempts.

So for now, we walk defensively. We listen for a sound that never comes. And somewhere out there, even as you read this, a man who just lost in straight sets is swinging a leg over his e-bike. He has cortisol in his veins, sunshine in his eyes, and a kombucha in the cupholder. He cannot hear me. He cannot hear you. He certainly cannot hear the 10 mph speed limit.

On your left.

He won't say it. So I will.

Taxes, from page 1

Key about \$14 million a year. The fire-rescue budget, at roughly \$9.4 million, is more than double the police budget and is, by a wide margin, the largest single line item the Town carries.

Strip away or steadily shrink the revenue that pays for all of that, the Town's leaders argue, and you do not eliminate the cost. You merely move it — to other taxpayers, to fees and assessments, or to the quality of the services themselves.

“Eliminating a revenue source doesn't eliminate the cost,” Town Manager Howard Tipton has put it. “You've got to find another way to pay for it.”

Two of the Town's commissioners have now made that case, in writing, to Tallahassee. Their letters — pointed, occasionally indignant, and notably unsuccessful in eliciting much of a response — are a window into how a small, affluent, fiscally conservative town came to see a statewide tax cut as a threat to its existence.

A Town Built on the Tax It May Lose

To understand the stakes, start with what makes Longboat Key unusual even by Florida standards.

The Town straddles two counties, Sarasota and Manatee, and sits atop a tax base that has more than doubled in a decade. Total assessed value now exceeds \$6 billion. The Town's operating millage rate has held remarkably steady — around 1.96 mills — for years, and yet the Town's annual property-tax haul has roughly doubled, from about \$10 million in 2015 to nearly \$20 million today, as soaring valuations did the work that a flat tax rate concealed. The arrival of the St. Regis resort on the Sarasota County side in 2025 added another half-billion dollars in new construction to the rolls, helping offset the hurricane-driven dip in values on the Manatee side after Helene and Milton.

That flat rate is the first thing residents should understand about their own exposure. The Town collects only a sliver of any given tax bill — roughly 2 of the 13 to 15 total mills a Longboat parcel pays. The rest flows to the counties, the school district and a constellation of special taxing districts. A \$2 million home on the Key carries an annual property-tax bill that can run between roughly \$26,500 and \$30,500, depending on which county and which beach-bond district it falls in; the median Longboat bill sits around \$9,274. But of all those dollars, the Town's own operating share is comparatively modest.

The second thing to understand is who actually lives here. Longboat Key is, demographically and fiscally, a community of second homes, seasonal residents and investment condominiums to a degree that sets it apart from the year-round suburbs and small cities that dominate the statewide debate. That single fact, as we will see, scrambles the politics of an amendment built around the homestead — the home where a Floridian actually, permanently lives.

The third thing: personnel costs consume roughly 80 percent of the Town's general-fund spending. This is not a government with a lot of discretionary fat to trim. When officials warn that a revenue shock would land on public safety, they are not being theatrical. They are describing the structure of the budget.

How We Got Here

The road to the November ballot was long, contentious and, until nearly the end, deeply uncertain.

Gov. DeSantis first elevated property taxes to the top of his agenda in the fall of 2025, calling reform “the big kahuna” of his priorities and framing it in the language of liberty. A Florida homeowner with a primary residence, he argued in a September speech, ought to be able to own that home “free and clear of the government,” rather than “paying rent to them indefinitely.”

His case rested on a number meant to alarm. Statewide, the property-tax revenue collected by local governments had nearly doubled in seven years — from roughly \$32 billion to about \$60 billion — and was projected to reach an “astounding” \$83 billion by 2032, according to the governor's “Save Our Homes from Excessive Property Taxes” materials. “Floridians can't afford it,” the proposal declared. “Taxpayers need relief.” The plan DeSantis advertised carried five planks: an immediate \$250,000 homestead exemption paired with a legally mandated “schedule for full elimination”; a requirement that whatever revenue remained be spent only on core services; a cap on business assessments; the five-year residency wait, which the governor cast as “fairness”; and — notably — a state trust fund to channel grant money back to local governments for those core services.

That headline figure carries a nuance the campaign is unlikely to dwell on, and it is, in miniature, Longboat Key's own recent history: the surge came overwhelmingly from rising property values and new construction, not from higher tax rates. On the Key as across the state, the rate held roughly flat while the bills climbed — the same dynamic the governor now decries as a crisis and the Town once counted as a windfall.

A Stalled First Attempt

The House moved first and moved aggressively. In October 2025, then-Speaker Daniel Perez unveiled a package of seven proposed constitutional amendments and a separate tax bill, an unusually crowded field that Democrats derided as “razzle dazzle” and that DeSantis himself, who wanted a single clean question on the ballot, complained was designed to “create confusion.” Through the winter, House committees winnowed the field. On February 19, 2026, the House passed HJR 203 by an emphatic 80-30 — a measure that would have phased out the non-school portion of homestead property taxes over a decade while constitutionally protecting public-safety funding at recent levels.

Then it stalled. The Senate, which never filed a property-tax resolution of its own, let HJR 203 die in its Appropriations Committee when the regular session ended on March 13 without so much as a hearing. The Senate's caution had a logic that resonates on a barrier island. “There's 67 totally different counties in this state,” Senate Appropriations Chair Ed Hooper observed, “and a property tax issue that is great for one county could crush” the poorer ones.

A planned April special session came and went with property taxes pulled from the agenda in favor of redistricting and other matters. Reform looked, for a moment, dead for the year.

The Three-Day Sprint

It was not. In late May, in Tampa, DeSantis abruptly unveiled the “Save Our Homes from Excessive Property Taxes” plan and called lawmakers back to the capital for a three-day special session beginning June 1 — releasing the details, as local officials would bitterly note, only

days before the gavel fell. In a compressed 72 hours, the Legislature reshaped the proposal in committee and then passed it. The version that emerged differed in consequential ways from what DeSantis had pitched, and from what Longboat's commissioners had been reacting to when they wrote their letters.

What the Amendment Actually Does

If 60 percent of voters approve it on November 3 — the threshold every Florida constitutional amendment must clear — the measure would do the following.

It would raise the homestead exemption from its current \$50,000 to \$150,000 in 2027 and to \$250,000 in 2028, indexed thereafter to inflation. Crucially, lawmakers carved school district taxes out of the expanded exemption — an amendment sponsored by Rep. Sam Garrison, the Fleming Island Republican slated to become House Speaker after November — so the relief applies only to the non-school portion of a homeowner's bill. Independent analysts estimate the average qualifying homeowner would save in the neighborhood of \$3,000 a year.

The amendment would also lower the cap on annual assessment increases for non-homestead property — second homes, rentals and commercial real estate — from 10 percent to 5 percent. It would impose a five-year residency requirement, meaning anyone who establishes Florida residency after January 1, 2027 would have to wait half a decade to claim the enlarged exemption. And it would, by its own language, point the Legislature toward a future path of fuller elimination enacted through general law — codifying what the governor's proposal had called a “schedule for full elimination.”

The phase-in itself was a concession. DeSantis had pitched the full \$250,000 exemption immediately; lawmakers stretched it across two years, beginning at \$150,000.

The Vanished Trust Fund

One feature that did not survive is worth dwelling on, because Longboat's commissioners had singled it out — and because it had been one of the five pillars the governor himself advertised. DeSantis's plan promised a state trust fund to channel grant money back to local governments for “core” services. Lawmakers scrapped it. The amendment headed to voters limits property-tax revenue to core functions — public safety, infrastructure, stormwater, education — but offers local governments no guaranteed replacement money at all.

The fiscal hole is not small. A House staff analysis estimated the measure would reduce annual revenue to non-school governments by about \$4.6

billion in its first full year, rising to roughly \$8.4 billion a year as the exemption climbs. The Florida Policy Institute's figures run higher still, projecting county losses approaching \$8.65 billion annually by the end of the decade. Before the school carve-out was added, firefighters' unions had warned of cuts of up to 25 percent.

The Local Alarm

It was into this fast-moving fight that two Longboat Key commissioners dispatched their letters, as the special session was convening.

Commissioner Penny Gold wrote to Rep. Leonard Spencer urging him to reject the amendment outright. Her argument rested on the same independent modeling that has alarmed city halls across the state. “An analysis of a \$250,000 homestead exemption found that 85 Florida cities could not fund public safety at current levels, even if they cut every other service,” Gold wrote, adding that “smaller communities would face the steepest impact.”

She reserved particular scorn for the now-deleted trust fund, calling it “a warning sign.” “If cities need state grants to keep the lights on,” she wrote, “the proposal is admitting that local resources won't be enough.” The amendment, she argued, “reroutes local funding decisions through Tallahassee, a fundamental change that deserves more careful study than a three-day special session can provide.” Her conclusion was characteristically blunt: “Florida's property tax system already works.”

(That Gold's letter went to Rep. Spencer is itself a small parable of the asymmetry between local governments and the capital. Spencer is a Democrat representing District 45 in suburban Orange and Osceola counties — a Central Florida district nowhere near the Key, a sign that Longboat's officials were lobbying broadly. The reply Spencer's office returned was a form acknowledgment, thanking the commissioner for her engagement and promising that a staff member “will follow up as soon as possible” should the inquiry “require a response.”)

The Mayor's Indictment

In a letter dated June 1 — sent the very day lawmakers gavelled in — Mayor Debra Williams wrote separately, and at greater length, to Rep. William “Will” Robinson Jr., the Bradenton Republican who chairs the House State Affairs Committee — a legislator whose District 71 actually includes part of Longboat Key, and who sits at the center of the property-tax machinery. Williams's letter is a small masterclass in the genre, opening with diplomacy and ending with something close to a moral indictment.

She objected first to the process. It was “troubling,” she wrote, “that the incomplete details of such a massive change to local government funding are shared just a few days before a 3-day special session.” For months, she noted, there had been “ample opportunity to disclose to the public and the local governments impacted the details of any tax reform.” Instead, she charged, “we are treated to political theater and something that's been crafted to achieve the 60% threshold, rather than making Florida and its local governments stronger and more resilient.”

Then she turned to consequences. What had been proposed, Williams warned, “will cripple or bankrupt a number of cities and counties across the state without thinking as to how critical services (including public safety) will be provided.” It would, she added, “jeopardize credit ratings and borrowing costs” — a sober concern for a Town carrying roughly \$42 million in debt.

And finally she made the argument that distinguished her letter from the standard fiscal protest. The proposal, Williams wrote, “is not just a financial issue but also an ethical one.” Public trust, she argued, “is the currency that allows all levels of government to function, and without it, we are bankrupt.” Her ask of Chairman Robinson was direct: do not endorse the Governor's plan.

The Numbers Behind the Warnings

The “85 cities” figure that anchors both commissioners' letters is not local hyperbole. It comes from an analysis released by the Florida League of Cities, drawing on modeling by Wichita State University, and it has become the rallying statistic of the opposition.

Taxes, from page 12

The study's central finding is structural and, for a town like Longboat Key, sobering: property taxes make up roughly 43 percent of municipal general-fund revenue statewide and are, in the League's words, the only stable, locally controlled revenue source most Florida cities have. More pointedly, the study found that cities of all sizes spend more on public safety than they collect in property tax revenue — meaning that even modest losses can open structural gaps. Fully eliminating homestead property taxes, the analysis projected, would cut municipal ad valorem revenue by about 38 percent; fixed exemptions in the \$250,000-to-\$500,000 range would carve out 25 to 35 percent.

The 85 cities the League identified as unable to fund public safety even after eliminating every other service include Largo, Gulfport, Temple Terrace, Seminole and Tarpon Springs — and, the League has said, the smallest and most rural communities would fare worst of all, because they have the fewest alternatives.

The Florida Association of Counties reached parallel conclusions. "We know this is a tax shift," the group's deputy director, Jeff Scala, told members in a pre-session briefing. "They're framing this as a tax cut, but there are small businesses, all businesses, they're going to feel the pain. Renters — they're not going to get an exemption. This proposal makes Florida more unaffordable."

What Other Communities Are Saying

Longboat Key is far from alone in its alarm, and the chorus from across Florida helps explain why the fight has become so charged.

In Tampa, Mayor Jane Castor warned that "everything could be at risk if there are dramatic changes to property taxes," noting that her city already spends more on police and fire than it brings in from the tax. In Orange County, Mayor Jerry Demings was even starker: "Services will be cut, there's no way around it," he said, projecting a loss of roughly \$270 million a year. Miami-Dade's property appraiser estimated his county alone could lose nearly \$925 million over the first two years.

The most instructive parallel for Longboat Key, though, lies south, in the Florida Keys. Monroe County, like the Key, is a high-value coastal community with an unusually large share of non-resident-owned housing — and its officials have warned that the amendment could squeeze funding for public safety and schools precisely because so much of its tax base belongs to people the homestead exemption was never designed to help.

DeSantis, for his part, has anticipated the opposition and tried to inoculate his supporters against it. At a pre-session rally, the governor cheerfully predicted that once lawmakers approved the plan, voters would be greeted by a flood of stories about how devastating it would be for local governments — and urged them, in advance, to dismiss such reports as scare tactics. The warnings, in other words, were priced in.

The Road Not Taken

Mayor Williams's letter pressed an alternative that deserves more attention than it has received, because it goes to the heart of why local officials feel steamrolled.

Buried in the Florida Constitution is a body called the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission. Established by voters in 1988 and written into Article XI, it is a 25-member panel — appointed by the governor, the House speaker and the Senate president, none of them sitting legislators — charged with examining the state's entire tax structure and budget process, and empowered to refer constitutional amendments directly to the ballot. It is, in short, a vehicle purpose-built for exactly the question now before voters.

There is only one catch, and Williams named it. The commission convenes just once every 20 years. Its next meeting falls in 2027.

"This would be a thoughtful alternative that would allow all sides of the issue to weigh in before anything is placed on the ballot," Williams wrote, asking Robinson, if he were so inclined, "to charge the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission that meets in 7 months to perform the necessary review." The obvious obstacle, she acknowledged with some tartness, "is that the Commission doesn't meet until 2027, and that is a timing issue for our outgoing Governor."

That last phrase carries the whole subtext of the fight. DeSantis is term-limited and leaves office in January 2027. A reform routed through the 2027 commission would arrive after he is gone, claimed by a successor. A reform on the 2026 ballot belongs to him. Williams was not alone in drawing the connection: on the House floor, Rep. Robin Bartleman, a Weston Democrat, made the identical point, noting that the budget reform commission is "constitutionally obligated to discuss this exact topic" — and is set to convene next year.

A Tax Cut Most of the Island Can't Claim

There is one more wrinkle, and on Longboat Key it may be the decisive one. By the county property appraiser's count, only about a third of the island's homes and condominiums — roughly 2,000 of them — are homesteaded. The other two-thirds are something else entirely: second and third homes owned by affluent out-of-state retirees and investors, and a long-standing contingent of Canadians and other foreign nationals who have wintered on the Gulf coast for generations. Under Florida law, a homestead must be an owner's permanent, primary residence — so none of those owners can claim the expanded exemption at all. The snowbird whose primary home is in Toronto or Connecticut, the limited-liability company that holds a Gulf-front condominium as an investment, the family that summers up north and winters on the Key: for every one of them, the relief the governor is marketing as a break for "every Floridian" is worth precisely nothing.

What those owners do get is the amendment's other half — the cap on annual increases in non-homestead assessments, lowered from 10 percent to 5 percent, which will slow how fast their bills can climb. That is a genuine benefit, and on an island this expensive it is not a small one. But it is also the crux of Longboat's predicament. Where non-homesteaded property is not the exception but the clear majority of the tax base, the amendment steers its headline cut to the homesteaded minority, restrains the growth the Town can draw from everyone else, and still leaves the same roughly \$14 million public-safety bill on the table. Should the Town be forced to close that gap, the likeliest targets are the very owners who got no exemption to begin with — second-home owners, foreign nationals, businesses and renters — through higher fees and special assessments. The relief, in other words, flows toward one set of residents while the bill drifts toward another. And the wealthy snowbird who finally decides to make the Key a permanent home will find the door briefly shut: anyone establishing Florida residency after January 1, 2027 must wait five years before the larger exemption applies.

What It Means for the Average Longboat Key Resident

So what, in practical terms, should a Longboat homeowner expect?

Begin with the good news, because there is some. A permanent, homesteaded primary resident of the Key would see up to \$250,000 of taxable value shielded from non-school taxes — a real saving, plausibly a couple thousand dollars a year on a typical Longboat parcel, phased in across 2027 and 2028. For a retiree on a fixed income who lives here year-round, that is a

meaningful break.

But the relief comes wrapped in a caveat bigger on Longboat Key than almost anywhere. Even for the homesteaded retiree who pockets the saving, the Town that protects them has the same bill to pay — and, as the island's lopsided rolls make plain, a narrower base from which to pay it.

That is the Town's bind. Longboat still has to fund roughly \$14 million of police and fire, and property taxes still supply 75 percent of its budget. If that base erodes — whether through the homestead exemption, the tighter non-homestead cap, or the longer march toward elimination the amendment invites — the Town is left with a narrow menu. It can cut services, with public safety the hardest line to protect given how much of the budget it consumes. It can lean harder on fees, special assessments and the beach-bond districts. Or it can shift more of the load onto the very non-homestead owners and businesses who see no benefit from the cut — the textbook definition of the "tax shift" the counties warn about. None of those options spares the average resident; they merely distribute the pain differently.

In a town where the Town's own millage has stayed flat for years even as bills climbed, residents have already learned that a steady tax rate can mask a rising burden. The amendment proposes the inverse lesson: that a falling tax can mask a rising risk.

The Timeline Ahead

The fight now moves from the capital to the campaign, and the calendar is unforgiving.

Florida's primary elections fall on August 18, when the same legislators who passed the amendment — and the challengers hoping to unseat them — will begin testing how the issue plays at the doorstep. The general election, and the amendment itself, arrive November 3. Sixty percent is a high bar; Florida voters have rejected popular-sounding measures that fell short of it before.

Should it pass, the machinery engages quickly. The first, \$150,000 tranche of the expanded exemption takes effect in 2027 — the same year the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission convenes, and the same January a new governor takes the oath. The full \$250,000 follows in 2028. Local governments, Longboat's included, will spend the intervening budget cycles modeling cuts they hope never to make and revenues they cannot count on. The Florida League of Cities has already prepared city-by-city loss estimates for every municipality in the state under the \$250,000 scenario; Longboat Key's number is, in effect, already written.

For now, the Town's leaders are left where small governments so often find themselves in their dealings with Tallahassee — having said their piece, forcefully and on the record, to a capital that may or may not have been listening. Mayor Williams put the stakes in terms larger than any single budget line. "As local government is the government the people know the best," she wrote, "if we don't stand up for the ethical principles that serve as the foundation for the greater good, who will?"

In five months, 60 percent of Florida's voters will answer her — and decide, for Longboat Key, who pays for the island.



Town of Longboat Key ATTENTION VOLUNTEERS

The Longboat Key Town Commission will be accepting applications for appointments to the Charter Review Committee.

Article II, Section 20(b) of the Town Charter states: The Town Commission, at its discretion, shall appoint a Charter Review Committee to review the Charter but in no event shall such review be less than once in a ten (10) year period from the date of adoption of this Charter.

Members selected to serve on this Committee will be responsible for review of the Charter and will provide recommendations to the Town Commission on any proposed amendments. Individuals appointed to this Committee are subject to Florida's Sunshine Law as provided for in Chapter 286, Florida Statutes, and Florida's Public Records Law as provided for in Chapter 119, Florida Statutes, and **MUST be available for in-person meetings during the months of July and August 2026.**

All applications must be submitted to the Office of the Town Clerk **by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on June 15, 2026.** The Town Commission will host a Meet and Greet on June 22, 2026, to meet interested individuals and will make final appointments at the June 29, 2026, Town Commission Special Meeting.

Applications are available at the Office of the Town Clerk or can be downloaded from the Town's website at www.longboatkey.org.

For additional information, please contact the Office of the Town Clerk at 941-316-1999. Applications may be sent via e-mail to tclerk@longboatkey.org, submitted in person, or by mail to:

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WineTimes



The 5-20% Solution: White Wine Blended into Red

Outside the Rhône Valley, winemakers in the Provence region of Southern France frequently add one or more of five local white wines to red wine.

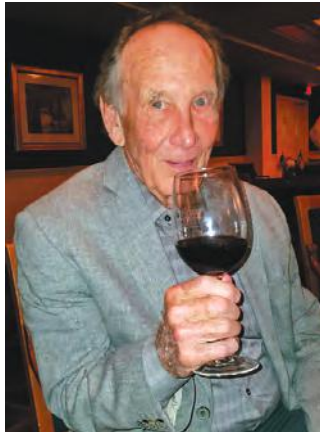
S.W. and Rich Hermansen
Guest Writers
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Red grapes, such as Cabernet Sauvignon, make red wine; white grapes, such as Chardonnay, make white wine. This simple rule only holds true in one direction: white grapes make white wine. Red grapes make red wine, yet red grapes also make white wine. The Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier red grapes make excellent white Champagne and sparkling wines. Almost all of the major types of red grapes are being used to make white wines at any one time somewhere across the globe.

Do rosé grapes make rosé wines? This question frequently arises in wine tastings. No. The juice of crushed grapes comes out clear. In traditional winemaking, the color of a wine depends on the color of the grape skins and how long the skins soak in the juice after crushing. So white grapes make white wine. Red grapes make red, rosé, or white wine. The depth of the color of a wine depends on the depth of color in the skins and the length of time the winemakers leave the skins soaking in the juice.

Soaking grape juice in the skins of the grapes extracts tannins into wine. These natural acids in a young wine taste like black tea left soaking in tea leaves. As a wine ages, the tannins “soften” and give the wine a taste and astringent mouth feel much like espresso, dark chocolate, spices, and tree nuts. These tastes and the contributions of tannins to the process of digesting proteins and fats help explain why diners pair red wine with savory meat and rich vegetable dishes.

Some red grapes impart a heavy dose of tannins in wines. Many (though not all) wine drinkers find wines made from these grapes bitter and too astringent. Harsh tannins in wine present a problem for winemakers.



Over generations, winemakers in regions producing highly tannic grapes have developed a simple solution for the harsh tannins problem. A longtime friend and fellow wine aficionado shared with us a perfect example of this 5-20% white wine solution. The Northern Rhône Côte-Rotie region restricts winemakers for the most part to the red Syrah grape for red wines; yet, due to the intense sunlight in the region during the autumn (the name of the region translates to “the roasting slope”), the rules of the appellation allow mixing of up to 20% of the local white grape, Viognier, into the Syrah after the initial crushing of the grapes. The mixing of the robust, tannic Syrah and the more mellow Viognier produces less tannic taste in younger wines. The 5-20% example, a 2020 Delas Côte-Rotie Seigneur de Maugrion (\$120), combines aged, robust tannins with pur-

ple dark plum and cherry flavors. It enhances prime sirloin strip steaks from the grill, charred and rare. The Côte-Rotie makes a great alternative to a California Cabernet Sauvignon in the \$200 range, or to an aged \$300 Bordeaux.

Other examples from the Rhône Valley include the Hermitage & Crozes-Hermitage. These appellations allow winemakers to blend up to 15% of white Marsanne and Roussanne with their red Syrah. (Winemakers adjust the percentage of white wine from vintage to vintage to fit the taste of the Syrah produced during that year.)

Outside the Rhône Valley, winemakers in the Provence region of Southern France frequently add one or more of five local white wines to red wine. In the Italian region of Tuscany, the historic standard for the red Chianti wine included small quantities of white wine mixed with red Sangiovese grapes. Even Bordeaux, with perhaps the most rigid standards in France, has begun relaxing restrictions against adding of white to red wine in special cases.

In the USA, a bottle with a wine variety named on the bottle, say Syrah, must contain at least 75% of that variety. It may and often does contain up to 25% of other wines. Some winemakers list all of the other grapes. Many don't. A favorite red wine may contain a lot of white wine.

From Southeastern Australia, a bargain 5-20% solution red wine, the 2021 Yolumba Shiraz-Viognier (\$13) offers wine drinkers an easy introduction to the classic Côte-Rotie blend. We recommend it as a good starting point.

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

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



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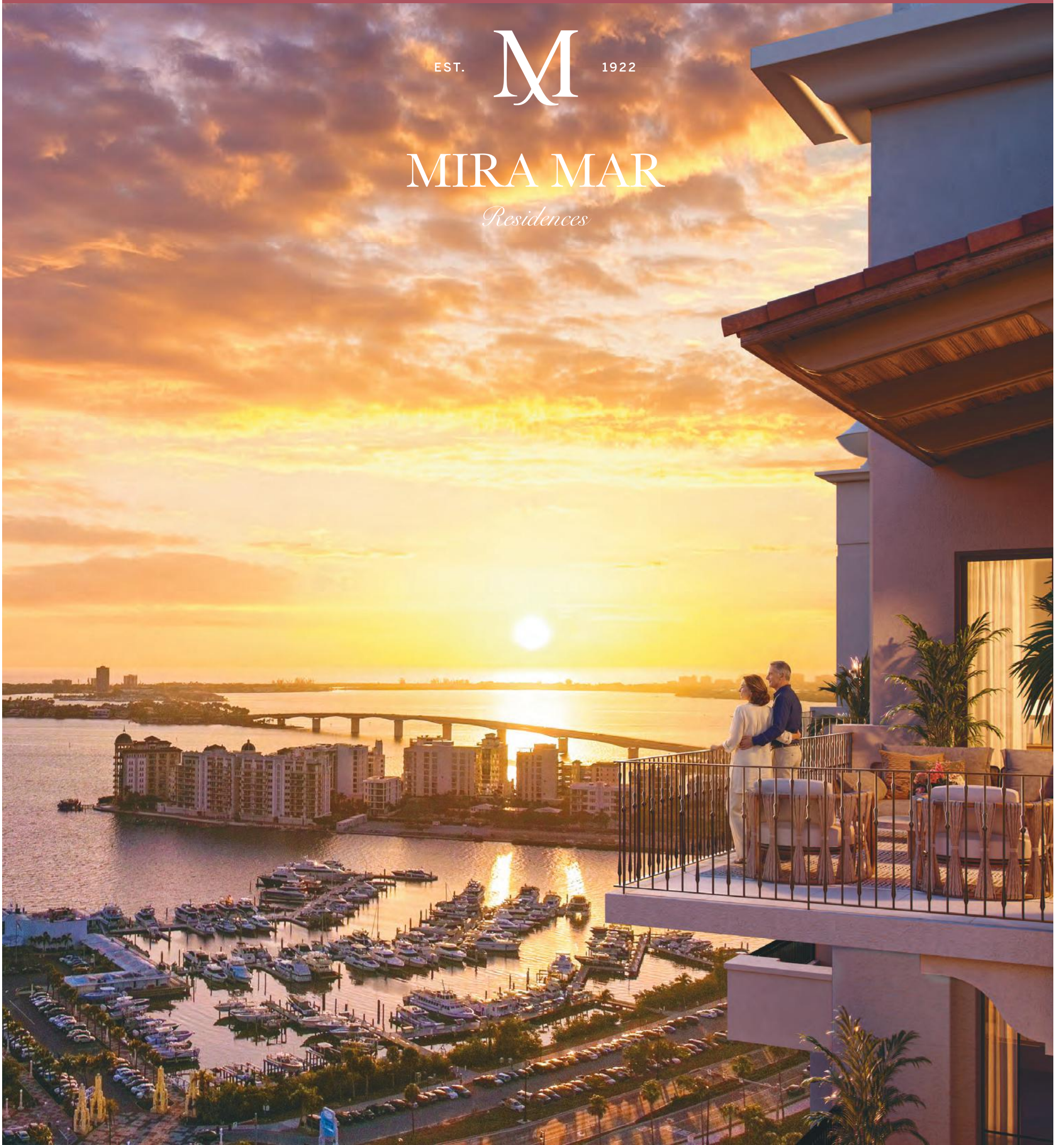
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