



# Longboat Key News

March 13, 2026

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## InsideLook



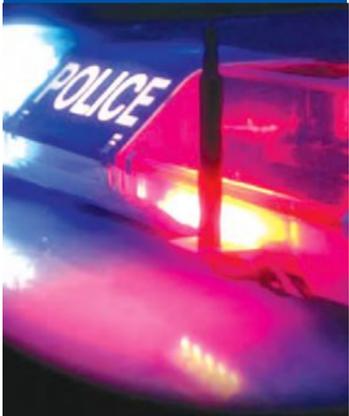
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Art show comes to Sarasota ...page 13



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Crazy jumping kids won't stop! ...page 10

## To Protect, Serve, or Pull over? Longboat's "High Visibility" Policing Sparks Taxpayer Revolt

*lately, when drivers descend off the bridge onto the island, they aren't met with a warm, breezy welcome. Instead, they are greeted by a barrage of flashing blue lights and what is rapidly becoming an aggressive gauntlet of traffic stops.*

**STEVE REID**  
Editor & Publisher  
sreid@lbknews.com

It is something of a policing paradox. For decades, the Town of Longboat Key, its residents, its businesses, and the local real estate industry have spent countless dollars touting the island's virtually non-existent crime rate, stunning beauty, and tranquil ambiance. Visitors flock from around the world to leave the cold behind, relax on the beach, play a round at the Longboat Key Club, or indulge at the new five-star St. Regis Resort.

But lately, when drivers descend off the bridge onto the island, they aren't met with a warm, breezy welcome. Instead, they are greeted by a barrage of flashing blue lights



and what is rapidly becoming an aggressive gauntlet of traffic stops. The frustration is conjoined with a confusingly shifting speed limit that morphs from 35 mph heading down the bridge past the BP station, bumps to 40 mph for a short stretch along the hardened medians in front of Country Club Shores, and then jumps to 45 mph for the

next nine miles.

For the police chief and some town officials, this heavy, high-visibility presence is an ode to safety—a stern warning to any would-be ne'er-do-wells. But the impact on the people actually driving Gulf of Mexico Drive is quite different. Instead of a peaceful arrival into a

See Policing, page 3

## Hurricanes, Tax Wars, and a \$33 Million Sewer Crisis Define Longboat's 2025 Victory Lap

*Behind the town's victory lap lies a year defined by brutal hurricane hangovers, bitter neighbor-vs.-neighbor tax fights, a near-disastrous \$33 million sewer crisis, and a high-profile showdown with an ultra-luxury resort.*

**STEVE REID**  
Editor & Publisher  
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If you read the Town of Longboat Key's newly released 2025 Annual Report, you might think the last twelve months were a breezy stroll down the beach. Framed under the banner of "Premier Community, Exceptional Service," the 34-page document reads like a glossy municipal brag book, touting flat taxes, soaring property values, and seamlessly executed infrastructure upgrades.

But peel back the glossy cover, and a much grittier story emerges.

Behind the town's victory lap lies a year defined by brutal hurricane hangovers, bitter neighbor-vs.-neighbor tax fights, a near-disastrous \$33 million sewer crisis, and a high-profile showdown with an ultra-luxury resort. The town survived 2025, but it required bleeding its financial reserves, fending off state mandates, and asking voters to take on massive debt.

Here is the real story of Longboat Key's last twelve months—the tri-

umphs, the controversies, and the multimillion-dollar battles missing from the brochure.

### The Hurricane Hangover: Drained Reserves and the Spanish Main Nightmare

The Annual Report briefly mentions the town's "hurricane recovery" efforts following the devastation of Debby, Helene, and Milton. What it doesn't highlight is the massive \$8.2 million the town was forced to drain from its financial reserves to keep the island functioning.

Town Manager Howard Tipton called the staff's cleanup efforts "Herculean," noting the town paid \$151,000 in overtime for Hurricane Milton alone. Debris removal cost a staggering \$4.3 million. And while the town has requested \$6 million in FEMA reimbursements, those checks haven't arrived. So far, the town has only recouped \$1.7 million from insurance.

But the truest symbol of the island's ongoing trauma isn't at Town Hall; it's inside the Spanish

Main Yacht Club.

Sixteen months after Helene's storm surge ravaged the 212-unit condominium villa subdivision, the neighborhood remains a chaotic construction zone. The community made headlines when remediation company Servpro hit them with an eye-watering \$13.5 million bill—amounting to \$63,000 per unit—and placed a lien on the entire community.

While the lien was finally settled in November 2025, the scars remain. Desperate residents entertained offers from developers to buy out the whole neighborhood, and dozens of villas that once sold for over \$500,000 have been offloaded at steep discounts.

### The \$33 Million Flush: Voters Avert a Utility Disaster

The Annual Report happily points out the town's \$19.2 million federal grant to replace its Subaqueous Wastewater Force Main—a 50-year-old pipe running

See LBK Report, page 2

## Scaled-Back Sarasota Art Center Wins Praise, but Looming Tax Threats Cloud Future

*The vision for the new Sarasota Performing Arts Center (SPAC) has been dramatically scaled back, brought down to earth, and given a much leaner price tag.*

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But even as city leaders applauded the sweeping architectural concessions presented on March 2, 2026, deep-seated financial and political anxieties threaten to keep the project permanently grounded.

Nearly a year after the City Commission sent the Sarasota Performing Arts Foundation (SPAF) and the Renzo Piano Building Workshop back to the drawing board, the delegation returned with "Concept 2.0." The new blueprint successfully navigates a minefield of prior objections, but it cannot solve the most pressing issue in the room: paying for it.

### A Forced Retreat from Extravagance

In March 2025, the foundation proposed a sprawling, multi-building complex elevated on 20-foot piers across the 10th Street boat launch canal. The cost hovered dangerously close to \$407 million, and its height threatened a deeded view corridor from a neighboring condominium tower. The commission balked, demanding a cheaper, shorter, and less intrusive facility.

Concept 2.0 delivers exactly what was ordered. The new design consolidates the complex into a single building, shifts it south into the northeast corner of the current Van Wezel parking lot, and slashes 500 seats from the main theater. The resulting cost estimate drops to between \$260 million and \$295 million.

For the Foundation, the redesign was an exercise in swallowing pride and listening to the critics.

"Concept Design 2.0 is a direct response to your feedback and the feedback from the community," SPAF CEO Tania Castroverde Moskalenko told the dais. "Our intent has been to deliver a concept

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**LBK Report, from page 1**

2.8 miles under Sarasota Bay.

What the report glosses over is the sheer panic that preceded it.

The project was born out of a 2020 disaster, when the decaying pipe ruptured, spilling 14 million gallons of raw effluent into the bay and triggering a strict Florida Department of Environmental Protection consent order. Initially estimated at \$21.9 million, inflation and construction costs caused the price tag to violently balloon to \$33 million.

Facing a financial cliff, the town was forced to put a referendum on the March 2025 ballot, begging voters to authorize a low-interest (2.89%) State Revolving Fund loan. If voters had said no, the town would have been forced to issue revenue bonds at over 5% interest, potentially inflating the project cost to a staggering \$58.5 million and forcing a massive hike in residents' water bills.

Voters overwhelmingly approved the loan (94.7%), dodging a fiscal bullet and allowing the massive dig to finally move forward.

**The Canal Class War: Who Pays for the Mud?**

Longboat Key is currently engaged in a bitter class war over mud.

The town's canals haven't been properly dredged since 2003, and recent surveys revealed that more than half of the 88 canals earned a grade of C or below, with some so choked by silt that boats are getting trapped on their lifts.

Public Works Director Charlie Mopps managed to slash the initial \$17 million dredging estimate down to a \$9 million baseline project. But the controversy isn't about the dredging; it's about who pays for it.

The proposed funding model, which the Town Commission will vote on in May 2026, forces property owners with direct canal access to cover 80% of the cost via a flat \$620 annual fee. But the remaining 20% will be funded by an island-wide ad-valorem tax—meaning condo owners who don't live on the water and don't own boats will be forced to subsidize the dredging.

"As a practical matter, I, as a non-canal-homeowner, can only access those canals by boat. I don't have a boat," argued resident Trish McDonald. "Is it fair for me to have to assume 20% of the cost?"

Canal-front homeowners have quickly fired back, pointing out that beach renourishment is funded by everyone on the island, even though public access to the private, condo-lined beaches is notoriously restricted.

**Culture Wars: The St. Regis Arch and "Gulf of America Drive"**

Beyond infrastructure, the Town Commission spent late 2025 embroiled in massive fights over the island's identity.

The most contentious local battle was waged against the ultra-luxury St. Regis Longboat Key Resort. Developers installed a massive, Instagram-ready stainless steel arch on a converted beach groin extending into the Gulf. They didn't get a town permit, arguing a state DEP permit was sufficient and claiming the structure was a "memorial" for weddings, not a sign.

The town ordered it torn down in August. But following heavy lobbying by St. Regis developer Chuck Whittall, the Town Commission stunningly flip-flopped in December. In a narrow 4-3 vote, they directed staff to rewrite the town's famously strict sign code to accommodate the resort.

The decision infuriated residents. "Our citizens hate signage," argued dissenting Commissioner B.J. Bishop. "Our beach is one of those glorious, protected, quiet places where people can be on the beach and enjoy peace and quiet without any commercialization."

But while the town caved to the St. Regis, they successfully went to war with the state government.

Following a federal push to rename the Gulf of Mexico to the "Gulf of America," the Florida Department of Transportation began removing signs on the island's main thoroughfare, State Road 789. Refusing to bend the knee to Tallahassee, the Town Commission voted unanimously in October to retain the historic "Gulf of Mexico Drive" name.

Mayor Ken Schneier noted that changing 5,140 addresses would be a costly administrative "disaster" for condo owners and local businesses. He successfully forced FDOT to back down, proving that while Longboat Key might compromise with luxury developers, they draw a hard line at state overreach.

Ultimately, the 2025 Annual Report is technically accurate: Longboat Key did keep its millage rate flat, crime remained virtually non-existent, and historic infrastructure projects are breaking ground. But the clean, corporate formatting of the report hides the sheer political and financial knuckle-brawling it took to get there. It wasn't just a year of "Exceptional Service"—it was a year of survival.

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## Policing, from page 1

manicured, recreational paradise, locals and tourists alike are thrust into a stressful, heavily policed corridor running all the way from the Islandside golf course down to Country Club Shores.

### The 2025 Report: Glossy Stats vs. Gritty Reality

This paradox is perfectly captured in the Longboat Key Police Department's newly released 2025 Annual Report. In his "2025 Year in Review" memorandum, Police Chief Russ Mager set a clear operational course for the island's law enforcement, prioritizing frontline patrols, aggressive traffic enforcement, and modern technology.

But for a growing number of residents, the glossy statistics are masking a deeply frustrating reality: Longboat Key is rapidly feeling less like a relaxed beach town and more like a militarized speed trap.

While the department touts its operational efficiency and strategic restructuring, taxpayers are digging into the numbers and raising serious red flags about the town's policing priorities. A staggering, nearly 200% surge in traffic enforcement has sparked intense community blowback, prompting locals to ask the hard questions: Is this massive police presence actually making anyone safer, or is it just harassing the people who foot the bill?

### A Strategic Shift to the Frontlines

When Chief Mager was sworn in, he brought a mandate of modernization and efficiency. A major strategic shift highlighted in his 2025 review was a restructuring of the department to bolster street-level presence. Following the retirement of the Deputy Chief in December 2025, the department consciously chose not to backfill the executive position. Instead, Mager reallocated those resources directly to the Patrol Division without increasing the overall budget.

This administrative move was specifically designed to allow the department to allocate more hours to beach patrols, marine patrols, and proactive community needs. By cutting top-heavy command roles, the department successfully added two new frontline patrol positions.

The strategy was clear: put more cops on the street to tackle the island's primary hazard—traffic.

### The "High Visibility" Backfire: When Safety Turns to Fear

While general crime on Longboat Key remains at historically low levels, the department reported a noticeable increase in motor vehicle accidents, rising from 93 crashes in 2024 to 114 in 2025. According to the department's findings, driver behavior—specifically following too closely, failure to yield, and careless driving—is the dominant factor in these crashes, rather than roadway defects.

In response, Chief Mager made "high visibility" a core objective, unleashing proactive policing efforts to curb bad driving habits.

But residents are pushing back, armed with research showing that the Chief's strategy may be fundamentally backfiring. According to criminological data actively being shared among frustrated locals in social media groups and email chains, high-visibility policing is only reassuring under specific conditions. When it crosses the line into over-policing, it actively damages public trust.

As one piece of research circulated by residents highlights, the breaking point is a "constant enforcement focus." "If visibility equals tickets, stops, or confrontations, fear rises," the research warns.

The community argues that Longboat Key has sprinted past community support and straight into an enforcement crackdown. The 2025 data is jarring: In a single year, the department issued 1,900 traffic citations and a jaw-dropping 4,000 traffic warnings. That is 5,900 traffic stops on an island with roughly 6,000 full-time residents.

The report proudly highlights 20,930 "self-initiated calls" in 2025. In police jargon, a "self-initiated" call means an officer wasn't dispatched by a 911 operator to help someone in need; rather, the officer actively went looking for an infraction and initiated the stop themselves. That equates to about 57 proactive stops every single day.

Does a 200% increase in flashing blue lights make taxpayers feel safe? Or does it foster a quiet "defund the police" sentiment—born not out of political ideology, but out of sheer exhaustion from being constantly monitored and nickel-and-dimed?

### The "Resident" Question vs. Community Policing

In his report, Chief Mager emphasized that community policing remains central to the department's mission, noting that officers are actively participating in HOA engagements, business outreach, and community events to build public trust.

But research shared by the community notes that public perception of police is heavily shaped by "how officers behave (friendly vs. confrontational)" at the point of contact. Lately, the behavior at car windows is drawing intense scrutiny.

The surge in traffic stops has brought disturbing anecdotal reports from the community. Several residents claim that upon being pulled over, officers have explicitly asked them: "Do you own a home here, or are you a visitor?"

If true, the question is highly inappropriate. It leaves the distinct impression of a double standard—that wealthy taxpayers might be let off with a warning while tourists or workers receive the citation. Yet, even full-time residents report feeling treated poorly during these stops, leading to a profound loss of community support. You cannot build a community-oriented police force while actively alienating the community on the side of Gulf of Mexico Drive.

### Tackling Traffic: Bad Drivers or Bad Infrastructure?

The police department justifies the traffic crackdown by pointing to the spike in crashes and blaming tailgating and failure to yield. But residents argue the data is misleading and the town's solutions are lazy.

How many of those 114 crashes were actually serious, injury-inducing wrecks, and how many were simply minor fender benders? The town's own maps show 13 crashes clustered in the Bay Isles area. How many of those were just low-speed bumps in the crowded Publix parking lot? Furthermore, how many of the island's crashes were directly caused by the chaotic, FDOT-mandated concrete barriers erected during the controversial Country Club Shores turn-lane project?

If traffic flow and safety are truly the goals, residents argue the town should rely on smarter infrastructure, not more tickets. Instead of setting up speed traps, why not install traffic circles at the frustrating three-way stops outside the Longboat Key Club and at the bottom of the bridge? Roundabouts are proven to calm traffic and eliminate the driver frustration that leads

to careless mistakes.

Furthermore, if the town is so concerned about safety, residents wonder why officers aren't prioritizing crosswalks. Having an officer step out of their air-conditioned cruiser to physically stand at high-traffic crosswalks would do far more to protect pedestrians than hiding in a median waiting to write a speeding ticket. If the issue is simply speed, automated speed cameras are significantly cheaper and more efficient than paying a pension-backed officer to run radar.

### Marine Patrols and Missing Data

The waters surrounding the island remain a heavy focus for the department. Mager's report highlights that marine patrol operations continue to play a crucial role in environmental protection and the enforcement of boating regulations. In 2025 alone, marine officers conducted 192 vessel stops and responded to 69 other marine-related calls.

But unlike the meticulously detailed, multi-year charts provided for road traffic and EMS calls, the Marine Patrol data lacks any historical comparison.

Why wasn't prior-year data shown for the waters? Did vessel stops also see a 200% increase? If not, why is the department aggressively policing the roads but taking a softer approach on the water? Boating Under the Influence (BUI) and waterway safety are massive issues in a coastal community. Residents are left wondering if marine safety is simply considered less important than meeting a quota of road citations.

### 2026 Tech Priorities and the Budget Paradox

Looking ahead to 2026, Chief Mager outlined several key initiatives to modernize the force. Top priorities include technology enhancements like body-worn cameras, drones, and upgrading internal records management systems. The department is also aggressively exploring grant opportunities, having already requested over \$121,000 in 2025 to secure funds for items like a Sea-Doo, ballistic shields, and bicycle safety programs. Mager also celebrated the department's strict compliance with law enforcement accreditation standards, boasting two consecutive years of internal mock assessments that yielded zero deficiencies.

But these ambitions highlight the most glaring paradox on Longboat Key: If crime is so incredibly low, why is the police force so big, and why are costs still climbing?

The 2025 report confirms what everyone already knows—Longboat Key experienced zero homicides and zero robberies for the third year in a row. It is one of the safest zip codes in America. Yet, Public Safety consumes an astounding 69% of the town's General Fund.

How does Longboat Key's police staffing compare per capita to other luxury vacation destinations with similar populations? How has the police budget ballooned over the last decade, particularly before and during Mayor Ken Schneider's tenure? As the Mayor himself recently urged during summer budget meetings, the town needs to focus on "needs, not wants" when it comes to personnel. If the police department is primarily functioning as an over-funded traffic enforcement squad, residents are asking if there are leaner, more effective alternatives.

### The Verdict

Chief Mager concluded his review by reaffirming the department's core mission: the Longboat Key Police Department remains fully dedicated to providing exceptional service and safeguarding the quality of life for all residents, visitors, and businesses on the island.

But the "customers" of Longboat Key are feeling the strain of his new business model. High visibility is only a virtue when it makes a community feel protected. When it turns into a daily gauntlet of radar guns, warnings, and confrontations, it creates an island that feels distressed, hostile, and harassed. As the Town Commission reviews this data, they will have to decide what kind of community they want Longboat Key to be: a relaxed, welcoming paradise, or a zero-tolerance patrol zone.

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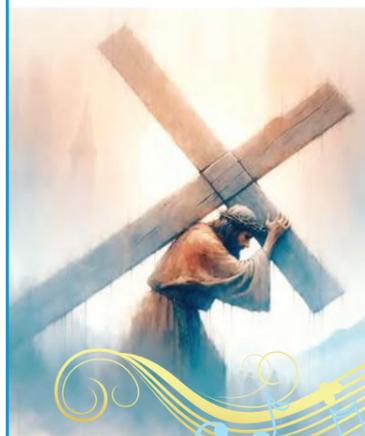
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# Editor Letters



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## Broadway roundabout timeline

To: Longboat Key Vice Mayor Debra Williams  
The latest timeline is as follows:  
Final Plans/ Specifications production and permitting are in progress.  
September 2026 Bid opening of submitted contractor bids.  
January 27, 2027 Notice-to-Proceed ("NTP") to Contractor; an 18-month contract is anticipated. NTP may be pushed to May 2027 to avoid peak season but depends on certain permit conditions.  
July 2028 Construction Completion. If NTP is moved to May 2027, contract completion, should be more like Nov. 2028.  
Please let me know if you have any questions.  
Isaac Brownman  
Assistant Town Manager  
Town of Longboat Key

## Broadway roundabout timeline

To: Longboat Key Assistant Town Manager Isaac Brownman  
Is there an updated/estimated timeline for the Broadway roundabout construction that you can share? Thank you.  
Debra Williams  
Vice Mayor  
Town of Longboat Key

## RoadWatch Update for the Week of March 15-21

To: Longboat Key Commission  
S.R. 789 from Bird Key Drive to Sunset Drive: Construction project: This project includes the addition of dedicated bicycle  
See Letters, page 13

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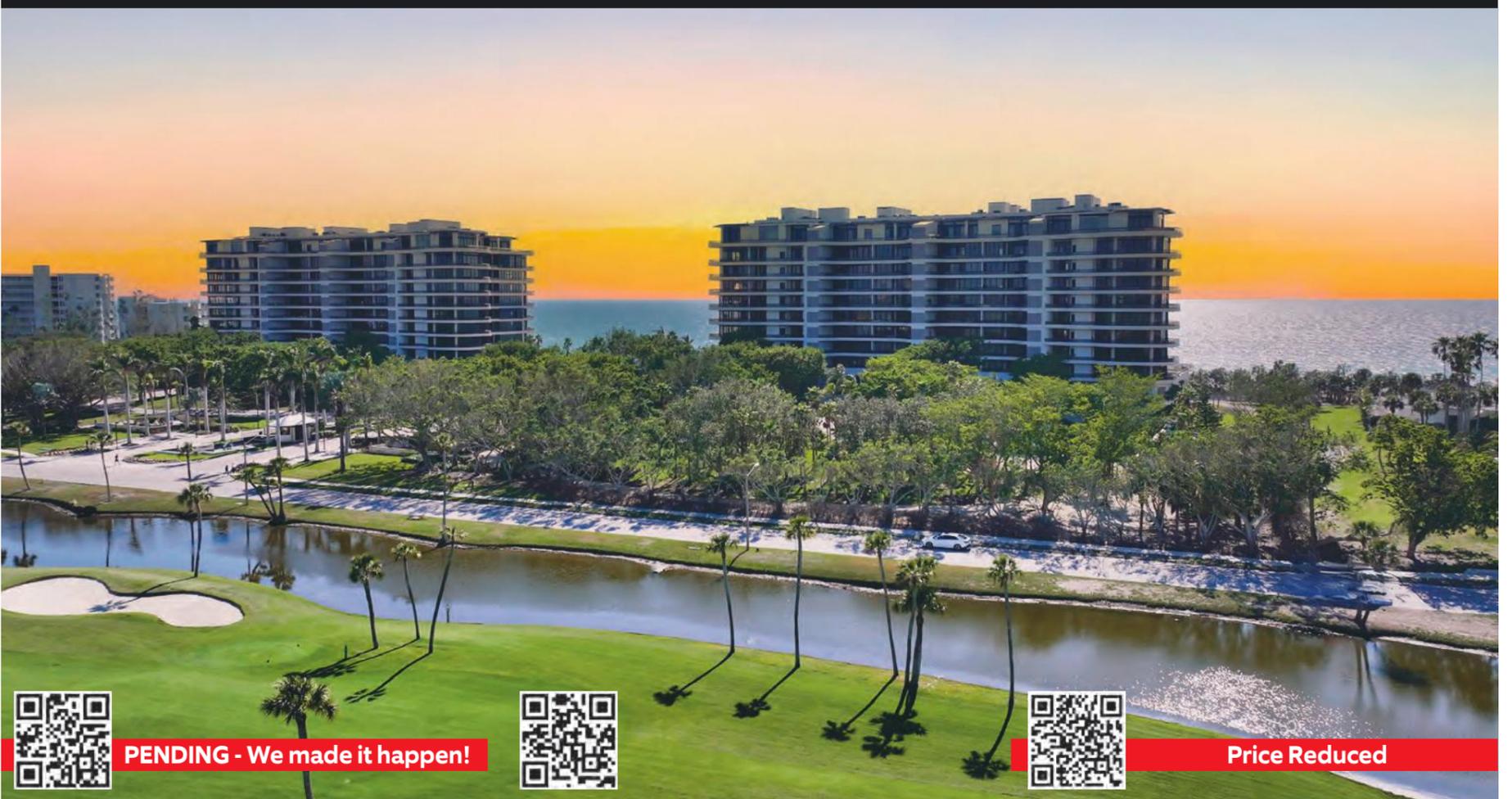
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### Key Tower South



1750 Benjamin Franklin Drive #10G  
\$1,200,000  
[KeyTower10G.com](http://KeyTower10G.com)

### Privateer



1000 Longboat Club Road #403  
\$974,500 | Furnished  
[Privateer403.com](http://Privateer403.com)

**Art Center, from page 1**

that is financially sound and unified, one that meets our community needs, honors the Bay Park master plan, reduces costs without sacrificing quality, and demonstrates a fiscally sound framework.”

Mayor Debbie Trice expressed clear satisfaction that the architects had listened. “Every single line item that was in my memo back in March saying please address these concerns, you addressed every one of them,” Trice said.

Vice-Mayor Ohlrich, however, couldn’t resist pointing out the irony of the building’s new location—which is exactly where it was slated to go in the original 2018 master plan before the architects tried to move it over the water.

“I think this delay has resulted I’m going to say in a better location, although it reminded me of hanging a painting in my house,” Ohlrich deadpanned. “How about here? How about here? How about here? And then you go back to the original location and say, we knew it all along.”

**Raising the Ground, Not the Building**

Rather than hoisting the PAC on expensive concrete piers, the new design leverages the Bay Park Conservancy’s existing strategy to gradually raise the elevation of the entire park with dirt for storm protection. Principal Architect Jerry Sparkman noted the importance of integrating the building naturally.

“It’s serious architecture, but it’s light on the land. Not trying to be imposing on the park. Trying to settle in,” Sparkman explained.

AG Lafley, the founding CEO of the Bay Park Conservancy, joined the meeting remotely to echo this sentiment, acknowledging the sheer difficulty of making all the different elements fit.

“First, and most importantly, we have a site for a design concept that could and should work in the master plan that the City Commission has approved for the entire site,” Lafley said. “That’s important because... we’re trying to put together a lot of different pieces of a Rubik’s cube here.”

Sparkman quickly agreed with Lafley’s assessment. “Rubik’s cube is understatement. Enjoyable Rubik’s cube. Privilege to work on the project.”

**The Financial Sword of Damocles: Tallahassee and the TIF**

Despite the architectural triumphs and the Foundation’s unwavering commitment to privately raise “between 172 and 207 million dollars,” the City Commission only voted to officially receive the presentation. A vote on the critical “implementation agreement” remains unlisted on the calendar.

The hesitation is rooted in severe financial ambiguities. The \$88 million public portion relies heavily on revenues from a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district. But a potential statewide referendum on property tax reform looms on the fall ballot. If Florida voters choose to drastically slash or eliminate homestead property taxes, the TIF revenues carrying the public side of the PAC project could evaporate.

Interim City Manager Dave Bullock addressed the timeline with a dose of stark reality, warning commissioners not to rush into binding contracts while Tallahassee holds the city’s purse strings hostage.

“With my unlimited ability to predict what the state will do, the worst I believe they can do will not be known until November,” Bullock warned. “I think we have a doable project as long as none of those significant barriers present themselves as we move forward.”

When Commissioner Liz Alpert asked why a ticket surcharge wasn’t factored into the current revenue projections to help pay off the debt, Bullock admitted he was playing it safe given the state-level threats. “I think the best way to say it is I like to leave some powder dry,” Bullock noted. “If we need it, it’s definitely there.”

The public commenters were far less diplomatic about the looming financial cliff. “This is a little bit of a clunker here,” warned resident Peter Blanton. “We have a governor who is hell-bent on cutting homestead taxes... You have to assume our homestead property taxes are going to be cut in the State of Florida.”

Frequent government critic Martin Hyde echoed the cynical reality of putting a tax cut on a public ballot. “The reality is that the thing that separates animals from humanities is that humans will take money every time. You shouldn’t be surprised if 60% of people vote for that... And if 60 percent of people do vote for that, I’m not saying it’s over, but it changes everything.”

**“Hurry Up, But Don’t Come Too Fast”**

Despite the heavy financial clouds, proponents urged the city not to lose faith. Resident David Lough delivered a passionate plea to keep the momentum alive. “Newton tells us that motion stays in motion, that at rest stays at rest,” Lough said. “We have motion again... To pause now risks allowing momentum to dissipate and restarting later will not be easy.”

As the meeting wrapped up, the tension gave way to a surprisingly humorous debate over the aesthetic future of the building. Renderings showed the facility’s distinct sections color-coded in vibrant yellow, blue, and pink, while other slides showed them in flat gray.

Vice-Mayor Ohlrich, ever the pragmatist, immediately zeroed in on the maintenance costs. “I immediately think of additional cost associated with colorizing buildings and additional maintenance associated with that. At what point does a decision have to be made and who makes that decision?”

Moskalenko, sensing an opportunity to pad the foundation’s fundraising goals, couldn’t resist a joke. “Maybe we can for \$25 million let somebody choose the color of one of the buildings.”

“Maybe a little more than that,” Mayor Trice shot back, laughing.

Commissioner Alpert chimed in to defend the vibrant design. “I think it’s a very cool idea to have like each building a different color. It’s kind of a great concept. I hope we aren’t encouraging them to do gray.”

Ultimately, the city finds itself stuck in a high-stakes waiting game. They have a design they like and a budget they can stomach, but they are entirely at the mercy of state politics.

Vice-Mayor Ohlrich summed up the city’s anxious paralysis perfectly as he looked at the SPAF delegation. “We have to hurry up, but don’t come too fast because the state is still deciding what they’ll do with our property taxes.”

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1922  
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2026

# South Palm News

SARASOTA  
STILL IS  
"SMILING UP TO  
SUNNY SKIES"

VOL. 1—NO.001

SARASOTA, FLORIDA

WINTER/SPRING 2026

# WHERE SARASOTA'S STORY BEGAN—AND BEGINS AGAIN

\*\*\* \*\* \* \*\* \* \*\* \* \*\* \* \*\* \* \*\* \* \*\* \* \*\* \*

## PRESERVING THE PAST, DEFINING THE FUTURE

BY JEFF LAHURD

Amid the plethora of downtown condominiums, the Mira Mar stands apart, for it was at this South Palm Avenue site that the foundation for modern Sarasota was laid over 100 years ago.

Seaward Development immediately recognized the importance of the Mira Mar Apartments and the former Mira Mar Hotel to the history of Sarasota. The Mira Mar Apartments were the catalyst to Sarasota's rapid transition from a fishing, ranching, and agricultural community into a stellar destination known nationally for attracting residents and tourists, a reputation still enjoyed. With overwhelming citywide support, Seaward Development will preserve the iconic apartment and return the building to its original condition. Thus, Mira Mar Residences will link Sarasota's colorful Roaring 1920s past to today's vibrant downtown for future generations.



VIEW SHOWING THE MIRA MAR & SARASOTA HOTELS, SARASOTA, FLORIDA

### JEWEL OF THE GULF, RISING

In the early 1920s, the Mira Mar Apartments and Mira Mar Hotel and Auditorium were constructed. As a result, Sarasota's growth exploded. A.B. Edwards, the city's first mayor, estimated that it would have normally taken 50 to 100 years to duplicate what happened in Sarasota in less than a handful of years.

The community had always offered an abundance of natural ingredients to be a go-to retreat for wealthy Snowbirds and tourists: the highly touted "Salubrious Climate," the sparkling jewel of Sarasota Bay at its downtown doorstep. Add the unblemished tropical beauty of palm trees, moss draped oaks, annual verdant foliage, unmatched white sand beaches, and a veritable cornucopia of game, fish, oysters, and clams for fishers and hunters alike.

Visitors characterized Sarasota as follows: "This is a tranquil village that provides limited appeal for

those seeking fashionable pursuits and entertainment. However, individuals seeking respite from the demands of daily life will find its peaceful atmosphere conducive to rest and rejuvenation."

In 1922, Mayor Everett Bacon and the city council met with Canadian born businessman Andrew McAnsh. Determined, indeed, this gentleman was the real deal, renowned as a "town builder."

Underscoring his bona-fides, Wichita Falls banker Charles Davidson was quoted in The Sarasota Times, "The buildings Mr. McAnsh constructed in Wichita were better in every way... and are bringing in more revenue today than when built seven years ago. And we want McAnsh back there and we'll give him anything he wants. That's the kind of man he is." That same sentiment was shared by John F. Smulski, President of the Northwestern Trust and Savings Bank of Chicago, stating, "I am confident that Sarasota has significant potential for future growth. Andrew McAnsh is

assuredly going to put it on the map..."

Expectations ran high, and The Sarasota Times generated much excitement, regularly focusing on McAnsh, and his grand plans for Sarasota. As to why he chose Sarasota: "You ask me why I did not choose St. Petersburg, Miami, Palm Beach or some other place in Florida? All beautiful spots, but I like Sarasota above all else. And I have seen them all... Money is only a matter of convenience. I have all the money I need."

*"But to know Sarasota and its people is to love both. No more cordial people could be found anywhere. That is honestly how I feel about it."*



EST.



1922



COLDWELL BANKER  
REALTY



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MIRA MAR CONSTRUCTION SITE



VIEW SHOWING THE MIRA MAR & SARASOTA HOTELS, SARASOTA, FLORIDA

# FROM VILLAGE TO VISION

BY JEFF LAHURD

When Sarasota broke away from Manatee County to form Sarasota County in 1921, the downtown area was defined by boarding houses, a hotel established in 1887 that had long since lost its former prestige, and a collection of one- and two-story wood or rusticated block structures housing residences and businesses. Near the foot of Main Street, the area around the bayfront suffered from the nascent fishing industry, marked by rundown shacks, old boats, tangled nets, flies, the smell of decaying fish, and whatever else washed onto the shore.

McAnsh sought major concessions before he would proceed—and got them.

Ordinance No. 312-A, “The City agrees to furnish water and electric service to the said Mira Mar Hotel and Mira Mar Apartments at no charge for a period of ten (10) years from the date of completion...” Sidewalk and street improvements were also promised.

Increasing expectations and illustrating what could lay ahead, on September 14, 1922, an architectural rendering of what his million-dollar hotel, temporarily called the Tamiami Inn, would look like, were revealed. Fronting Sarasota Bay, the elegantly beautiful hotel, incorporated the Mediterranean Revival style on a scale commonly associated with Miami and Palm Springs. The brick hotel would be fireproof, and “follow the Spanish and Italian style of architecture which lends itself so admirably to the enhancement of the tropical beauties of this section.”

The style was popularized throughout the state by the colorful architect Addison Mizner in Palm Beach. As the hotel offered an unobstructed view of Sarasota Bay, it was christened the Mira Mar—sea view. The Times put it: “[After] Years of hopes and rumors of a large modern tourist hotel for Sarasota, the indications now are that these hopes and rumors are to become realities.”

Ground was broken for the “Half Million Dollar Apartment House,” on October 5, 1922, and three weeks later a contract for the first unit of the new apartment house was let to the Carman Co., in what was the largest contract in the city’s history. Work began immediately and subsequently, the Mira Mar Apartments earned the moniker “the 60-day wonder” due to the continuous, round-the-clock effort required to complete.

The modern apartments were available in one, two, or three-bedroom units with optional maid service. While the hotel would be operated seasonally, the apartments were available year-round. McAnsh and his wife Bertha lived in one of the three-bedroom apartments. Their son Byron stayed there during his visits to town. Residing on site enabled McAnsh to welcome new guests, and chat with them, which he found rewarding. All 25 apartments received annual updates.



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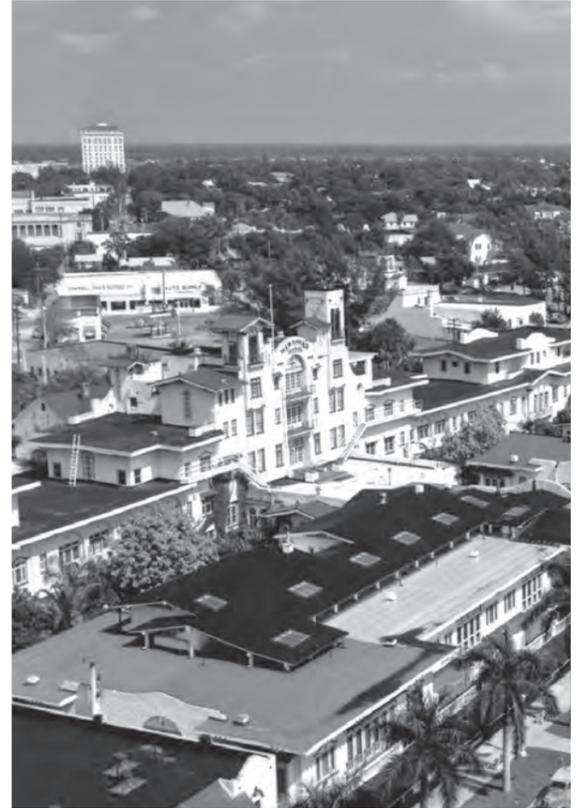
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TARPON FISHING IN SARASOTA



ANDREW MCANSH



MIRA MAR HOTEL

# A CITY TRANSFORMED

BY JEFF LAHURD

Immediately businesses sought to rent space in the apartments' 18 storefronts. Catering to affluent snowbirds, Abercrombie & Fitch opened a winter-only shop for each season. With fishing still a major tourist attraction, and golf becoming more popular, Gardner-Noble, a sporting goods store opened at Mira Mar. Their large tarpon sign became a point of reference for directions to other merchants. Harry Green, a writer specializing in advertising materials, was among the lessees, alongside Manning and French who provided clothing which included dress shirts, arrow collars, and a comprehensive selection of men and women's apparel.

Well-known surgeon, Dr. Jack Halton, who specialized in diseases of eyes, ears, and throat relocated his office to the Mira Mar, as did a beauty shop, which offered "A becoming bob," the latest style for the younger set. A. B. Edwards relocated his real estate and insurance firm there. So too, real estate man, C. E. Rowland, "Choice Property—Sterling Values."

The Mira Mar Café opened with an advertisement that emphasized modern dining preferences, mentioning that customers would be attracted by the scent of Maxwell House coffee and freshly prepared eggs with Beech-Nut bacon. Dissatisfied with the food provided? "If you have any kicks coming, see us."

Shortly after the Mira Mar Hotel opened, the

adjacent Mira Mar Auditorium debuted on January 19, 1924, quickly becoming Sarasota's social and cultural hub. Its grand opening, billed as "The Event of the Season," featured coloratura soprano Josephine Lucchese, known as "The American Nightingale," baritone Robert Ringling of circus fame, and acclaimed concert pianist Margaret Carlisle.

The auditorium anchored a thriving arts scene that blended sophistication with modern flair. It hosted touring orchestras, jazz bands, and theatrical productions, drawing national and international talent. Highlights included Frieda Hempel, the "Jenny Lind of Today," and Russian bass Fedor Chaliapin, hailed as the "World's Greatest Opera Singer." Adventurer Lowell Thomas captivated audiences with his lecture "With Lawrence in Arabia," while the Tennessee Serenaders brought spirited dance music to flappers and hotel guests alike—complete with a novelty left-handed banjo player.

For certain guests, the second floor offered a complete gambling room, operated by Conrad and Locke which ran the Golden Horseshoe in Chicago. Locals were banned, but snowbirds could freely gamble their money away. The auditorium, anchored on Palm Avenue, became the site of choice for local entertainers, fashion and flower shows, meetings, political rallies, fund-raisers, card parties, lectures, and art exhibitions.

After the Mira Mar complex was completed the rapidity of downtown Sarasota's growth was truly breathtaking. Indeed, the capitalists that were promised to follow McAnsh's lead to invest in Sarasota, came.

Construction immediately began on multi-storied banks and hotels, along with churches, schools, improved roads and highways, a much-needed hospital (now Sarasota Memorial), automobile dealerships, residential developments, upscale restaurants, and the opulent Edwards Theatre (presently the Sarasota Opera House).

Those wishing to make money on the escalating real estate market were set upon by the numerous high-pressure real estate agents who came for the same purpose. Capitalizing on the boom, the Sarasota Herald started its presses in October of 1925, and This Week In Sarasota followed suit. Full-page advertisements filled all the newspapers. By 1925, the Chamber of Commerce issued a booklet calling Sarasota the City of Glorified Opportunity. The county became a combination of the California gold rush, the Oklahoma land rush, and the Bear stock market. Prominent real estate man and civic leader, Roger Flory recalled, "There were stacks of checks by every cash register, smiles on every face, money in every pocket."



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# A FUTURE WORTH BUILDING



VIEW SHOWING THE MIRA MAR & SARASOTA HOTELS, SARASOTA, FLORIDA

BY JEFF LAHURD

However, the devastating hurricane that struck Miami in September 1926, coupled with the onset of the Great Depression and the rationing restrictions of World War II brought Sarasota’s booming growth to a halt. Banks closed, retail stores shut down, and newspaper ads were replaced by bankruptcy notices, going out of business sales, and public auctions. Concurrently, newcomers slowed to a trickle and city records indicated that more than half the taxes between 1926 and 1929 had not been paid. McAnsh and the Mira Mar complex were adversely affected, going into foreclosure and changing hands several times. In 1928 or 1929, he relocated his principal residence to Chicago, where he managed his business operations.

But the foundation he and the Mira Mar laid was firmly set, awaiting the end of the war for the

inevitable resurgence. After the war, returning service men and women came with their families looking for stability, not a quick way to make money. The look of Sarasota changed dramatically as a result of the new modernist movement established by the Sarasota School of Architecture, which garnered international recognition. Once again, Sarasota became a go-to destination for tourists and newcomers wishing to start their lives anew - young couples with families to raise and retirees wishing to spend their remaining years in the sunshine.

To effectively manage the city’s forthcoming growth, the city commission decided to implement a new system of local government led by a qualified city manager. In 1950, Ken Thompson was sworn in as city manager. For the next 38 years he channeled the city’s growth in a manner which rejuvenated downtown Sarasota by beckoning the wealthy. Thompson’s mantra became, “Keep your industry, send us your industrialists.”

Street improvements—widening, resurfacing, renaming, and re-routing became a major goal.

To offer newcomers driving through town an opportunity to view beautiful Sarasota Bay, and, hopefully, entice them to stay, U.S. 41 was re-routed along the downtown bayfront on fill dredged up just west of Gulf Stream Avenue. Unfortunately for the downtown area, the growth into the county which offered national stores, took much of their business. Huge shopping centers and strip centers offered free parking and convenience. Luxury hotels such as the Mira Mar and John Ringling Hotel saw a shift in demand too as beachfront lodgings and modern upscale motels became more prevalent.

The Mira Mar Hotel, its sea view blocked by new buildings, took guests into the 1970s. After a short stint as a retirement facility and its age showing, the city believed the costs to renovate it too high. In 1982, it was demolished. The Mira Mar Apartments were converted to office and retail use, which remained for more than a century.

The building was preserved from demolition by Seaward Development who have committed to an extensive rehabilitation of the building and the restoration of its place along South Palm Avenue.

Andrew McAnsh, known as a town builder, died in Chicago on October 23, 1946.

If he were alive and could walk through portals of his “60-day wonder,” and into the revitalized Mira Mar, this visionary gentleman would marvel at what has transpired since his first Sarasota appearance—oh, so long ago.



ANDREW MCANSH ON STICKNEY POINT BRIDGE



VIEW OF MIRA MAR FROM THE WATER



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# EditorLetters



### Letters, from page 4

these lines, and how can the residents assist? I will look to find best practices in other communities and perhaps the Green Team can help with monitoring.

CC-ing Isaac here for advice, not trying to cause extra work for staff but I know mangrove protection (and appreciation!) is a big concern. I'm hopeful we can turn more energy toward better stewardship.

Sarah Karon  
Commissioner  
Town of Longboat Key

### Mangrove cutting on Jewfish Key

To: Longboat Key Planning and Zoning Director Allen Parsons

Must the property owner be caught in the act in order to be cited? If that's the case, it seems unlikely that mangrove laws can ever be enforced. Wouldn't before/after pictures suffice? Incidentally, the clearcutting of mangroves on Jewfish occurred months ago (just before I first registered a complaint).

James G. Haft  
Longboat Key

### Mangrove cutting on Jewfish Key

To: James Haft

Thanks Jim. Code Enforcement staff investigated when the complaint came in (including going to the site 3 days in a row). Unfortunately, staff did not see anyone cutting mangroves. The complaint was also forwarded to FDEP at the time (as they are the state designated agency responsible for mangrove permitting & enforcement). An FDEP contact for follow-up, if you're interested, is Hannah.Westervelt@FloridaDEP.gov

Allen Parsons  
Planning and Zoning Director  
Town of Longboat Key

### Mangrove cutting on JFK

To: Longboat Key Planning and Zoning Director Allen Parsons

Hi Allen & Charlie — Thank you both for coming to our LBK North meeting on Thursday. Just wanted to follow up on the Jewfish Key clear cutting of mangroves. I had reported this back in November. It was handed off to someone in code enforcement (whose name I forget) but nothing more happened as far as I'm aware. This is highly illegal and environmentally damaging action. According to another JFK Owner, the culprit is Jordan Mollenaar, who owns

See Letters, page 16

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**BIRD KEY • SARASOTA**  
247 Robin Drive  
New Construction • \$13,999,000



**ST. ARMANDS • SARASOTA**  
212 Tremont Lane  
.73 Acre Waterfront Lot • \$6,995,000



**L'AMBIANCE • LONGBOAT KEY**  
435 L'Ambiance Dr #1703  
3BR/2BA/1HB • \$4,495,000



**BIRD KEY • SARASOTA**  
259 Robin Drive  
3BR/3FB/2HB • FULL BAYFRONT • \$8,195,000



**GULF FRONT NEW CONSTRUCTION**  
4005 Casey Key Road, Nokomis  
6BR/6.5BA • \$9,950,000



**BEACHES OF LONGBOAT KEY**  
775 Longboat Club Rd. #203  
3BR/3BA • Full Gulf View • \$1,850,000

# OnPatrol



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

## Mar. 6 Citizen Assist

1:31 a.m.

Officer Mathis while on patrol in the 4000 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive observed a Nissan Altima traveling north in the bike lane and at well under the posted speed limit of 45 mph. Officer Mathis estimated the speed to be at 20 mph. Officer Mathis then conducted a traffic stop. He made contact with the occupants, and provided the reason for the traffic stop. The driver advised that she was lost and having a hard time reading the road signs which was her reason for traveling at such slow speeds and in the bike lane. Officer Mathis then advised her that he would escort them to their destination on Dream Island Place. The driver proceeded to follow the officer to their destination. Once safely in the parking lot, he returned to service. Case clear.



Nazareno then made contact with the group and spoke with the woman who stated she was advised by another resident that they are allowed to use the beach access across the street. The access that the group attempted to use was fenced off and the group accessed the beach by cutting through the vegetation. The woman was advised to use the public beach access located less than a block away from the location. Case clear.

## Incident

10:55 p.m.

Officer Maple and Officer Nazareno responded to a call regarding a suspicious incident at Bayport Way. The complainant who was out of town, reported that her neighbor had noticed lights were on in her apartment and a loud bang had been heard, suggesting possible unauthorized entry. Upon arrival, Officer Nazareno and Officer Male spoke with the neighbor who confirmed the situation. Officer obtained a key from a lockbox using a code provided by the complainant. After accessing the apartment, officers conducted a thorough search. No signs of forced entry or criminal activity were observed and the residence was found to be secure and unoccupied. The apartment was secured and the complainant was notified of the results. Case clear.

## Beach

11:19 a.m.

Officer Tillman responded to the 2100 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for a report of approximately six shell casings that had washed upon the beach. The location was described as near the gulf side water's edge. Officer Tillman spoke with several people on the beach and all were unaware of such findings. Also of note, no casings were seen by Officer Tillman in the general area that was described. Officer Tillman stayed in the area and was never able to make contact with the caller. Case clear.

## Mar. 7 Assist resident

3:12 p.m.

Officer Miklos was dispatched to Old Compass Road in reference to a suspicious person call. Sarasota Sheriff's Dispatch advised the complainant was watching an unknown woman and elderly woman walking around the residence. The complainant advised the younger woman was driving a gray Subaru SUV. Upon arrival, Officer Miklos observed a woman in a gray Subaru about to leave the residence at Old Compass Road. The younger woman stated they were interested in renting the property and the older woman provided her ID. Officer Tillman and Officer Miklos conducted an exterior check of the residence and observed no signs of damage or forced entry. Officer Miklos made contact with the complainant who confirmed that her residence was going to be listed for rent, however, did not wish to have unknown subjects on her property due to possible injury liabilities. The complainant advised she would contact her realtor and discuss the incident. Case clear.

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**GARDEN ARGOSY**

## Beach parking

6:25 p.m.

Officer Nazareno was dispatched to 5600 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for a suspicious person call. Upon arrival, Officer Nazareno was met by the caller who stated that a group of adults and juveniles were cutting through the vegetation on his private property to access the beach. Officer

## March 8 Bridge

3:00 p.m.

Officer Miklos was dispatched to the 7200 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to juveniles jumping off Longboat Pass Bridge. At the time, Officer Miklos requested Officer Barrett to check the area near the bridge. Upon arrival, Officer Miklos observed four men gathering belongings near the start of the bridge. Officer Miklos made contact with the men who advised they were leaving. Officer Miklos advised the men that they could not jump off the bridge due to state statutes and the risk for injury. The four men left the area in a white truck without further incident. Case clear.

## Citizen assist

9:15 p.m.

Officer Maple was dispatched to Broadway for a call in regard to an overflowing sewage pipe. A call was dialed in from the restaurant manager. Upon arrival, Officer Maple observed an overflowing manhole cover on Lois Ave. And smelled the pungent aroma of sewage in the vicinity. Public Works employee was notified and he reported his response would be soon. The restaurant manager was contacted with situational status. With no law enforcement presence necessary, Officer Maple closed the case. Public Works arrived on scene and rectified the situation. Case clear.

## March 9 Vehicle

11:16 p.m.

Officer Mathis while on patrol in the 4700 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive, observed a blue Infinity parked in violation of town ordinance by being parked at the location between the hours of 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. Upon placing a parking citation on the windshield Officer Mathis observed sand in the floor of the vehicle and luggage in the rear cargo area. A package was also in plain view with the name and address. Officer Mathis advised Sgt. Montfort of the incident and permission was granted to have Officer Troyer check the surrounding beach areas. A short time later Officer Troyer arrived and checked the beach south to the Bayfront Park beach access and North to the Gulfside Road Beach Access. The canvass of the surrounding area yielded negative results. Case clear.

## March 10 Citizen assist

1:21 a.m.

Officer Mathis was dispatched to the 5800 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to a possible disturbance. Upon arrival, Officer Mathis met with a guest who explained that he returned to his room but had forgotten his key. The man further advised that his wife had returned to the room earlier and was already asleep and not answering her phone. After some time knocking and yelling in an attempt to wake his wife, the man was finally able to wake her so she could let him in the room. Officer Mathis spoke with the man's wife separately and she said that she returned to the hotel room earlier due to an early morning checkout and went to sleep. The wife explained that she had woken up to her husband pounding on the door to let him in. Both parties involved advised no dispute had occurred and everything was fine. The man apologized about the noise and the misunderstanding. Officer Mathis explained why police were dispatched to the location and both people apologized for the misunderstanding. The couple advised they were in town celebrating their five-year anniversary and apologized about the obvious mix-up. Case clear.

## Contractor

11:00 a.m.

Officer Van Dyke responded to the police department in reference to a walk in report due to a threat/harassment. Upon further investigation, the call was updated to a disturbance and the incident location was Penfield Street. Upon arrival, Officer Van Dyke spoke to the contractor who advised that the homeowner was upset that a project was taking longer than expected. According to the contractor, the homeowner yelled at him, walked towards him and came within inches of his body. There was no physical contact or threats of violence made to either party. The contractor stated that he left the scene to document the incident in case the project ultimately requires litigation. The contractor also stated that the wife was cooperative. Based on the information provided, no crime occurred, only a verbal dispute. Case clear.

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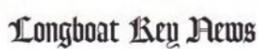
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# TeeTime



## Mastering Golf's Most Difficult Shot

*Very rarely do I get requests to go into a bunker to improve their results. I always ask what would you grade yourself as a bunker player?*

**TERRY O'HARA**  
Columnist  
News@lbknews.com

As a Golf Instructor for over 40 years I get all types of requests from students looking to get better. Most always start with the full swing followed by short game and then putting. Very rarely do I get requests to go into a bunker to improve their results. I always ask what would you grade yourself as a bunker player? Most say D or F. Once I hear that I always try and spend 15-20 minutes in the trap with the student trying to help improve that grade.



TERRY O'HARA

When I do get into the bunker I find it amazing what I see from the student. I see swings that don't resemble anything of what I saw on their full swing. I love the responses I get....I try and hit 6 inches behind the ball....my goal is to just get out....I stop at impact because I don't want the ball to fly over the green....I use my pitching wedge because I am trying to chip it out....I use my putter because I know where it's going. I saw this Sand Wedge at 2am in the morning on an Infomercial and they guaranteed it would go on the green. Do any of these sound familiar? These excuses to get out are what 90% of the golfers go through.

How do we fix this issue? How do we get confidence to get it out and close to the hole?

The first step is to make sure you the correct club. What is that club? For any greenside bunker you want to have either a 56 or 60 degree sand wedge.

The next step begins with the process. This is critical to make sure you are ready to go....

1. You will play the ball inside your left foot (as a right hand player)

2. You will open your clubface about 25 degrees.

3. Because the face is open you will need to compensate for the open face and take the club straight back on your backswing.

4. Here is the key piece and the reason why so many fail in the attempt to hit it close. When going through impact you need to keep face open and do not flip your hands (see picture)...feel like you are leaving sand on the face as long as you can. If you do this your bunker shots will be greatly improved. And remember that this is the only shot in golf where



you don't make contact with the golf ball....you are moving sand....commit to the shot and accelerate in the hitting area.

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The Town of Longboat Key is accepting applications for appointment to the following board:

**Citizens Tax Oversight Committee**  
**Zoning Board of Adjustment**  
**Sarasota County Bicycle and Pedestrian**  
**Technical Advisory Committee**

All applications must be submitted to the Office of the Town Clerk **by 12:00 p.m. on April 17, 2026**. All applicants must be registered voters of the Town of Longboat Key. Late applications will be held for one year for any future board/committee vacancies that may arise.

All members of the Zoning Board of Adjustment are required to file a financial disclosure form within 30 days after appointment and annually thereafter for the duration of the appointment as required by Florida Statutes Chapter 112.

The Town Commission may schedule a Meet and Greet with applicants at a later date. Please call the Office of the Town Clerk at 941-316-1999 for an application or for any questions. Completed applications may be submitted to:

Town of Longboat Key – Office of the Town Clerk  
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Stephanie Garcia, Deputy Town Clerk II  
Published: 03-13-2026, 03-27-2026

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# Editorial Opinion

## Bombs, Billionaires, and Reality TV: The High Cost of Trump's Iranian Intervention

*It has become painfully obvious that our recent Iranian bombing campaign landed directly on a cohort of schoolchildren—the latest collateral damage, as Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth would view it—but let's talk about collateral damage to our country.*

**STEVE REID**  
Editor & Publisher  
sreid@lbknews.com

Pete Hegseth is a man who reportedly paid a settlement to make sexual assault allegations go away, and who stepped down from veteran organizations after leaving a track record of financial mismanagement and drunken philandering parties. In the real world, this is a resumé of disgrace. In Donald Trump's world, it makes you a nobleman. And back in reality, this "nobleman" is helping disrupt the global order.

Trump has wedded our foreign policy to Israel, a nation with a completely different tolerance for military activity. Israeli citizens are accustomed to sirens, running to bunkers, and being at odds with neighboring states for decades. As a nation and as a construct born into conflict, that state of affairs has been an inevitable reality since its inception. But America used to be the broker between warring parties. We were the mediators of disagreements, not a partner in bombing children, obliterating oil reserves, and disrupting the world economy.



STEVE REID

### The Shifting Sands of Strategy

What are our goals in this nearly three-week-long conflict? They vary depending on the day, presented in no logical order.

First, Marco Rubio claimed Israel was going to strike, so we jumped in—a narrative quickly walked back when it didn't play out well in the news cycle. Then, we were told this was about regime change. Obviously, that has yet to work; the son currently in power is even more radical than the father, proving our strategy is actively backfiring. Next, we were told we had to neutralize ballistic missiles and nuclear capabilities, which we supposedly handled in June 2025. Finally, we are allegedly "helping the protesters," a profound irony considering our nation has stopped defending protesters at our own universities, let alone in Iran.

What is the beginning and end of this executive workaround? Are we simply going to ignore Congress and the War Powers Act? Is this an extension of executive overreach—a very Putinesque approach to warfare? The overriding question remains: Are we going to follow the lead of Israel vis-à-vis Palestine with no plan in place other than toppling a regime and creating chaos? Are we prepared to invade Iran, remove the Islamic Republic's leaders, and stay in an ongoing, protracted manner to ensure stability? Iran is far more complex and developed than Iraq ever was. We seem to be diving headfirst into a world of uncontrolled chaos and military adventurism.

### The Economic and Strategic Bleed

This is rapidly becoming a war of attrition. America's resolve is being eroded by an economic crisis, while Israel desires an "as long as it takes" approach. The conflict has killed thousands, ruptured global supply chains, and driven oil prices to spike above \$100 a barrel.

That oil spike is fueling more than \$150 million a day in additional revenue for Russia, which Vladimir Putin can use to fund his actions in Ukraine. Meanwhile, the very munitions we are expending are becoming unavailable to Ukraine. We are strengthening Russia's hand while weakening our own in the face of our real adversaries, Russia and China.

We are burning through years of munitions. Officials told senators the war cost more than \$11 billion in the first six days of strikes alone. Each Patriot missile costs millions of dollars. The Tomahawk missiles we are firing—manufactured by RTX—cost roughly \$3.6 million each. We are firing these at Iranians who are utilizing cheap drones that cost a mere \$30,000 apiece.

In the first week of the war, a strike on a school killed 168 people, mostly children—the deadliest attack on civilians in the war so far. Trump immediately deflected, claiming it was done by Iran. But open-source satellite imagery and procurement records show it was a US-made, long-range Tomahawk missile, complete with the manufacturer's identifying marks on the circuit board. The Pentagon is now "investigating." This marriage between Israel and the US insulates Washington from certain political responsibilities. Assassinations of heads of state are carried out by Israeli fighter jets, allowing Trump to avoid the political fallout and pesky legal sensitivities.

If our goal was to persuade Iranian protesters to unseat the Iranian regime, then bombing schools and children is the quickest way to ensure the most radical American dislike imaginable for generations. That's why Hegseth's indiscriminate approach to war sounds like a cartoonish sound bite, but he is damaging our nation's reputation and resolve and ultimately undermining the very principles we stand for as Americans.

### The Evolution of Humanity vs. The Fog of War

In the 2003 documentary *The Fog of War*, Robert McNamara referenced 19th-century Prussian military strategist Carl von Clausewitz, who described war as a "realm of uncertainty." But there is no uncertainty about the human cost.

When a country is invaded, or children are killed in a conflict, do we get ramped up on testosterone and brag about what an effective killing machine we are? Or have we retained a basic notion of humanity? This isn't some hippie idealization; this is the very minimal evolution of civilization. If we truly believe that your average Palestinian or Iranian is a human being

whose life has value, how can we follow Trump, Hegseth, and Benjamin Netanyahu into this dark morass of brutality?

We stood by Israel's decimation of the Palestinian state under the rubric of eliminating Hamas. But that conflict led to the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians, including horrific numbers of women and children. Is that acceptable? Is this what American weapons were meant to be used for? Was the slaughter of tens of thousands the best way to resolve the horrific atrocities of October 7th?

The Torah says *Ayin Tachat Ayin*—an eye for an eye. According to traditional Jewish interpretation, this refers to a legal principle of proportional justice and monetary compensation, meant to limit excessive vengeance and ensure the punishment fits the crime. It does not mean a village, a nation, or tens of thousands of lives for an eye.

The overriding question is and always has been—are we going to partner with Israel for stability in the Middle East? Are we going to all retreat regularly to bunkers? Is that our future? Are we going to try to eliminate every enemy according to Israel?



### Every Which Way but Loose and The Kardashian Pivot

My father earned a Purple Heart in World War II—a war worth fighting, and one we were slow and cautious to enter. To hear Pete Hegseth approach geopolitics like an MMA fighter is insulting to that legacy. He aspires to be the guy in a parking lot outside a bar who lost a political debate and now wants a fistfight, posturing like a young Clint Eastwood with a demented monkey as a sidekick. He talks with a maniacal glint, viewing this as a "by any means necessary" operation, despite Iran lacking the armaments to reach the United States.

But some say this war is just a distraction from Pam Bondi and the Epstein files. And they are likely right.

We are Americans; we are the spiritual sons and daughters of the Kardashian family. We love to see the rise of the common man, and we are obsessed with a salacious downfall. Trump knows this instinctively. If there is one thing Donald Trump gets insecure over, going all the way back to his reality TV days, it is low ratings.

### Oil prices and Ratings: Trump's inverted conundrum

Only 41% of Americans support this conflict. Trump hasn't won over the public, and with the economy tanking, he is looking for an exit. Joe Rogan, Megyn Kelly, and Tucker Carlson have all defected. Will he bring back Roger Stone to stand in the corner? Can the spirit of Rudy Giuliani be brought back to litigate through the morass?

When the news cycle is unfavorable, Trump knows how to pivot. It's like changing the channel with a remote control. But a real problem with the war is that rising oil prices are interrupting the American need to return to the party. We need to pivot from the ugly world of war crimes back to the salacious world of sex crimes—always a strong play for this president.

We don't have triumph on our hands; we have something darker and far more menacing. We can call it a victory if you are tied at the hip to this oversized personality we call the president. But if we want to address true threats—like nuclear proliferation, the environment, education, and healthcare—we cannot indulge in a warm bath of blood that removes our focus.

A president can pardon himself. He can pardon anyone he wants. But he cannot pardon history. And he cannot pardon the soul of a nation that has been stained by the defense of the indefensible.

## Longboat Key News Sarasota City News

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