



Longboat Key News

January 16, 2026

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Shore Restaurant's Plan for St. Armands Sparks Zoning and 'Visioning' Controversy

"Once zoning changes are made for this one property, they then apply to all properties."

STEVE REID
Editor & Publisher
sreid@lbknews.com

A high-profile effort to reopen the popular Shore restaurant on St. Armands Circle has ignited a contentious debate over zoning, density, and the future of the island's commercial landscape.

While the proposal promises a revitalized "flagship" destination, residents and community leaders warn it could set a precedent for widespread hotelization and increased density on the historic

Circle.

Tom Leonard, owner of the Shore brand, is spearheading a plan to redevelop two flood-damaged commercial properties at 24 and 28 N. Boulevard of the Presidents. The proposed "Shore flagship" would combine a restaurant, café, and retail store on the lower levels, with a controversial new third floor designated for residential units or a boutique hotel.

However, the path forward is fraught with regulatory hurdles, including strict FEMA flood

guidelines and fierce opposition from the St. Armands Residents Association, which fears the project is a Trojan horse for zoning changes that would fundamentally alter the character of the area.

The 'Visioning' Controversy

Tensions reached a boiling point this week following the announcement of city-run "visioning sessions" scheduled for early 2026. Ostensibly designed to gather community input on the "Future of
See Circle News, page 3

Coffee, Resilience, and the Future of Food Trucks on Longboat

In the chaotic aftermath of the 2024 hurricane season, sometimes a simple cup of coffee represents more than just caffeine—it represents a return to normalcy.

For residents near the former Turtle Coffee Bar at 3172 Gulf of Mexico Drive, a mobile coffee kiosk became a small beacon of recovery after Hurricane Helene's storm surge damaged the property. The Town of Longboat Key, recognizing the unique need to support a local property owner and provide a gathering spot for neighbors, granted a temporary use permit (TUP) for
See Food Trucks, page 2

Legal Reality Check: State Hurricane Law Blocks Town from Imposing Strict Occupancy Deadlines

The Town's hands are effectively tied by the State of Florida until 2027.

As Longboat Key residents and business owners continue the long, emotional slog of rebuilding after the devastating 2024 hurricane season, a contentious debate over when a building is "finished enough" to inhabit has hit a legal wall.

Town Commissioners, responding to community pressure regarding the duration and certainty of Temporary Certificates of Occupancy (TCOs), recently asked the Town Attorney's office to explore establishing firmer local deadlines for these permits. The goal was to bring order to a chaotic recovery landscape where many properties remain in a state of "temporary" compliance.

However, in a memo delivered to the Town Commission this week, Town Attorney Maggie Mooney issued a stark warning: The Town's hands are effectively tied by the State of Florida until 2027.

The Question of "Temporary"

The issue arose from the practical nightmares of post-hurricane recovery following Hurricanes Debby, Helene, and Milton. With contractors scarce and repairs dragging on, many property owners have relied on Temporary Certificates of Occupancy (TCOs) to live in or operate out of buildings

that are safe but not yet 100% complete.

Currently, the Town issues TCOs in 30-day increments, with extensions granted at the discretion of the Building Official. Frustration has mounted over the lack of predictable timelines, prompting the Commission to ask if
See Town Law, page 2

Bishop to Lead Regional Voice for Cities

When it comes to ensuring Longboat Key has a seat at the table, Commissioner BJ Bishop isn't just showing up—she's leading the conversation.

At the January 8 meeting of the Manasota League of Cities, representatives from nine municipalities across Manatee and Sarasota counties voted to re-elect Bishop as President. The move signals continued confidence in her ability to unify the region's diverse local governments into a cohesive political force.

Bishop's influence will now extend even further. In addition to her presidency, she was selected to represent the region on the Florida League
See Bishop, page 3

Mission Accomplished: Town Ready to Take a Victory Lap Over Country Club Shores Turn Lanes

Get ready for the metaphorical confetti. This coming Monday, the Town of Longboat Key will pause its regular business to perform a time-honored municipal tradition: the collective self-high-five.

The occasion? The official completion of the Country Club Shores Turn Lane Project—a massive infrastructure undertaking that successfully widened the road, shrunk the golf course, and installed concrete medians that many residents spent years begging the town not to build.

According to a glowing memo from Public Works Director Charlie Mopps to Town Manager Howard Tipton, the project has achieved "substantial completion" without a single timeline extension or cost overage. The Town Commission is set to receive a presentation detailing the triumph, marking the end of a saga that began when Barack Obama was still in the White House.

A Decade in the Making

While the asphalt is fresh, the paperwork is vintage. The project design actually began in 2016. It took nearly ten years, a partnership with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and approximately \$2.6 million to answer the age-old question: How long does it take to pour a turn lane?

The answer, apparently, is a decade.

The finished product covers 0.84 miles of Gulf of Mexico Drive, from Channel Lane to Longboat Club Road. To make room for the improvements,
See Turn Lanes, page 3

Town Law, from page 1

they could codify stricter expiration dates or deadlines to force final completion.

The Legal “Stop Sign”

Mooney’s findings, outlined in a detailed memorandum, clarify that while the Town has some administrative power, state law—specifically the recently passed Senate Bill 180 (2025)—strictly limits their ability to change the rules in the middle of a crisis.

Under the Florida Building Code, the authority to issue TCOs and set their duration rests primarily with the Building Official, not elected Commissioners. But the real hurdle is SB 180, a state law designed to protect hurricane victims from bureaucratic red tape.

“Senate Bill 180 prohibits local jurisdictions impacted by Hurricanes Debby, Helene, or Milton from proposing or adopting more restrictive or burdensome amendments in land development regulations,” Mooney wrote.

Because Sarasota and Manatee counties were included in the Federal Disaster Declaration, Longboat Key falls squarely under this protection.

“Null and Void”

Mooney’s warning to the Commission was blunt regarding the legal consequences of trying to impose new deadlines now.

“Any adopted restrictive or burdensome amendments prior to October 1, 2027, will be considered null and void ab initio,” the memo states. In legal terms, this means any new rule the Town passed to tighten TCO timelines would be dead on arrival—completely unenforceable from the moment of the vote.

The Takeaway

For now, the Town of Longboat Key must stick to its existing process: TCOs will continue to be issued and extended in 30-day blocks based on safety and progress, rather than arbitrary hard deadlines.

While this may frustrate those seeking a quicker return to “normal” zoning enforcement, the Attorney’s analysis confirms that the State Legislature has prioritized flexibility for storm victims over the regulatory rigidity of local government. The current rules will likely remain the law of the land until the statutory freeze lifts in late 2027.

Food Trucks, from page 1

the truck. It was a practical solution for a community rebuilding itself.

But could that temporary solution open the door to food trucks popping up all over the island?

That is the question facing the Town Commission next week. On Tuesday, January 20, 2026, Commissioners will sit down to review and discuss the zoning standards for food trucks, balancing the need for flexibility with the desire to maintain Longboat Key’s distinct character.

A Unique Exception

The current conversation was sparked at a November meeting when Commissioner Bishop raised concerns about the potential for proliferation of mobile food vendors. While the coffee truck at the Turtle Coffee Bar site was widely seen as a positive, “atypical” step to help a storm-damaged business generate revenue, some town leaders want to ensure this doesn’t set a precedent for food trucks on every corner.

Currently, the Town’s zoning code is strict. It does not expressly allow food trucks as permanent uses in any district. They are typically only seen at special events like art festivals, fundraisers, or farmers’ markets. The permit for the coffee kiosk was a special exception—initially approved in September 2025 and extended in December—specifically tied to hurricane recovery efforts.

The Balancing Act

The challenge for the Commission is navigating state law while protecting local aesthetics. According to a memo from Planning, Zoning & Building Director Allen Parsons, Florida Statute prevents local governments from banning mobile food dispensing vehicles entirely. Towns also cannot charge separate license fees beyond what the state requires.

However, the Town can enforce zoning standards.

At next week’s meeting, Town Manager Howard Tipton and Director Parsons will present an overview of these standards. The goal is to find a “sweet spot”: allowing for helpful, temporary services—like the post-hurricane coffee truck—without unintentionally turning the island’s scenic drive into a food court.

For now, the coffee is still pouring at the south end of the island, a testament to Longboat Key’s resilience. Next week, leaders will decide how to keep that spirit alive without changing the look of the island they love.



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Circle News, from page 1

St. Armands,” the sessions have drawn skepticism from resident leaders who view them as a taxpayer-funded vehicle to justify the developer’s requests.

Chris Goglia, President of the St. Armands Residents Association, expressed deep concern in a January 12 letter to the City and media, calling the timing of the sessions suspicious.

“I believe it is connected to the new Shore Restaurant returning to St. Armands which, as presented, will require significant zoning changes,” Goglia wrote. He questioned why this specific project merits a city-financed facilitator and workshops, asking, “Is there a community need being solved here, or is this just going to line some developer’s pocket?”

Goglia noted that if density increases or parking concessions are granted for the Shore project, those changes would likely apply to all of St. Armands. “If this concept is financially successful for this one developer, why won’t more and more commercial properties on St. Armands do the same thing?” he asked.

The Proposal: A “Fully Immersive Shore Lifestyle”

The project targets two buildings that have remained vacant since the devastating 2024 hurricane season, which forced Leonard to close the original Shore location at 465 John Ringling Blvd. (That space has since been leased to Tommy Bahama).

Applicants United Associates Ltd. and Kauffman Family Partnership aim to transform the North Boulevard properties into a three-story destination. A press release described the three-phase project as the first “fully immersive Shore lifestyle destination.”

While the redevelopment of the commercial ground floors may not require rezoning, the addition of a third floor for short-term rental apartments or hotel use faces significant legal barriers. Currently, the St. Armands Commercial Tourist (CT) district prohibits hotel usage. City code defines a hotel as a building with six or more guest rooms for daily or weekly travelers, explicitly intended to serve tourists—a use strictly regulated in the district.

The FEMA Hurdle: The 50% Rule

Beyond zoning, the project faces a formidable engineering and financial challenge: the FEMA “50% Rule.”

During a pre-application conference on December 17, 2025, the City’s Development Review Committee (DRC) warned project representatives that simple renovations would likely trigger a requirement to bring the entire structure up to current flood codes.

The rule stipulates that if improvements to a building in a flood zone cost 50% or more of its pre-improvement market value, the structure must be elevated to meet modern safety standards. Deputy Building Official Mike Taylor noted that the two existing buildings have a combined structure value of approximately \$1.2 million.

Bishop, from page 1

of Cities Nominations Committee, giving Longboat Key a direct line to state-level leadership decisions.

Joining her on the executive team are Lisa Gonzalez Moore as Vice President and Terry Schaefer as Treasurer. Schaefer steps in for Brian Williams, who is retiring from public service this November.

Under Bishop’s leadership, the League is already gearing up for a busy 2026. The group voted to host candidate forums in both counties ahead of the primary elections. Perhaps most critically, they plan to hold dedicated forums addressing a potential bombshell from Tallahassee: the legislative proposal to eliminate property taxes, a move that could radically alter how local towns like Longboat Key fund their essential services.

For Bishop, the re-election is more than a title; it is a mandate to ensure that when the state legislature speaks, the barrier islands and local cities speak back—loudly and clearly.

Turn Lanes, from page 1

the project required widening the southbound pavement by 12 feet—a feat accomplished by carving a generous slice out of the adjacent golf course.

The result is a shiny new 44-foot-wide pavement section boasting two travel lanes, widened bike lanes (“paved shoulders”), and the pièce de résistance: five landscape medians.

The Medians Nobody Asked For

For years, residents in Country Club Shores argued against fixed, hard medians, preferring a more open center lane concept. But the FDOT and the Town, driven by safety data and engineering standards, proceeded anyway.

In his memo, Director Mopps highlights a concession made to the public: “With community engagement, a decision was made to reduce the size of the five medians.” This reduction, he notes, allowed for longer turn lanes for queuing vehicles, “amplifying the safety measures previously designed into the project.”

Translation: The concrete islands are still there, just slightly smaller than originally threatened.

Victories Small and Large

The presentation scheduled for Tuesday is expected to highlight several “collaborative efforts” and fiscal wins that might soothe the sting of the construction chaos.

For one, the town saved “thousands of dollars” by reducing the number of irrigation taps into the water system from five to two. Additionally, the construction team managed to avoid “adverse impacts on the community” by minimizing night work—meaning the traffic jams at least happened while the sun was shining.

Most notably, the project finished on time. The “substantial completion” date of November 14, 2025, was hit right on schedule, and a final walk-through on December 29 confirmed that the job was done.

So, while the golf course is a little narrower and the residents navigate the medians they tried to vote off the island, the Town is ready to mark the moment. The memo ends with a simple “Staff Recommendation: None, informational only.”

Please hold your applause until the end of the PowerPoint.

“It doesn’t sound like this project can be built for under 50% of the value of that,” Taylor told project consultant Bill Waddill of Kimley-Horn. “Even with a private property appraiser, it would be difficult to meet those numbers and still be able to get what you want out of this.”

This means the developers may be forced to raise the structures to base flood elevation—a costly and complex endeavor—to maintain insurance eligibility.

A History of Development Disputes

This is not the first time Leonard and his associates have clashed with local regulations.

- 2021-2022: Leonard, then Chair of the St. Armands Business Improvement District (BID), sought a commercial height increase and authorization for hotel use. The effort stalled when it was revealed the BID lacked the authority to seek zoning changes. The City Commission subsequently voted 5-0 to reject the request in November 2022.
- The Fillmore Lot: Developers previously proposed a hotel on the St. Armands Fillmore Parking Lot. That plan collapsed after it was discovered that municipal bond covenants prevented the elimination of the lot’s paid parking spaces.

Goglia points to this pattern as evidence of a persistent push for intensification that the community has repeatedly rejected. “We occasionally get devastated by hurricanes,” Goglia wrote, citing environmental sensitivity and traffic congestion on the barrier island’s evacuation routes as critical reasons to limit density.

Next Steps

The City of Sarasota is proceeding with the visioning process to determine what changes, if any, are necessary for the Circle’s future. Meanwhile, the next step for the Shore project is a formal submittal to the DRC.

For residents like Goglia, the stakes are clear. “Once zoning changes are made for this one property, they then apply to all properties,” he warned. “Is that what the community wants for the future of St. Armands?”

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The Science of “Home”: How Connection to Place Could Solve the Gulf’s STEM Crisis

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine is betting that the key to solving the Gulf Coast’s future environmental challenges isn’t just better technology—it’s better psychology.

The Gulf Research Program (GRP) has awarded Dr. Aly Busse, Associate Vice President of Education at Mote Marine Laboratory, a 2025-2027 Early-Career Research Fellowship. While typical fellowship announcements focus on the accolades, the grant itself signals a shift in how the scientific community views the future of the Gulf workforce: moving away from generic science education toward “Place-Based Education” (PBE). Dr. Busse’s research over the next two years will test a critical hypothesis in educational data: that a student’s emotional and psychological attachment to their physical environment—their “sense of place”—is a primary variable in whether they stick with a career in science.

The Data Behind the Decision

The fellowship is rooted in a growing body of data suggesting that standard STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) curriculums are failing to retain students from underrepresented coastal communities because they present science as an abstract, placeless discipline. Research published in journals like *Frontiers in Education* and *Environmental Psychology* indicates that “place attachment”—the emotional bond between a person and a specific setting—is a strong predictor of pro-environmental behavior and civic engagement. However, this metric is rarely quantified in standard educational assessments. Dr. Busse’s work aims to fill this data gap. Her recent co-authored publications, including a 2024 study in *Oceanography* on inclusive marine STEM experiences, have already begun to track how localized, mentorship-driven research experiences can prevent “leakage” in the



STEM pipeline. By formalizing this into a scalable framework, her new project aims to move anecdotal evidence into the realm of hard data.

Why the Gulf Needs “Place-Based” Scientists

The Gulf Research Program, born out of the Deepwater Horizon disaster settlement, has a vested interest in this specific psychological mechanic. The Gulf Coast faces existential threats ranging from intensifying hurricane seasons to complex offshore energy safety challenges. The National Academies’ strategic goal is not just to create more scientists, but to create scientists from the Gulf who possess “local ecological knowledge.” The theory is that a workforce with a deep, identity-level connection to the region is more likely to innovate in ways that protect community resilience and environmental stewardship.

A Shift in Methodology

Dr. Busse’s project moves beyond the traditional “informal education” model (e.g., a one-time field trip to an aquarium). Instead, she will be examining long-term outcomes of “place-conscious” strategies—measuring if and how a student’s attachment to the Florida coastline correlates with their “science identity” and “self-efficacy” years down the road. “We are moving from simply exposing students to science to analyzing how their relationship with their home environment dictates their professional persistence,” the project scope suggests. If successful, Dr. Busse’s framework could provide the empirical evidence needed to overhaul how environmental science is taught across the Gulf, justifying a curriculum that prioritizes local field work over standardized textbook learning.

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EditorLetters

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

Thoughts regarding road central reservation area

To: Longboat Key Code Enforcement Officer Paul Goodwin
Hi I'd like to convey my concern about the central carriageway reservation that's been built in front of my house on 500 schooner lane. In the last couple of weeks we've had two occasions where vehicles have driven into the side of the new raised area at night. I have some serious concerns that someone will hit the central reservation and end up in our front yard or worse still through the front of the house. I thought I'd bring this to your attention now because I do have concerns and I don't know how I'd be covered for such a situation. I look forward to your comments and recognition of my concerns. Thank you for keeping me posted and for reaching out to your Representative.
Charles T. Chapman
Legislative Advocate
Florida League of Cities, Inc

Thoughts regarding road central reservation area

To: Dave Schiller
Good afternoon Dave, I will reach out to my Comcast rep tomorrow and see if they can help get the service buried.
Charlie Mopps
Public Works Director
Town of Longboat Key

Thoughts regarding road central reservation area

To: Longboat Key Public Works Director Charlie Mopps
Thanks for your swift reply. It have been there since the road expansion started and goes over our driveway so I'm wondering if there's any way of finding out when it'll be gone seeing the roadworks are complete?
Dave Schiller
Longboat Key

Thoughts regarding road central reservation area

To: Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton
Guy just confirmed that this is a Comcast Service Line. It is probably a temporary placement until the permanent solution is implemented.
Charles Mopps
Public Works Director
Town of Longboat Key Public Works

Thoughts regarding road central reservation area

To: Longboat Key Public Works Director Charlie Mopps
Good morning, that is correct. This is a Comcast service line.
Guy Matricciani

Construction & Facility System Manager
Public Works Department
Town of Longboat Key

Thoughts regarding road central reservation area

To: Loingboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton
Sir, we will look into this. I included Guy, it could be a Comcast line, but he will confirm.
Charles Mopps
Public Works Director
Town of Longboat Key

Thoughts regarding road central reservation area

To: Longboat Key Public Works Director Charlie Mopps
Any idea what this is?
Howard N. Tipton
Town Manager
Town of Longboat Key

Thoughts regarding road central reservation area

To: Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton
Tip, can someone look into this?
Gary Coffin
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

Thoughts regarding road central reservation area

To: Longboat Key Code Enforcement Officer Paul Goodwin
Paul thanks for this One more thing to notify you about. We have an orange wire running from a box into a cable box on our land. No idea what it's for but it's been there since the roadworks started. One more thing to notify you about. We have an orange wire running from a box into a cable box on our land. No idea what it's for, but it's been there since the roadworks started
Dave Schiller
Longboat Key

Thoughts regarding road central reservation area

To: Dave Schiller

See Letters, page 6

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Editor Letters

Letters, from page 5

I am forwarding this issue to public works and have looped Julie in on this.
Paul Goodwin
Code Enforcement Officer
Town of Longboat Key

Sovereign Immunity

To: Florida Senator Kathy Galea
The Senate Bill regarding Sovereign Immunity is similar to some suggestions we made earlier this year. The House Bill will certainly have a large negative impact on our insurance costs and certainly encourages frivolous and unsubstantiated lawsuits.
Further, we agree that having any increase based on inflation (as the Senate Bill states) is a responsible direction regarding Sovereign Immunity. We will continue to monitor the Senate Bill, but we are opposed to the House Bill. We appreciate Delegate McFarland’s concern about these cases languishing in Tallahassee, but we do think the Senate Bill creates financial numbers that are more reasonable.
SB 1366 – Sovereign Immunity (Brodeur)
These limits are more incremental in nature and appear to be more reasonable for an increase to claim limits. New proposed limits: \$300,000 individual, \$450,000 total.
HB 145 – Sovereign Immunity (McFarland)
These higher limits would almost certainly open the door to many more claims against the Town, including having to spend more time and money defending an even greater amount of frivolous and unsubstantiated claims than we do now, so these would be beyond what the Town would consider reasonable to be enacted all at once.
BJ Bishop
President, Manasota League of Cities
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

Land Use Legislation

To: Longboat Key Commissioner BJ Bishop
Thank you for taking the time to review these bills and for sharing your and the Town staff’s comments — this is very helpful. The insight from a built-out community like Longboat Key is important context as we continue to triage which proposals rise to the top tier of advocacy attention. We will incorporate your concerns in our conversations with legislators. Thanks again for sharing your analysis. Please don’t hesitate to reach out.
David Cruz
Deputy General Counsel/Legislative Counsel
Florida League of Cities, Inc.

Land Use Legislation

To: Florida League of Cities Legislative Counsel Dave Cruz
David: Town staff and I took a look at the legislation you mentioned in your discussion Monday. Hope this is helpful. In some regards since LBK is built out and some bills do not have the same impact they will in larger municipalities that are still growing.
BJ Bishop
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

Land Use Legislation

To: Longboat Key Commissioner BJ Bishop
SB 840 Land Use Regulations
Definite improvements to the SB 180 legislation (which limits applicable local governments from enacting more restrictive land development regulations or Comp Plan amendments). Some key positive changes:
Narrowed Scope: The bill reduces the geographic area subject to post-storm land-use restrictions from a 100-mile radius to within 50 miles of a hurricane’s track.
Property Specificity: Restrictions on new local building codes would apply only to storm-damaged properties being rebuilt, rather than all properties within a disaster area, allowing local governments to maintain stricter rules for new development.
Shortened Duration: SB 840 moves the expiration date for restrictions related to Hurricanes Debby, Helene, and Milton from October 1, 2027, to June 30, 2026.
Removal of Legal Penalties: It deletes provisions that allowed individuals to file suit for injunctive relief against local governments to enforce these restrictions.
Local Government Exceptions: Explicitly allows local governments to continue managing infrastructure projects related to stormwater, flooding, drinking water, and sewer systems.
SB 208 – Land Use
Most aspects of this bill will have limited impact on the Town. However, a key provision on “infill residential development” is an overly impactful overreach, which would deny meaningful public input on residential developments of properties less than 100 acres (which would likely be most development within the Town). Key provisions of the bill are below (with problematic provision highlighted):
Redefining Compatibility: The bill specifies that land uses within the same residential category in a local comprehensive plan are “deemed compatible”. This prevents local governments from denying or delaying projects based on “neighborhood feel” or “community character” alone.
“Infill Residential Development” Mandates: SB 208 creates a new category for “infill resi-

See Letters, page 12

MEMBERSHIP: *Come Test the Waters.*





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2120 HARBOURSIDE DR Unit#617	2,039	\$799,000	3	2	0	44	\$740,000
4500 GULF OF MEXICO DR Unit#305	1,312	\$689,000	2	2	0	35	\$650,000
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68 TWIN SHORES BLVD	736	\$100,000	2	1	1	76	\$101,011



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OnPatrol

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

Jan. 9 Trespassing

1:15 a.m.
Officer Troyer was dispatched to Saint Judes Drive in reference to a trespassing. The complainant contacted the Sarasota County Dispatch Center and he reported a man wearing blue flannel shirt who was on the property and refusing to leave. Upon arrival, Officer Troyer observed the man sitting on a bench located on the reported property. Officer Troyer met with the complainant who said that he returned to his home and recognized the man due to seeing him as a paying customer at a local restaurant, however, the man did not have permission to be on the property currently as the business was closed. The complainant only wanted the man to leave and did not want a trespass warning issued. Officer Troyer spoke with the man who identified himself with a State of New York Driver's License. Upon speaking with the man, Officer Troyer wanted to search him or look through his baggage. Officer Troyer asked the man if he had any weapons, which he denied. Officer Troyer further asked him permission to pat search him for any weapons to confirm. The man gave verbal permission and he conducted a pat search of his person for any weapons which he did not locate. The man continued by saying he was on the property because he ate dinner at the restaurant earlier int he night and he felt he saw a famous singer. The man felt the situation was fate and he wanted to wait on the property for the singer. Officer Troyer informed the man he was not able to legally be on the property because the business was closed and the property manager informed Officer Troyer he wanted the man off of the property. The man was cleared for any wants or warrants and he vacated the property without any issue. Case clear.

Property

9:58 a.m.
Officer Martinson was dispatched to Bay Isles Parkway on a call of a Property Damage Report. Upon arrival, Officer Martinson was met by the on duty security guard and his boss outside the security gate. The security guard told the officer that an older age man driving a white Dodge Ram pickup accidentally struck the security gate arm in the property owner's lane of travel. The man did not have his driver's license on him at the time, but allowed security to take pictures of him and of his vehicle along with the license plate. The man stated he would return with a driver's license and make arrangements to pay for the damage. Officer Martinson ran the vehicle through NCIC/FCIC and it came back clear of any wants or warrants. Case clear.

Citizen assist

11:20 a.m.
Officer Martinson was flagged down by a man for a citizen assist at Bayfront Park. The man stated his vehicle was parked at Bayfront Park, however he has a suspended driver's license and cannot drive. The man said he had been calling tow truck companies all morning and his cell phone and laptop were now dead. The man requested Officer Martinson drive him to Publix so he could eat some lunch and charge his devices. Officer Martinson advised the man he would need to pat search him first before transporting him to which he agreed. After placing the man into the backseat of the squad car, Officer Martinson ran hi through checks and he came back clear of any wants or warrants. Officer Martinson notified dispatch that he was going to do a courtesy ride. Upon arrival at Publix, he let the man out. Case clear.

Jan. 10 Smoking

5:46 p.m.
Officer Maple was dispatched to the 3700 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in Sarasota for a signal 13 call. The call was in reference to an unknown person possibly smoking on the beach. Upon his arrival, Officer Maple canvassed the beach an was unable to find anyone matching the unknown description smoking on the beach. Case clear.



Jan. 11 Incident

7:50 a.m.
Officer Martinson was dispatched to the Moorings store located at Harbourside Drive on a call of a suspicious incident. Upon arrival, Officer Martinson was met by the female complainant inside the marina store, who stated she heard several gunshots coming from the mangroves in the area by the Grand Bay condominium complex. Officer Martinson advised it was hunting season and that over the past couple weeks there have been multiple 911 calls about gunshots being heard in the area. The caller stated her work had made her aware that it was hunting season and for the possibility of hearing gunshots but she'd never heard them before while working. The woman just wanted to make sure it was hunters in case residents living on boats or customers asked her about the gunshots. Case clear.

Incident

4:43 p.m.
Officer Tillman responded to the 5500 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive pertaining to a missing juvenile. Officer Tillman spoke with the complainant who stated that while walking at the entrance of the park she saw a young woman wearing black shorts, black tight shirt, blond hair, and the girl was on her cell phone. Officer Tillman also observed the same woman described earlier walking on Gulf of Mexico Drive. The woman Officer Tillman saw was not the missing woman and was a person exercising. A canvass of the area provided negative results. Several people were questioned in the park and stated they would call if a single 14-year-old girl was seen. Case clear.

Jan. 12 Person

5:00 p.m.
Officer Pescuma was dispatched to 2100 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to a suspicious person. Upon arrival, Officer Pescuma met with the complainant who stated that while walking his dog, he observed an unknown person lying on the tunnel on Gulf of Mexico Drive. The unknown person was described as a white male 35-40 years old, 5'9" medium build, long black hair. Officer Pescuma canvassed the area for the man with negative results. The caller said the subject asked him "How are you doing sir?" and the caller replied back, "I'm good, how are you?" The subject replied with "I'm walking like I'm always walking." The caller was unsure if the subject was a transient and thought it was odd that he was laying in the tunnel. The complainant stated that he may have been talking to himself or on the phone. The caller did not hae any further interaction and the unknown subject was not seen again. Case clear.

Property

2:19 p.m.
Officer Pescuma was dispatched to the 2600 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to property damage. Upon arriving on scene, Officer Pescuma met with the complainant who said that Sarasota County Waste Management allegedly damaged the fence enclosure for their dumpsters during trash pickup either Monday, Wednesday, or Saturday of last week. Officer Pescuma uploaded pictures of the property damage to the file. The manager stated that she will call Waste Management to inquire about the incident. Case clear.

Jan. 13 Noise

6:39 a.m.
Officer Van Dyke responded to Chipping Lane in reference to a noise disturbance. Upon arrival, no one was on scene. It should be noted that the caller didn't wish to meet either. Before departing a white Mercedes cargo van arrived. Officer Van Dyke stayed on scene for several minutes to ensure no violations would arise. Although several contractors are speaking to each other on scene, the sound doesn't constitute a violation simply because they're preparing for their work day to begin. Case clear.

Disturbance

10:00 a.m.
Officer Miklos was dispatched tot he Police Department lobby in reference to a walk in in report about an issue at a condo. Upon arrival, Officer Miklos made contact with the complainant who stated he was in a verbal argument over truck parking in his condo complex. The man advised he was unsure of the maintenance man's name and advised no threats were made, however the man did walk towards him with clenched fists and said, "f--- you." The complainant advised he wanted to make an informational report as he believes the man will get fired from his job in the next few days. The complainant advised he was concerned the man will blame him for the termination. The complainant advised Officer Miklos could find his name in the police department report system as he was mentioned in a report from the summer about a damaged truck with a 2 x 4. At this time, Officer Miklos was able to recall the incident as he was the reporting officer. This case can be referenced from earlier. Case clear.

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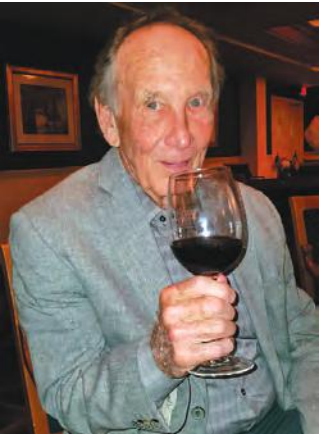
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Tapas and Wine in the Alma de España

We feel fortunate to have found this place during the first five months of its opening. We shall return.

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

The lore of Spanish tapas extends from the legendary 13th Century decree by King Alfonso of Castile (The Wise), requiring food to be served with drinks to reduce drunkenness, to the practical use of small plates to cover drinks to prevent flies from sharing them. We know from experience that patrons of bars at 2AM in Madrid expect to have small plates covering drinks, as do Catalans at a bodega in Barcelona during the afternoon. We recall the stir when Chef José Andrés, founder of the World Central Kitchen, opened the tapas restaurant Jaleo on 9th Street in Washington DC. We have developed a fondness for the small plate trend in restaurants in the USA, especially if they offer a decent selection of wines.



A recent addition to the Hillview area of Sarasota has the qualities one would hope to find in an American bodega. The Alma de España indeed embodies the soul and spirit of Spain. Located in a niche within a row of bars and cafes on Osprey, it has a bar at the back, fronting the kitchen, and a side room for larger tables.

The main dining room consists of twenty small tables. It has the atmosphere of a formal restaurant with arched windows and colorful artwork. The glassware hanging above the bar has selections of polished wine glasses for white wines, more rounded ones for lighter reds such as Garnacha or Pinot Noir, and larger glasses for robust Tempranillo, Malbec, or Cabernet Sauvignon. A large display of close to a hundred wines lines the storage area above the glassware.

The visual appeal of a cante will only take us so far; happily, the tapas matched the atmosphere. The menu listed many more small plates than we could consume at lunch. Or for dinner.... We chose selections of tapas from the salad category and the heartier fare category. The ensalada de remolacha (beet salad) featured glazed sugar and dark red beets with oranges. The croquetas de jamon had a little row of ham croquettes on and topped with dabs of aloe. The pulpo had tender tendrils of octopus lightly grilled with potato quarters, ad the tortilla espanola omelet came with potatoes and microgreens. The chef and owner Elier Rodriquez and his partner Claudia Marquez, both originally from Cuba, have an impressive background in fine dining. We plan to return and try the baked oysters and paella, among other delicacies, in the future.

Claudia poured us glasses of an excellent Godello white wine and a Rueda Verdejo, both from the northeast quadrant of Spain. These wines pair perfectly with the beet salad, croquettes, omelet, and grilled octopus. We noticed in the shelves above the bar Rioja and Ribera del Duero Tempranillo reds that would hold their own with pork, beef, and lamb selections on the menu.

We should also mention the espresso coffees that Claudia made for us at the bar. For brunch at the opening time of 11AM or later, we'll opt for the bar with the tortilla espanola or churros, depending on mood.

Alma de España may become an overbooked dining destination before long. We feel fortunate to have found this place during the first five months of its opening. We shall return.

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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Editor Letters

Letters, from page 12

Half moon bay property

To: Maureen Merrigan
Thanks Maureen. As I just noted in the other email I sent to you about derelict/vacant prop-
erties, I'll be happy to join the meeting on the 22nd and will do my best to answer questions
about the Half Moon property. Most of my answers are probably going to be dismaying to
the group. Property owners do have a right to maintain their properties. There are permitting
requirements, of course, but those don't allow for a 'taking' (i.e. the government preventing
a person's use of their property) unless there's just compensation provided for the loss. This
would be dealt with in the form of building permits, which don't involve public hearings or
the commission. You sure you still want me to attend? Kidding.
Allen Parsons
Planning and Zoning Director
Town of Longboat Key

Half moon bay property

To: Longboat Key Planning and Zoning Director Allen Parsons
Everyone is back on the Key and walking the beach. Not surprisingly, we are getting a num-
ber of resident concerns and questions about the old half moon property. See pictures below.
Can it be rebuilt in the same location (including rebuilding their seawall in same spot)? Will
there be serious Town discussion about setbacks, variances, etc. given the fact that this property
has been source of multiple beach re-nourishment problems on Gulfside? Will this be dis-
cussed with Commission (eg., to consider a buy out of the property, etc.)? Can't imagine this
property would go through a typical administrative approval - given its very atypical location.
No need for a response right now unless you have some quick info to share, but know it will
come up by LBK North Reps at our next meeting on Jan 22. Thanks Maureen Location of
Half-moon property significantly seaward of all other properties along Gulfside.
Neil Mazzei
Plans Examiner
Town of Longboat Key

Seahorse Beach Resort upcoming project

To: Town of Longboat Key Plans Examiner Neal Mazzei
The purpose for this note is to say thank you!
The meeting this morning was exactly what we hoped for, and the process you outlined is
exactly what businesses like us need. You and Debra clearly listed the documentation we need
to provide and the manner to provide it. Your assurances of expediting the approval process
once our documentation is submitted was music to our ears. We will be sure to share our posi-
tive experiences whenever and wherever we can. We now believe we have a partner in the LBK
Planning Department.
Sam McCarter
Director of Finance and Business Operations
Seahorse Beach Resort

Seahorse Beach Resort upcoming project

To: Sam Mccarter
I left a Voice mail message the other day and then again, this morning so we could discuss
their plans and project schedule for their next phase of work. Debra and I would like to sched-
ule a pre-permit consultation meeting so we can ensure they will have a complete permit and
plan package so that once it gets submitted, we can expedite their permit process for them
accordingly. Their office doesn't open until 10 a.m. daily, so I will try calling again after 10 am
and keep you all posted accordingly. Happy Tuesday!
Neal Mazzei
Plans Examiner
Town of Longboat Key

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Steve Branham
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

LBK to AMI sidewalk and bike lane safety

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Steve Branham
Great to catch up. Here is the communication with Charlie on the complete streets (e-bikes)
and the missing piece of sidewalk, as requested. Appreciate your work with the MPO regard-
ing these safety issues.
Maureen Merrigan
Longboat Key

LBK to AMI sidewalk and bike lane safety

To: Longboat Key Public Works Director Charlie Mopps
I reviewed the commission meeting yesterday online which is why I have the questions and
requests below. Was on the Commission when we were doing the original planning for the
Complete Streets but the one thing that has changed dramatically over the last few years is the
transition from manual to e- bikes, which is why I am curious if, based on that, we are think-
ing about the implications of this change, if any, to the original plans. If the multimodal plan
is what we pursue as a priority and do not widen the GMD bike lanes - we will end up with
e-bikes on the multimodal path, as the current GMD width is too dangerous with the 45mph
speed limit.
The reason I am asking about AMI plans was that I thought you stated you had not viewed
those plans recently and BJ stated both islands should be considered together so thought our

meeting on the 22nd would be an opportunity to hear about those as residents on the north
end bike north (to AMI) as much as they do south. I also thought Steve's comments regarding
funding made good sense.
Maureen Merrigan
Longboat Key

LBK to AMI sidewalk and bike lane safety

To: Maureen Merrigan
Maureen, Jenn will be briefing at the LBK North meeting and after yesterday's Commission
meeting, the focus may be on the multimodal trail. I would recommend viewing the last part
of the Commission meeting to get some insight.
Charles Mopps
Public Works Director . Town of Longboat Key

LBK to AMI sidewalk and bike lane safety

To: Longboat Key Public Works Director Charlie Mopps
The sidewalk was brought up by Debra Williams at the TDC last year and by the commu-
nity at the joint commission meeting with the County /Town - so it would be great to get it
off their "to do" list. It was a miss when the sidewalks were designed at Coquina.
Relatedly for the LBK north meeting, when you discuss the complete streets project, would
be great to have some sort of visual of what the plans are for AMI complete streets - to see
how they differ and are similar.
Also will be interested in how we may be thinking about complete streets now (several years
after initial design discussions) given that many, if not the vast majority, of residents are trad-
ing regular bikes for e-bikes. For example, do we prioritize wider GMD bike lane funding and
consider reducing amount of sidewalks / width of multimodal trail, as many bikes would move
to safer GMD lanes if they existed? See you on the 22nd and thank you again!
Maureen Merrigan
Longboat Key

LBK to AMI sidewalk and bike lane safety

To: Maureen Merrigan
Maureen, I sent this info to FDOT and included the Director of Public Works for Manatee
County, to inquire if they can address this while the Contractor is still there. Let's, see how
they will respond.
Charles Mopps
Public Works Director , Town of Longboat Key

No sidewalk in highly trafficked area

To: Longboat Key Public Works Director Charlie Mopps
For years now any walker (or slower bike rider) to/from LBK to AMI must traverse the edge
of GMD for a good stretch near the bridge, as there is no sidewalk. AMI and LBK all have
sidewalks from end to end but FDOT/ BB/ Manatee County is missing a section (maybe 1/8
mile) on the stretch just north of the LB Pass bridge. We have raised this issue several times. Is
this on any list to address - and if not -who does LBK need to reach out to make this passage
to/from Coquina safer? Thanks for your help with this
Maureen Merrigan
LBK North co-chair

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BreakPoints

A Savage Journey into the Heart of Longboat Tennis

We were somewhere around the service line at the Public Tennis Center, ankle-deep in the green grit, when the realization hit me like a foul ball to the jugular: We are the last sane people left in this sport.

STEVE REID
Editor & Publisher
sreid@lbknews.com

If you are reading this, you are likely one of the faithful—a disciple of the Longboat Key gospel, a warrior with green dust permanently embedded in the fibers of your socks and the pores of your soul. You know the sound. That shhhhk of the slide as you glide into a forehand at the Key Club. It’s the sound of civilization. It’s the sound of a knee joint not exploding like a cheap lightbulb.

But out there? Beyond the bridges of our granular sanctuary? It is a zoo, friends. A twisted, high-speed carnival of bone-crushing concrete and slippery aristocratic lawns where the laws of physics are bent by sadistic greenskeepers.

To truly understand the luxury of our green haven here on the island, we must stare into the abyss of the alternatives. We must look at the savage surfaces the rest of the world uses to destroy their bodies for plastic trophies.



STEVE REID

The Har-Tru Bunker: Our Island Fortress

Let’s get one thing straight before the ether wears off: The Har-Tru courts of Longboat Key—from the manicured “Gardens” at the Resort to the hallowed grounds of the Public Center—are the only surfaces compatible with human dignity.

It’s crushed basalt, a soft, shifting tectonic plate that moves with you. When the ball hits the grit on Bay Isles Road, it bites. It pauses. It sits up and lights a cigarette, giving you time to rethink your backswing, your footwork, and your entire existence before you strike.

It is a surface of mercy. You slide, and the shock dissipates into the earth instead of shooting up your shinbone to shatter your hip. It is the surface of the survivor. It is the reason we can play doubles seven days a week while the hard-court heathens on the mainland are icing their knees.

The Red Menace: European Clay

The Venue: Roland Garros, Paris (and the nightmares of snowbirds)
Cross the Atlantic and you find the Red Clay. The Europeans love it. It looks like our Har-Tru, but don’t be fooled by the geology—this is a different beast entirely. It’s crushed brick, the blood-red dust of old empires.

The ball hits this stuff and kicks up like a startled cobra. It’s slow. My god, it is slow. It’s a war of attrition. You hit a winner, and the court just swallows the energy, laughs at you, and spits the ball back up at shoulder height. It’s Rafael Nadal’s personal torture chamber.

For a Longboat Key man, the movement is familiar—you can slide until next Tuesday—but the ball feels heavy, like hitting a wet grapefruit. You have to bludgeon it. It’s socialist tennis: nobody gets a free point, everybody suffers equally, and the rallies last until you die of exhaustion.

The Concrete Meat Grinder: Hard Courts

The Venues: New York, Melbourne, and the unforgiving public parks of the mainland
This is where the fear sets in. The Hard Court. The “American Standard.” A slab of asphalt painted blue and sold to the public as progress.

There is no slide here. There is only the brutal, jarring stop. The friction coefficient is high enough to rip the tread off a tire. Every time you plant your foot to change direction, your ankles scream in protest. It is a surface designed by orthopedic surgeons looking to finance their third divorce.

And the ball? It comes at you like a tracer bullet. It skids off the acrylic and keeps its speed, mocking your reflexes. Topspin doesn’t kick up; it shoots forward. You are trapped in a high-velocity pinball machine, reacting on pure instinct and terror. It favors the young, the dumb, and the indestructible. We want no part of it on the Key.

The Slippery Green Death: Grass

The Venue: Wimbledon
And then there is the Grass. The Holy Lawn. The British scam.
They tell you it’s tradition. I tell you it’s ice-skating with racquets. The ball hits the grass and simply refuses to bounce. It skids along the ankles, hissing through the rye like a snake in the garden.

You can’t trust it. You can’t trust anything about it. One minute the bounce is true, the next the ball hits a divot and shoots sideways into the Royal Box. And the footing? Forget it. You don’t slide on grass; you crash. You take one wrong step on a damp patch of clover and you’re flat on your back, staring at the English clouds, wondering which ligament just snapped.

It is a surface for gamblers and adrenaline junkies. It rewards the reckless. It punishes the artist.

The Verdict

So let the barbarians have their concrete slabs. Let the Europeans grind their bones to dust in the red dirt. Let the British slip and slide on their manicured weeds.

We will stay here. We will sweep the lines at Cedars. We will embrace the green grit at the Club. It is messy, sure. It gets in the car, in the condo, in the bedsheets. But it is soft. It is honest. And in a world gone mad with speed and violence, it is the only place a human can hit a backhand in peace.

Letters, from page 12

Property taxes

To: Town Clerk Trish Shinkle
Property taxes fund core public safety and infrastructure, including police, fire, emergency response, roads, and utilities. These services make communities safe, insurable, and economically viable.

- Most cities have average taxable values of \$250,000 or less. This is not a 10-year step down; it is much sooner for the majority of Florida cities.
- The provisions that prohibit reductions in law enforcement budgets in this bill would crowd out other essential services, such as fire protection, emergency medical response, and disaster preparedness, forcing cuts in areas that keep our communities resilient, if the city is even able to comply with the prohibition due to the loss of homestead property taxes. (We expect an amendment to expand prohibited reductions to include fire and EMS, leaving other essential services vulnerable.)
- Florida consistently ranks among the best states for taxpayer return on investment, meaning residents receive strong public services for the taxes they pay. Local governments deliver disciplined, efficient spending even as costs rise, which is why Florida’s effective property tax rate is roughly half that of Texas. This balance of affordability and service is a competitive advantage worth protecting.
- Florida’s cities are partners in the state’s prosperity. We share your commitment to fiscal discipline, local accountability, and keeping Florida an affordable and secure place to live. However, this proposal would have the opposite effect by creating instability, increasing taxpayer inequity, and risking the quality of life across our communities.

BJ Bishop
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

To: Longboat Key Commissioner BJ Bishop
Good morning, Commissioner. Isaac and I have a meeting with Mr. Drake of the historical society to review our concerns and explore options going forward. I’ll also reach out to Rusty and ask him to donate the picture to the Clerk’s Office (at least for the interim). We’ll keep you posted.

Howard N. Tipton
Town Manager
Town of Longboat Key

Historical Society Donation

To: Rusty Chinnis
The Historic Society is not functioning. I am going to copy this to Tip and Isaac. We do a horrible job of maintaining historic records of Longboat. Since the group that moved the building to the Town Green is not doing anything we have to find a way to preserve these materials

BJ Bishop
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

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