



Longboat Key News

January 5, 2024

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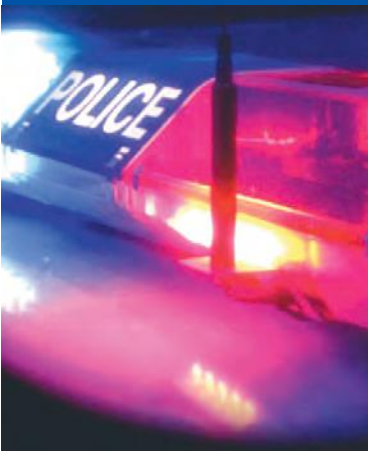
InsideLook
Raccoon lady avoids jail ...page 2



Bird Key nets \$3.775 million ...page 9



Beat is strong at LBK Ed Center ...page 12



Serious issue with liquidity ...page 10

Sarasota and Manatee men Arrested on Felony Charges for 2021 Capitol Breach

Two Florida men are charged in an indictment unsealed today in federal court for the District of Columbia with multiple felonies and misdemeanors related to their conduct during the breach of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Their actions and the actions of others disrupted a joint session of the U.S. Congress convened to ascertain and count the electoral votes related to the 2020 presidential election.

See Arrests, page 2



Drinking to help sharks

“I’ve grown up in Sarasota and have watched Mote grow from a small-town organization to a large, international marine science powerhouse,



Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium has joined forces with Big Top Brewing and the official launch of Finhead Lager, a light beer with a charitable edge..

“Mote is pleased to partner with Big Top Brewing as it shares Mote’s commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of our oceans,” said Dr. Michael P. Crosby, Mote President & CEO.

“Finhead Lager is perfect for those days spent on the boat, or on the beach, and no matter where you chose to enjoy it, it’s even better knowing each sip makes a difference for our oceans, as Finhead Lager benefits Mote’s mission of translating and transferring the information and technology produced by its diverse research enterprise to support long-term conservation and sustainable use of our marine resources, and to enhance ocean literacy among the public

“We’re excited to launch this partnership with Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium, one of the most iconic organizations based in Sarasota,” said Mike Bisaha, co-owner of Big Top Brewing. “I’ve grown up in Sarasota and have watched Mote grow from a small-town organization to a large, international marine science powerhouse, and it is an honor to collaborate and give back to this organization that has given us, locally, and now the world, so much.”

See Lager, page 2

What does 2024 have in store for the Longboat Key real estate market?

TRYLA LARSON
Guest Columnist
tryla@lbknews.com

We are beginning the year with 240 active listings, but to get a full month of figures, let’s hop back to December 2023. In December 2023 we had 383 listings that could result in approximately \$553,505,315.00 in sales revenue.

Now let’s hop back a year to December 2022 for comparison’s sake. In December 2022 we had 278 active listings that could have resulted in \$341,423,469.00. Wow, that is a huge increase in both the volume of active listings and the amount of sales revenue.

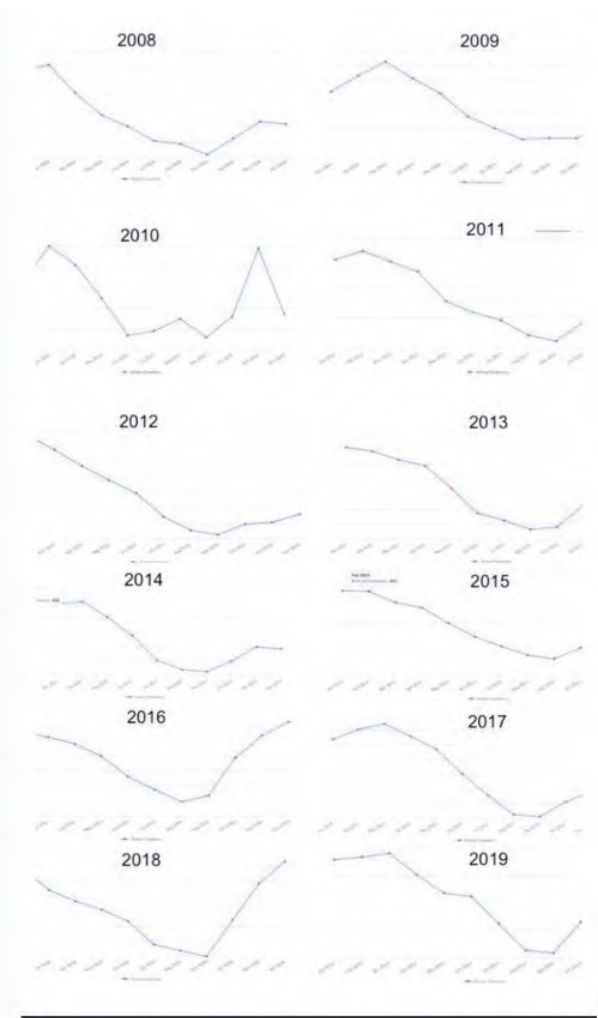
Part of the reason for the increase in sales revenue, besides the increased number of listings, is price points. In January 2023 we had 99 active listings that were \$1,000,000.00 or higher. Now we have 156 listings that are \$1,000,000.00 or higher.

The increase of the number of listings did not happen overnight. It was a gradual increase throughout the year. In February there were 112 active listings over \$1,000,000.00. In May there were 122 active listings over \$1,000,000.00, and it kept growing from there. If this year is anything like previous years, the number of active listings should increase quickly and then steadily decline through the year until the last few months when the number of active listings begin to increase again.

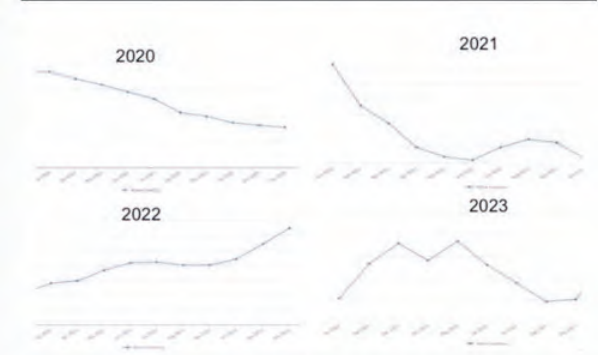
Conventional wisdom says that a Presidential election year is different because buyers are waiting to see who gets elected. They say that buyers are worried because election years are when unpredictable things could happen. I can’t predict the future, but history shows that is not true.

If you look at the graphs of annual trends of Active listings 2008 – 2033, you will see that the Presidential years held steady and predictable. They also show that Longboat Key has a fairly predictable real estate market cycle. Even when the market goes a little off the rails it appears to have always corrected itself. Each year the market appears to start off a little down, but then goes up. That trend begins to wane in the late winter-early spring months. It then continues to decrease until the later months of the year when it again begins to increase.

Yes, there are some hiccups which quickly get back on track. True, the market did go a little bonkers during the Pandemic, however if you look at the 2023 graph you will see the market is already self-correcting. There are other parts of the equation that influence the market. Factors such as interest rates, hurricanes, and bad winters up



Pandemic



north, but time and time again the real estate market on Longboat Key always balances itself and gets back to its traditional trend.

*MLMSand Sunstats.com on 1/4/2024.

Arrests, from page 1

Tom Vournas, 62, of Bradenton, Florida, and Leonard Lobianco, 52, of North Port, Florida, are named in the indictment and were arrested on Jan. 4, 2024, in Florida by the FBI. The men will make their initial appearance in the Middle District of Florida.

Vournas is charged with felony offenses of civil disorder; obstruction of an official proceeding; assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers using a dangerous weapon; entering and remaining in a restricted building or grounds with a deadly or dangerous weapon; disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building or ground with a deadly or dangerous weapon and engaging in physical violence in a restricted building or grounds with a deadly or dangerous weapon. Vournas is also charged with misdemeanor offenses of disorderly conduct in a Capitol building, acts of physical violence in the Capitol grounds or buildings, and parading, demonstrating, or picketing in a Capitol building.

Lobianco is charged with civil disorder, a felony, and misdemeanor offenses of entering and remaining in a restricted building or grounds, disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds, disorderly conduct in a Capitol building, and parading, demonstrating, or picketing in a Capitol building.

According to the indictment, on Jan. 6, 2021, the men committed and attempted to commit an act aimed at impeding law enforcement officers from performing their official duties during a civil disorder event. In addition, defendant Vournas is alleged to have used a chemical irritant to assault law enforcement officers on the Capitol grounds and allegedly brought the weapon inside the Capitol building.

This case is being prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia and the Department of Justice National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section. Valuable assistance was provided by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Middle District of Florida.

This case is being investigated by the FBI’s Tampa and Washington Field Offices. Valuable assistance was provided by the U.S. Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police Department.

In the 35 months since Jan. 6, 2021, more than 1,230 individuals have been charged in nearly all 50 states for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol, including more than 440 individuals charged with assaulting or impeding law enforcement, a felony. The investigation remains ongoing.

Sarasota woman guilty of burning raccoon avoids prison

A Sarasota woman guilty of aggravated animal cruelty and tampering with evidence in connection with a viral Snapchat video of the burning of a raccoon in September 2022 was sentenced to 45 days in an offender work program.

In October 2023, a jury found Alicia Kincheloe, 31, intentionally tortured or tormented a raccoon by setting it on fire in a waste bin, which she then proceeded to record and post to Snapchat.

Alicia Kincheloe was sentenced on Dec. 19, and along with the 45 days in an offender work program, which must be completed within 315 days of her sentence, she was sentenced to two years of community control and three years of probation, according to court records. She is required to perform 100 hours of community service, which can be started after the work offender days are completed.

Lager, from page 1

The can art features sharks on its label to honor where Mote began—as a one room shark research and conservation laboratory in a small Florida town in 1955 with the famous founding “Shark Lady,” Dr. Eugenie (Genie) Clark. Today, Mote continues to advance shark conservation with leading scientific research. Sharks continue to play an important role in ocean ecosystems by regulating populations of their prey species and serving as indicators of ocean health.

However, due to overfishing and environmental impacts, many shark species are threatened or endangered. As the only Center for Shark Research designated by the U.S. Congress., Mote continues to spearhead solutions to save these amazing animals.

Finhead Lager can be found at Big Top Brewing locations in Sarasota and Lakewood Ranch, in Mote’s Deep Sea Diner, select Total Wine locations, and other locations.



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THE DIPINTO COLLECTION



Thank you

Dear neighbors :

I'd like to take this moment to thank you all for the opportunity to work with you this past year. Your trust in me is very much appreciated as I take your business very seriously.



Helping people achieve their real estate goals for the past 26 years is not a job for me — it's a lifestyle and I am honored to guide you on your journey.

I am extremely lucky and blessed to call Longboat Key my home. Together with my husband Todd, our son Jack, and our 2 fur babies Sampson and Liberty, we've fallen in love with the people and all the beauty that surrounds us.

I am here to assist you with any of your needs: real estate — dinner recommendations — hotel stays — outdoor activities, and more. Being local has helped my clients in many ways. I take pride in the fact that I work, volunteer, and live in such a special part of Sarasota.

Feel free to reach out to me so I can share my knowledge of the local real estate market. Together, we can make your dream of living here a reality as well.

Cheers to 2024. And if you see us walking or out with friends, feel free to say hello. I'd love to meet you.

Nicholle



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NEW CONSTRUCTION TO BE BUILT



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GULF FRONT NEW CONSTRUCTION



LONGBOAT KEY • 6489 GULFSIDE DRIVE \$16,900,000
Fabulous Gulf front lot offering nearly 100 ft. of sandy beach, this gorgeous DSDG Architect designed home is a rare find. Boasting almost 6,000 AC/SF, this spectacular home is custom built with the finest details throughout. Architect designed landscaped exterior and 4-car garage.

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SIESTA KEY • HIGEL AVE. \$16,995,000
Currently under construction and scheduled to be ready Fall 2023, this breathtaking 8,964 AC/SF residence is one of a kind, designed by DSDG. Gulf front property on one acre and offers a 2,000 SF roof terrace. Separate guest house and 8-car garage. No expense spared on this remarkable home.



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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.

Noisy lawn equipment

To: Longboat Key Mayor Ken Schneier
Shannon and I want to add our voices to the list of others frustrated about the Mondays through Fridays high decibel noise nuisance generated by gas mowers, leaf blowers and hedge trimmers.
We all are so blessed to live on peaceful LBK with allot of beautiful open space and pristine landscaping. We also want to acknowledge the great and hardworking landscape service small businesses that do such a good job of keeping Longboat neighborhoods so well-manicured, hard work!
The “straw” for us, in this regard, is that we just got back to Town from the West Coast, me with a bad cold/flu and jet lagged, unable to sleep well. Promptly January 2, 8 a.m. leaf

blower wake up call and every day this week. We all are surrounded by the high frequency noise Monday through Friday.

It also awakens us to the sensitivity of the fact that we have many older, and infirm folks who live on Longboat who need their sleep. That is why they live here to achieve some Peace after years of toil.

Most homes now have thick hurricane safety glass that dampens outside noise but still doesn't really help and this time of year many like to crack the windows open for fresh air. The variant modulation of the high frequency noise, the rev up, rev down, rev up, rev down etc. is an extremely loud obnoxious noise nuisance impossible to escape. The machines also have no mufflers to dampen exhaust noise. Mowers are better but gas-powered leaf blowers and hedge trimmer noise is out of control in our neighborhoods five days a week.

Five years ago we purchased an EGO rechargeable battery operated, relatively light weight, leave blower that works great and is dramatically quieter than the large gas powered machines. The technology has significantly improved since then.

We understand this is a complex and sensitive ordinance and business impact issue.
Our ask is to have Town staff:
• Do global research on 2024 higher tech, quieter industrial landscape equipment opportunities for transition.
• Recommend a transition schedule and process, in consultation with landscape service companies, in reducing the machinery noise nuisance with attendant ordinance revision recommendations.
• Suggest business tax credits or other to assist businesses in converting to quieter equipment or other transition incentives over a reasonable period of time.
• In the mean time, could various neighborhoods have a schedule to allow landscape gas powered equipment operation thus reducing the numbers of days per week an individual neighborhood would have to suffer the noise? Even one less day, per neighborhood, per week would give some relief.

This is 2024 and landscapers are using highly outdated noisy gas motors strapped to their backs in 90 degree, high humidity weather half the year. This would increase their landscape business productivity and reduce their expenses over time.

Some HOA's may need to make adjustments to their Covenant Declarations to limit the number of days per week landscape machinery may be used, if the Town can't come up with a transition plan to higher tech, quieter landscape equipment.

Thank You for your consideration and as always for your able service to our beautiful community.
Bob and Shannon Gault
Longboat Key

See Letters, page 6

Restaurant Specials

Steak & Frites Tuesday Nights \$34.95

Wine Down Wednesdays
25% Off All Bottles of Wine

Italian Wine Dinner
Thursday, January 18th | 6:30pm
\$160/person (gratuity and tax not included)

Willamette Valley Vineyards Wine Dinner
Thursday, January 25th | 6:30pm
\$135/person (gratuity and tax not included)

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www.christchurchoflbk.org (follow YouTube link)

“Gospel Shorthand: The Christian Journey in 13 Words”
3-SUNDAY SERMON SERIES IN JANUARY

January 14, 21, and 28 • 10:00 AM

Have you ever wished for a focused way to think about what it means to be Christian, or for a non-pushy way to talk about your faith with others? Dr. Piermont has created “Gospel Shorthand: The Christian Journey in 13 Words” to address these needs. Each Sunday will reveal a few of the thirteen words, the key event in Scripture on which it is based, and the key way Christians respond to that event. *Invite a friend!*

WINTER CONCERT SERIES
Sunday • January 14, 2024 • 2:00 PM

String Quartet Concert

On Sunday, January 14, acclaimed violinist **Stewart Kitts** will bring his String Quartet to our first Winter Concert. Stewart has performed two popular recitals for us in the past. He has put together his group with three of the finest musicians in the Southeastern United States. This program promises to inspire, dazzle and deliver a complete range of musical emotions.

Stewart Kitts
Violinist

Sandy Kitts
Violinist

Abby Collins
Cellist

Daniel Cortes
Violinist

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MLS# A4589724

This extraordinary riverfront property provides an idyllic setting to build your dream home. Featuring approximately 100 feet of meandering frontage on the Manatee River, this location offers seamless boat access to the Gulf of Mexico with NO FIXED BRIDGES.

The property features a BRAND-NEW dock extending 200 feet into deep water, ensuring boat access at any tide. Additionally, a 200-square-foot waterside deck is perfect for family fishing adventures or just enjoying spectacular Sunsets over the water. Encompassing nearly an acre, this expansive lot offers abundant space, allowing you the opportunity to bring your personal vision to life and construct the home of your dreams.

The building envelope, situated in an X zone, offers diverse construction possibilities.

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6609 GULF OF MEXICO DRIVE | LONGBOAT KEY

Coastal-inspired elevated pool home. This North Longboat Key 4 bedroom, 4 bath, 4,132 sf home with private beach access features views of the Gulf of Mexico and sunsets from wide covered decks and the third-level widow's walk. The main level is ideal for family gatherings and entertaining with ample seating in the kitchen, living room, dining area and wet bar. All bedrooms have ensuite baths. The Gulf of Mexico facing glass sliders open to an expansive balcony with a gas grill overlooking the pool, spa and lush array of mature tropical trees and landscaping.



\$1,250,000

569 BAYVIEW DRIVE | LONGBOAT KEY

100 ft. x 100 ft. canal front homesite in Sleepy Lagoon. Great location – perfect balance between beach/ICW. Updated seawall and 10,000 lb. lift. Topographical survey and geo-technical engineering reports available.



\$2,100,000

370 GULF OF MEXICO DR., #432 | LONGBOAT KEY

Delight in scenic views of Sarasota Bay in this custom-designed 4-bedroom, 4.5-bathroom PENTHOUSE in the gated resort-style Tangerine Bay community on the southernmost tip of Longboat Key. The spacious condominium features soaring ceilings, skylight, great room with gas fireplace, marble gallery for displaying artwork, and private gated courtyard. All bedrooms are ensuite. Sliding glass doors in the primary suite and great room open to a tiled terrace where you can start your day with a cup of coffee while watching the sunrise. An additional west-facing terrace boasts stunning sunset views.



511 SPINNAKER LANE | LONGBOAT KEY - SOLD AT LIST PRICE

Gorgeous 4BR/5BA, canal-front home in Country Club Shores, offering expansive open spaces and seamless indoor/outdoor living. New composite dock with jet ski and 30,000 lb. lift, with direct access to the ICW. **SOLD \$3,495,000**



\$4,495,000



648 BAYVIEW DRIVE | LONGBOAT KEY

Boater's dream property on oversized (19,994 sf) rarely available cul-de-sac end lot with a brand new 320-foot seawall located in Sleepy Lagoon, on the north end of Longboat Key. This location offers fantastic panoramic views of Bishops Bayou and the ICW. Situated on nearly a half-acre lot is a 3-bedroom, 4,157-SF home, which could be renovated or removed creating a build site for an incredible custom home.

EditorLetters

Letters, from page 4

Bay Isles MOU

To: Longboat Key Mayor Ken Schneier
Ken, thanks for reaching out on this topic. They way I left it with the Board after meeting with Howard, was that the town would prepare a draft based on the prior MOU template and Howard indicated that he would have this draft available prior to the holidays given timelines. We have not received thus far and I have not heard any update. Happy to talk with Howard if you think helpful.

To be fair, and given the existing agreement, the major concern was the liability clause which you may know is unlimited for Bay Isles while the town is capped at \$300K. I emphasized this with Howard at our last meeting and noted this being the key concern on our part. We are also trying to understand our general liability exposure on the Parkway if no MOU is not in place as no safety measures exist from our end. That is the status on our end.

Not sure where you heard we had decided against the interim MOU but always appreciate your reaching out directly to me. We will respond quickly to any draft from the town, but you would appreciate to have a clear process on this (Board vote) notwithstanding either decision. Happy to speak further if needed.

Joseph Reiser
Longboat Key

Bay Isles MOU

To: Joseph Reiser
Thanks, Joe. I understand that the Town can't adjust the indemnity language, but I will let Howard follow up with you.
Ken Schneier
Mayor
Town of Longboat Key

Bay Isles MOU

To: Joseph Reiser

Happy New Year and thanks for the insurance information supplied by Neil. I was catching up with Howard Tipton today and we were wondering whether Bay isles was still interested in having an interim MOU with the Town covering only Bay Isles Parkway. For some reason I thought you had decided against. Please let me know.

Ken Schneier
Mayor
Town of Longboat Key

Turtle Disorientation

To: Melissa Macksey
Thanks, Melissa. Interestingly, high density condos have not been allowed on Longboat since the mid-80's, but the old ones still have windows. Agreed that communication is the key.

Ken Schneier
Mayor
Town of Longboat Key

Turtle Disorientation

To: Longboat Key Mayor Ken Schneier
The difference in development levels between the two islands is part of why we chose Casey Key to point out the differences. Areas of high density development (such as condos) are typically where we see more disorientations. Comparing the number to Casey Key where there are few condos/motels helps to support this. If efforts can be prioritized in getting condominiums in compliance of the Codes, it is likely that disorientation rates could improve, even dramatically. Part of the challenge, however, is the amount of lights and the amount of turnover (as vacation rentals). This requires that the condo management be diligent about educating all guests and/or implementing protocols to reduce all the lighting from the windows and in exterior locations. We recognize that it's an uphill battle, but we try to help the condos (and all beach front properties) by providing materials that they can include in their rooms, elevators, public areas, etc. to help educate guests.

Melissa (Bernhard) Macksey
Senior Biologist & Conservation Manager

See Letters, page 8



\$2,500,000

2675 GULF OF MEXICO DR., #304 • LONGBOAT KEY

Beautifully renovated Gulf front 3-bedroom, 3-bathroom corner residence boasting 2,180 sq. ft. of well-designed living space. The spacious living area is bathed in natural light with large recently replaced windows that showcase the ocean views. Wake up to panoramic views of the ocean and savor every moment in this serene retreat.



> > > > > > >




\$850,000

1350 MAIN ST., #803 • SARASOTA

Live in this iconic building in the heart of downtown Sarasota with access to incredible amenities, shops, culinary experiences, and entertainment. This lovely poolside condo features sleek design, thoughtfully selected upgrades, and an abundance of natural light. With 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms this 8th floor condo layout flows together to maximize natural light and livability throughout.





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What’s Happening at the Education Center at Temple Beth Israel

It’s a New Year and new learning adventures await at The Education Center!

SUSAN GOLDFARB
Contributing Writer
goldfarb@lbknews.com

On Thursday, January 4, the curtain will rise for our 2024 offerings—over 150 programs—special events, concerts, courses, workshops, and one-time lectures and presentations! We welcome you to a friendly atmosphere where like-minded individuals pursue their interests, partaking in a vast and diverse variety of adult enrichment covering the arts, culture, and education.

Did you know that your home is a direct reflection of the state of your life? Join certified Feng Shui instructor Laurie Pawli for a workshop on how you can transform any space and create improvement in your home and life—a good plan for 2024! As a special highlight you will learn about the Lunar Year 2024 of the Wood Dragon, what to expect and what you can do to make this your best year ever! ”Feng Shui For Perfect Harmony” will be offered on Saturday, January 13 from 1-3 pm.

Need to de-stress, nurture your body, mind, and spirit, or return to healthy habits in 2024? Join our certified teachers for Chair Yoga, Qigong, Mixed Levels Yoga, Nordic Walking and Mindfulness Meditation in the mornings throughout the week.

Recreational and entertaining programs will include bridge, canasta, mah jongg, movie discussions and film festivals, watercolor, bead stringing, New Orleans Jazz Nights, and our new Wind Down Wednesday Jazz Happy Hours, all starting in January. Patricia Dean, a member of the Don Mopsick Trio will sing and play drums to launch the Wind Down Wednesdays Jazz Happy Hours in a program entitled Ladies of the Great American Songbook featuring Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday and many more! Don’t miss an opportunity to hear this group on January 24 from 5:00-6:30 PM. Enjoy interaction with the trio and Happy Hour wine and cheese!

If you are looking to enrich your mind with educational lectures and courses, we have what you are looking for! January programs will include programs that cover art history, music and dance appreciation, theatre, American history, opera, biblical journeys, literature and poetry, musical biographies, book discussions, and writing workshops!

Want to avoid being scammed by those creative hackers and scammers? Join James Goethe, IT guru and owner of Hypercube Tech, for “Your 2024 Fraud Survival Guide!” on Wednesdays, January 10 and 17 from 1-2:30 pm. Join Bonnie Hammer in a workshop on January 13 from 1-4 pm called “How To Secure And Safeguard Your Devices” open to people with all levels of technology. Both android and Apple devices will be covered. To utilize technology to a fuller extent on Apple devices a series of two session programs called “Everything Apple” will begin on Thursdays on January 11 from 1-3 pm with Helen Hoffenberg, Apple educator.

To kick off our annual Lecture Series Charles Miano, artist, founder, and director of Miano Academy of Art, will present a unique lecture entitled “The Hidden And Untold Story Of Classical Art In The 20th Century” on Tuesday, January 9 from 3-4:30 pm. Charles Miano, a classical realist, will take you on a fascinating historical journey not taught in traditional art schools. Q & A will engage participants.

This is just the tip of the iceberg folks! Register early. We sell out of many programs. Visit our website with the handy online payment option, www.tbieducationcenter.org. Call 941-383-8222 or email us at edcenter@longboatkeytemple.org. We will be back in the office on



PATRICIA DEAN

Wednesday, January 3.
We look forward to seeing you soon!
“We Do What We Love...That’s Why People Love What We Do!”
Sincerely,
Susan Goldfarb, Program Director, The Education Center at Temple Beth Israel

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Editor Letters



Letters, from page 6

Senior Biologist & Conservation Manager
Mote Marine Laboratory

Turtle Disorientation

To: Longboat Key Turtle Watch Cyndi Seamon
Sems like an uphill battle, but we certainly want to help.
By the way, I think the comparison with Casey Key is a little unfair. Much less developed than we are.
Ken Schneider
Mayor
Town of Longboat Key

Turtle Disorientation

To: Longboat Key Mayor Ken Schneider
Sorry for the delayed reply. I found this in my spam folder.
I have added the Mote experts on this thread to assist with those numbers to make comparisons. They can email you reports.
Unfortunately, I agree the trend is not good. Based on my beach nighttime observations, window treatments need to be used to block the bright LED lights that many beachfront homes and condominiums are using.
Cyndi Seamon
Longboat Key Turtle Watch

Turtle Disorientation

To: Longboat Key Turtle Watch Cyndi Seamon
I read the newspaper article about our disorientation results and was surprised that we seem to have backslid despite the new ordinance. I had trouble trying to do an apples to apples comparison with prior years, but the sense I had was that we have a higher rate of disorientation than in past years. Is that true and what can we do about it?
Ken Schneider
Mayor
Town of Longboat Key

Islands Condominium Association meeting

To: Longboat Key Mayor Ken Schneider
I am President of the Board of Directors for Islands West condominium association. We are located at 2525 Gulf of Mexico Dr., across the street from Publix.
On January 25th, we are conducting our Annual Meeting in our Clubhouse. We would be honored if you would be our guest of honor to speak about the current state of Longboat Key - anything newsworthy, etc.
Our meeting begins at 10 a.m. and we would be ready for you in the 10:30 a.m. range (best guess.)
Is this something you would be interested in and available for? I think our owners would love to hear from you, kind of a “State of the Key” style. I would imagine a 30-minute timeframe would be sufficient for you to discuss anything and take questions.

Please let me know - thanks so much.
Stacy Rolfe
Longboat Key

Harassment of disabled woman and deployed soldier

To: Longboat Harbour Condominium Association, Longboat Key Commission
My name is 1st Lieutenant Max Weisman, a resident of Longboat Key alongside my disabled and elderly mother, Diane Weisman.
I am an active-duty U.S. Army Officer currently deployed overseas, and I am deeply troubled by the violent and targeted harassment my mother has endured from your HOA. Despite

submitting all official service animal documents, complying with state and federal laws, she continues to face unwarranted prying, baseless accusations, and even physical threats by your HOA. You have vehemently violated Federal and Florida state laws, which “prohibit housing providers from discriminating against tenants with a need for a support animal”.
You have left my 86lb elderly and disabled mother in complete fear for her life while I’m deployed and serving our country over 6,000 miles away and unable to physically take care of her.
Today marked the fourth incident in two weeks where she was subjected to vicious harassment related to her disability and her registered service animal.
The most recent and appalling incident happened today
See Letters, page 11



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Steve Reid, Editor & Publisher
sreid@lbknews.com

Associate Publisher
Melissa Reid

Columnists
Susan Goldfarb, Sig Hermansen,
Greg Rusovich, Blake Fleetwood

Sales
Lillian Sands
Steve Reid
ads@lbknews.com

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OnPatrol

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

Dec. 29 Citizen assist

9:55 p.m.
Officer Martinson was dispatched to Mistletoe Lane on a call of a citizen assist for a resident who had no water. Upon arrival, Officer Martinson met with the homeowner outside in front of the residence. She said that her family had just arrived into town and found that no water is coming into the house. She said there had been people working on the gas lines earlier in the week and she believes that they turned off the water to the house. She said that everything is now turned back on but there is still no water. Officer Martinson advised her that she would need to contact either the homeowner association, a plumber, or the company that had been working on her gas lines to fix the water issue since it was not town property. Officer Martinson did attempt to call Public Works but they did not answer.

Dec. 30 Fishing

5:21 a.m.
Officer Martinson while on patrol observed three men fishing in Overlook Park after hours. Officer Martinson made contact with the men and advised them that the park was closed and did not reopen until 5 a.m. The men apologized and said they had walked over the bridge from Sarasota and did not know the park was closed. The men came back clear of any wants or warrants and were sent from the park. Case clear.

Abandoned vehicle

5:30 a.m.
Officer Miklos while on patrol was flagged down by a woman who said she is the pastor and had noticed a white older model Thunderbird in the parking lot taking up two parking spots, with no license plate. Officer Miklos advised that the church could have the vehicle towed since it was on private property. Case clear.

Injured bird

10:33 a.m.
Officer Nazareno was flagged down by a resident who advised that there was an injured bird in a container and transported it to Save Our Seabirds Animal Hospital at Ken Thompson Parkway. Case clear.

Dec. 31 Blocked highway

3:52 p.m.
Officer Maple was dispatched to the 1900 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for a disabled vehicle that was stuck. Upon his arrival, Officer Maple met with Sgt. Smith and Officer Nazareno who were already on scene and they reported his vehicle had attempted to make a u-turn and got stuck with two wheels off the road and two on. Vehicle positioning obstructed traffic and a rotational tow was called. During the wait for a tow, the officer was able to free the stuck vehicle and the road was cleared. The driver continued on her paper route without further delay. Rotational Tow cancelled prior to them departing for scene. Case clear.

Noise

9:57 p.m.
Sgt. Puccio was dispatched to Bayou Sound in reference to a noise complaint involving fireworks in the area. Upon arrival, Sgt. Puccio met with the caller and explained that the fireworks were allowed due on New Year's eve per Florida Law. The caller understood and appreciated the information. Case clear.



Jan. 1 Noise

12:05 a.m.
Officer Miklos and Sgt. Puccio were dispatched to Linley Street in reference to a noise complaint called in by a caller who did not wish to meet with police. Sarasota Sheriff's Office Dispatch advised that it was a large party with loud music. Upon arrival at Linley Street, Officer Miklos heard loud music coming from the backyard. The Police Department was advised of this party earlier in the week. Officer Miklos came into contact with the homeowner who advised it was the last song and the party was ending. Following the end of the song, the music was turned off and the neighbors and guests of the party began to disperse from the residence. Case clear.

Suspicious vehicle

2:04 p.m.
Officer Ramsaier responded to Harbour Cay Lane for a call of a suspicious vehicle. The complainant stated a vehicle was parked in his cul-de-sac for approximately 30 minutes and then moved to another location. Upon arrival, Officer Ramsaier observed a vehicle parked on the street and was unoccupied. The complainant approached the officer and said that he saw the driver enter Harbour Cay Lane. The complainant approached the officer and said that he saw the driver of the car enter Harbour Cay Lane. Officer Ramsaier went to Harbour Cay Lane and was met by a man who said he was hired to cater an event at the location. He arrived too early and remained in his vehicle for approximately 30 minutes prior to entering his house to begin setting up for the party. Case clear.

Jan. 2 Theft

5:26 p.m.
Officer Swinford was dispatched to the 2000 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to a theft. Officer Swinford arrived and spoke with several individuals who did not speak much English. Officer Swinford arrived on scene and spoke with several individuals who did not speak much English. Officer Swinford proceeded to the northeast parking lot to speak on the matter of a battery possibly being taken by a co-worker. The woman stated that her husband advised that a worker of his took one of his portable Dewalt batteries for power tools. All the batteries were yellow Dewalt portable batteries appearing to be the same. The complainant stated that he arrived at the work site and observed the Dewalt portable battery sitting on the truck bed of his boss' truck with nobody around. He stated he placed the battery in his truck for possible safekeeping. He continued to state his intentions were not to steal the battery. The man was given the battery back and the issue was resolved. The complainant said that they have had multiple issues with the worker in the past and he was going to be terminated as a result of the incident. This incident would be determined to be a civil disturbance. Documented for record at this time. Case clear.

Jan. 3 Welfare check

4:57 p.m.
Officer Martinson was dispatched to Durante Park for a Welfare Check. Upon arrival to the area, Officer Martinson was flagged down by a caller who stated she last saw the man walking westbound on Gulf Bay Road several minutes ago but she did not know where he was now. The caller stated the man is very old and appears frail. The caller said she is just concerned about his health. Officer Martinson checked Durante Park and the street around the park but was unable to locate the man. Case clear.

Jan. 4 Found property

3:09 p.m.
Officer Martinson was dispatched to Royal Road on a call of a Found Property. Upon arrival, Officer Martinson met with the woman who stated that while she was taking down Christmas lights from the bushes around Longboat Key Estates of Mexico Drive and Royal Road she found a Florida vehicle tag. Officer Martinson ran the license plate. Officer Martinson later property inventoried the vehicle tag for safe keeping back at the police station. Case clear.

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Editor Letters

Letters, from page 8

when a large man who claimed to be a part of your HOA stalked and intimidated my mother, leaving her in a state of panic.

He viciously pursued my mother down the road today, subjecting her to relentless harassment and mockery regarding her disability. This individual, a large male, went to the extent of obstructing her path on the sidewalk to verbally assail her. Despite her attempts to escape, he persistently followed, exacerbating her distress by recording her with a video camera while menacingly asserting “we want you out of the complex” and further threatening that he “knows where she lives”.

This horrifying incident has left my mother in a state of profound fear for her life. I'm on the verge of having to call a doctor or the police to her home because of the mental and physical state you have put her in.

She is a disabled, elderly, cancer survivor who I scraped money together to move us down to your complex to peacefully enjoy her final years of life. Instead of letting her live in peace you are instead taking years off of her life by trying to force her out through illegal actions and fear mongering.

Attached is a photo of the individual involved for your reference who said was part of your HOA team. I'm nervous to even file a police report out of fear he may retaliate or another member of your HOA and I'm not there to protect her. He needs to be removed and investigated by your HOA immediately.

This is a disabled elderly woman and a professional service animal that has been professionally trained by Guiding Eyes: <https://www.guidingeyes.org> that we are talking about.

This situation is not only causing immense physical and mental distress to my mother but more importantly jeopardizing her safety. I implore you to immediately cease the harassment, adhere to the law, and respect her rights as a citizen and resident in the community.

I have copied my good mentor, United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, local Congressman Vern Buchanan, local Mayor Ken Schneier, and Florida Governor Ron Desantis for visibility, and am seeking their assistance and intervention in this matter.

I urge you to take swift action to rectify this situation and ensure the safety and well-being of my mother and resident, Diane Weisman as well as myself.

Your cooperation in ending these immoral, illegal, and unethical targeted attacks is crucial.

Max Weisman

1LT, Airborne Ranger

Target Aquisition Platoon Leader

3rd Infantry Division

2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team

Harassment of disabled woman and deployed soldier

To: Lt. Max Weisman

I am forwarding your note to our Town Manager Howard Tipton and our Police Chief George Turner for their consideration and action. Please keep them apprised of any further developments.

Ken Schneier

Mayor

Town of Longboat Key

To: Longboat Key Commission

I am requesting that this letter be forwarded to the Town commissioners and FDOT so that they are aware of the concern that the center turn lane going west off GMD will disappear if the current Roundabout design is installed, thereby guaranteeing, in my opinion as a 46 year visitor to Longbeach Condominium, longer waits for all vehicles needing to turn west, (left) at the Broadway intersection, particularly from mid-afternoon to early evening each day during season. I am requesting that the design of the Broadway roundabout be reconsidered given the potential disruption it will cause for the north end when options exist to avoid making conditions worse for both traffic and pedestrian safety.

After a lot of discussion I've had since May with our Longbeach condominium and in November, with the Longboat DPW, real estate brokers, and Eddie Abrams of the north side coalition, there is a solution that wouldn't cost us the ability to turn left on Broadway, and, would provide safer passage for pedestrians who have deserved better sight lines for decades.

The DPW representative suggested the possibility of a one lane road going north to the left (west) of GMD to Broadway. It currently exists and is used for beach parking and Police observation. The new lane might start after the last private driveway west off GMD, adjacent to where the liquor store is and well short of the intersection at Broadway.

For the pedestrians, I recommend an underground crosswalk like the one south of the Bay Isles road intersection at mid-key. Nothing could be safer than that. Both of these suggestions would add to the cost of the Broadway redesign but I urge the city and FDOT not to go cheap when safety and traffic snarl are at risk of being significantly worse.

The city/county/FDOT have announced intent to build multiple center left turn lanes for the south end of the key so that the property owners across from the golf course, east off GMD, don't have to sit in standstill traffic anymore while waiting to get home. Letting these vehicles Turn left earlier is appropriately considered to be a traffic improvement.

We on the north end of the key, will then become the ones to have to sit in standstill traffic potentially every afternoon for five to six months of the year while we are blocked off from making the left hand turn we can make now.

How much is the city spending to afford the South end this improvement while we will incur a worse traffic situation? Will the city spend for the south end, and go cheap for the north end?

Based on what I've read in the numerous Observer articles on the Broadway roundabout and the village residents problems with restaurant traffic, the roundabout was chosen so that the Broadway street owners wouldn't have to install speed bumps (see former Observer article entitled "WHOA..."). Two options exist to increase pedestrian safety, the underground crosswalk, or, a traffic light at the intersection, not the

roundabout. How much slower can GMD traffic go below the current 35mph, or the Broadway limit of 20 mph?

I may be one sided in my thinking, but I shouldn't have to arrange my time at my condo to always be home before those leaving the beach, and the restaurant traffic begins to ramp up, at 2pm each day. All because some people either don't want the economical speed bumps that would solve the problem on Broadway, or they're driving skills have become so poor that they want to lessen everybody's else's enjoyment in order to creep out onto the highway.

The city/county and FDOT know how much center turn lanes mean to alleviating traffic snarl, that is why they are building them for the long suffering south end property owners. I am hoping to let the city/county and FDOT know that we don't want worse traffic and safety issues when they have the options to avoid creating them.

David Baughman

Longboat Key

Subpoena

To: Longboat Key Commission, Sarasota City Commission

Recently, I have been informed that I should expect to be subpoenaed in the next week or so, for a topic that a local NGO is pursuing. I will of course respond to the subpoena but figured (and Don Conn agreed) that I should inform the

See Letters, page 12

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WineTimes

New Main Street Wine Bar

The concept of a wine bar originates in Europe. A French café or bistro serves wine and lighter fare as an alternative to an informal brasserie or a formal restaurant.

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

The renovation of the space formerly occupied by the Grand Cru wine bar on Main Street in Sarasota, Florida has prompted us to think about the broader concept of a wine bar. A new wine bar, Block 15 Cork and Craft, has replaced the Grand Cru. The owners of Block 15, Tom and Melanie have already built a successful wine bar business, the Siesta Key Wine Bar, established in 2021 and thriving in a location popular with tourists. What the owners decided to change in the earlier Grand Cru , and not change, may prove interesting to others in the restaurant and bar business and to wine bar customers.

The concept of a wine bar originates in Europe. A French café or bistro serves wine and lighter fare as an alternative to an informal brasserie or a formal restaurant. One would choose one or another using the name as a rough guide to the style and cost of the establishment. In Italy, one would go to an enoteca for lunch or a glass of wine during the early evening prior to the opening of a formal ristorante, or instead, choose a less formal osteria or trattoria for wine and food. A French restaurant or an Italian ristorante will have limited hours of operation, multiple courses, and a quieter ambiance. Purveyors of more casual fare keep earlier, later, or longer hours and offer more flexible choices of dining experiences. In the USA, a wine bar may mean a restaurant and wine bar that serves only wine and beer, not spirits due to licensing; a wine (and beer) bar that serves bar food; or a bar serving cocktails as well as wine and beer and a limited food menu. Some wine bars have a pianist or guitarist playing music, but rarely have dancing.

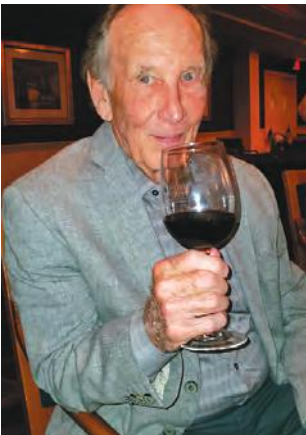
The owners of Block 15 have not begun serious food service yet but plan to do so. A few tables and a long bar open on Main Street and occupy a narrow space going back to an outdoor space with tables on the back end. Think of the whole space as a shotgun house in New Orleans. The long bar ends three quarters back with a kitchen area behind it. A large space houses a floor to ceiling wine cooler (Block 15 has the licensing in place to sell bottles of wine at retail).

What we see now in the renovated space, compared with what we saw before the renovations, includes mainly updates to the bar and new paneling. The basic interior design featuring the bar, wine storage shelving, and a ground level wine cave matches what we see in wine bars across the country. Carried over from Grand Cru, rows of wine and beer taps arrayed across from the bar give customers direct access to premier wines and craft beers. Customers wear electronic bracelets that monitor volumes and prices of wine and beer poured in their glasses. The new owners found that customers liked the option of sampling small quantities of wine or beer and selecting the pour that they preferred. The bracelets compute a running tab for each customer. This feature supplements service at the bar or at tables.

Tom and Melanie plan to bring food service up to the standards of wine and beer selections. (For now they allow customers to bring food from the outside to pair with wines.) They are increasing inventories of niche wines popular with astute wine and beer drinkers and are looking to set up wine and beer tastings to introduce customers to regional and international selections.

We tried a couple of wines on the substantial list of wines by the glass. The 2021 Silk and Spice White Wine Blend (\$16 per bottle retail) contains grapes from different wine regions of Portugal (50% Bical, 35% Arinto, 15% Alvarinho). It has ripe apple and melon tastes. Critics detect toasted oak flavor that we do not find in a wine reportedly fermented in stainless steel vats and stored in American oak barrels. This wine has a smooth finish and a touch of sweetness. A bargain 2019 Donna Laura Alteo Chianti Riserva (\$17), from the red Sangiovese grapes grown in the Toscano region of Italy, has bright cherry and raspberry tastes on the tongue and acidity on the sides of the mouth. A lingering acidic finish makes one long for a pasta dish with a spicy red tomato sauce.

The Block 15 has the essentials that we are looking for in a wine bar. We will follow up to



see how the venue evolves.

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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