

# Where Will Our Water Come From in 2040?

BY JOHANNES WERNER

People are moving to Southwest Florida at the fastest clip in decades, and tens of thousands of new homes are on the drawing boards. But the people in those homes need water. And that, in turn, clashes with local water capacities that are already close to maxing out, as well as with rising sea levels, which adds to existing saltwater intrusion into local aquifers, due to too much pumping.

Mike Mylett, Sarasota County's retiring utility director, in his second-to-last appearance before the county commission, had a warning to his bosses, "The growth is "challenging our systems", he said. "If you look back over our 25-year history ... we've maintained a pretty consistent growth rate of about just under 2%," Mylett said. "If you look over the last three years, that 2% has grown to five. We've grown really dramatically over the last three years. And that's impacting our water supplies and our water usage or water demands."

Sarasota County just registered its first 30-million-gallon-day ever, and neighboring Manatee and Charlotte counties are experiencing similar spikes. So where will we get our water?

If you ask Manatee and Sarasota County officials: From farther away. Both Sarasota and Manatee counties are members of the Peace River Manasota Water Authority. That entity draws water from the Peace River in rural DeSoto County - and pumps it to coastal Sarasota and Charlotte counties and to the City of North Port. Right now, that's to the tune of 26 million gallons a day. Sarasota, at the urging of Mylett, will now ask for an additional 12 million gallons a day.

Manatee County has not bought any water from the Peace River Authority - yet. Thanks to the Manatee River, that county has a surface water reservoir, which Sarasota doesn't. But the fast clip of population growth in Manatee will lead to max-out in 2037 — probably sooner, because new construction east of the county's urban development boundary is not factored in yet — and that may force Manatee to look east for more water.



### The Peace River Authority's capacity

The Authority has two reservoirs and a treatment plant, allowing it to pump 26 million gallons of drinking water a day to coastal communities. To accommodate rising demand, the Peace River Authority is preparing construction of a third reservoir, as part of a five-year, \$800 million capital investment program. That project alone will cost close to half a billion dollars. If Manatee begins

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# Series Aims to Grow Local News Ecosystem

BY KATHLEEN MURRAY

WSLR News will connect locally-focused journalists, editors and media scholars with members of the community during a series of free public newsrooms in 2024. "Building a Local News Ecosystem" launches Jan. 16 and continues through April 2 at the Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center.

"Members of a community are already well positioned to evaluate how issues that affect them are covered and to identify what is missing from local news," said veteran journalist Maria Vesperi, professor of anthropology at New College of Florida, who serves as advisory scholar for the series.

Vesperi will moderate "*The Local News and*

*Me*," the first forum in the series, which takes place **Tuesday, Jan. 16 from 6-8 p.m.** at Fogartyville.

Topics will include the strengths and weaknesses of local reporting, how to identify and address gaps in news coverage, key differences in presenting news and opinion, and the value of hyperlocal news.



Panelists Renee James Gilmore, Dennis "Mitch" Maley and Johannes Werner will discuss "The Local Media and Me" on Tuesday, January 16th at Fogartyville.

Scheduled panelists are Renee James Gilmore, executive producer and host of ABC7's "Empowering Voices"; Mitch Maley, featured columnist and senior editor for The Bradenton Times and host of The Bradenton Times Podcast; and WSLR News Director Johannes Werner.

"Dialogue with reporters and editors adds critical awareness of the institutional strengths and pragmatic limits of established news outlets, and humanities scholars can help frame the cultural values and expectations that shape decisions about where media resources are directed and why," Vesperi said.

Participants in this lively program will walk away with new tools, ideas and resources for helping to keep their communities informed about news that matters.

"We want our coverage to be as close as possible to the community – to working people, to

neighborhoods – and reflect their needs," Werner said. "This dialogue is an opportunity to strengthen those ties, and it's an opportunity to draw more community members to reporting about their neighborhoods and government."

Additional forums in the Building the Local News Ecosystem series include: "Introduction to Community Journalism" on Jan. 30, "Thinking Like a Journalist" on Feb. 13, "Media Ethics & Law" on Feb. 27, "Working a Beat" on March 12 and "Community News & Democracy" on April 2.

Scheduled participants include: Kerry Sheridan (WUSF), Eric Garwood (Community News Collaborative), Endera Allen Stevens (Northend Agents Newspaper), Carrie Seidman (Sarasota Herald-Tribune), Juan Pablo Salas (Solmart Media), Billy Cox (Sarasota Herald-Tribune, retired), Steven Walker (Sarasota Herald-Tribune), Tom Bayles (WGCU), Samantha Gholar (USA Today network), Clay Calvert (UF Law), David Snyder (USF Law) and Matthew Sauer (Barancik Foundation).

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# Right to Read Festival: All Books for All People

BY DAVID BROSTROM

When the going gets weird, the weird ban books. And hijack school boards and liberal arts colleges and make decisions that diminish public libraries.

A newly released PEN America report, *Banned in the USA: The Mounting Pressure to Censor*, cites a “33% increase in book bans in 2022-2023 compared to 2021-2022. A disproportionate number of book bans, 42%, occurred in Florida, and a large share of the 3,362 individual bans took place in states where legislation or coordinated campaigns by local and national groups have driven mass restrictions on access to literature. Books about race and racism, LGBTQ+ identities, and violence have remained a top target.”

In response to the intensified uptick in book banning and other forms of censorship in Florida, the Social Justice Alliance of the Florida Suncoast (SJAFS), comprised of 15 alliance nonprofit groups and individuals from Sarasota and Charlotte Counties and surrounding area, have mobilized. SJAFS is hosting their first major event, The Right to Read Festival: All Books for All People, Sat. Feb. 24. This all-day celebration is designed to push back against book banning, underscore rights and freedoms under the First Amendment, and preserve intellectual freedom.

The festival, co-sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice, will feature local, regional, and national speakers, including award-winning children’s author (banned), Rob Sanders, journalist Carrie Seidman, and grassroots organizer Zander Moricz. Sarasota school board member Tom Edwards, will be on hand, as well as representatives from the Freedom to Read Foundation/American Library Association.

Fun free children’s activities are planned throughout the day, including games, performances

by local storytellers and musicians. Banned books giveaways, a colorful banned books bus, a bounce house, Blue Lotus meditation and more will round out the day. Food and refreshments will be available for purchase from vendors and food trucks.

The Right to Read Festival will take place on the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice grounds, 1971 Pinebrook Rd, Venice, from **10 am – 4 pm, Feb. 24**. For further information and regular updates visit the alliance’s website at [sjafs.org](http://sjafs.org), or email [sjafs23@gmail.com](mailto:sjafs23@gmail.com).



## Ten Days of Anti-Racism Education and Action | March 11-21, 2024

Join the Manasota Anti-Racism Coalition and take action to #FightRacism. Every day, each and every one of us can stand up against racial prejudice and systemic racism. Events are still being planned. If your organization is interested in participating, please let us know by emailing [PEACenter@gmail.com](mailto:PEACenter@gmail.com).

One of the highlights of the ten days will be the return of Father Paul Abernathy, a nationally-

recognized trauma expert. In 2020 Sarasota Strong brought Abernathy to town and hosted a presentation on “Building a Community of Hope and Healing; Addressing Trauma, Building Resilience.” Sarasota Strong is a growing group of Sarasota County residents committed to learning about trauma and responding to its impact on our community.

The ten days of Anti-Racism will culminate on March 21 which is The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. If your organization is interested in participating, please email [PEACenter@gmail.com](mailto:PEACenter@gmail.com).



Father Paul Abernathy, founder, Neighborhood Resilience Project



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**CONTACT US:**

(941) 894-6469

[criticaltimesrq@gmail.com](mailto:criticaltimesrq@gmail.com)

[www.CriticalTimes.org](http://www.CriticalTimes.org)

**Editor:** Arlene Sweeting

**Layout:** Mark Zampella, Rob Demperio

**Contributing Writers:** Dale Anderson, David Brostrom, Shawn Bartelt, Jesse Coleman, Tom Matrullo, Kathleen Murray, Carol Rescigno, Robin Russell, Johannes Werner



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[www.cfsarasota.org](http://www.cfsarasota.org)



# Through Women’s Eyes Film Festival Celebrates 25 Years

## STAFF REPORT

The Through Women’s Eyes International Film Festival celebrates 25 years of groundbreaking films from around the world March 7-12, 2024. The Sarasota-based festival features in-person and virtual screenings, awards, filmmaker conversations, and an opening celebration at Ringling College of Art.

“We are delighted that the Through Women’s Eyes International Film Festival will return to theaters this year,” said Scott Osborne, festival chair, “and that we are able to celebrate 25 years of films that have enhanced our thinking and brought greater equality and diversity to screens.”

The film festival selection committee received more than 350 submissions from 42 countries. Films this year hail from Ireland, Australia, Israel, Iran, Turkey, Sweden, India, Canada, Palestine, Germany, the USA, and more.

Each year, the festival chooses 25-30 films that reflect a diverse array of experiences by and about global women and the LGBTQ+ community. Independent filmmakers from all over attend the festival and meet with audiences to share what inspires them and how they created their films.

The opening celebration films and awards will be Friday, March 8, at the Ringling College of Art, Morganroth Auditorium, where local secondary students, once again, will participate in the judging and presenting an Impact Award. In-person films continue all day Saturday and Sunday, March 10 & 11, at the Sarasota Art Museum, SHS Alumni Auditorium.

Four of the chosen films highlight the quality and diversity of stories and perspectives.

### The Soft-Skinned (Australia, Short film)

An Australian veteran must confront the ghosts of war when a young Afghani man shows up on her parents’ doorstep. A deeply moving reflection of both the refugee experience and the PTSD experienced by soldiers.

### Blue Sunshine (India, Feature-length film)

A teacher at a traditional, conservative high school in southern India wishes to transition from male to female. Her journey affects not only her parents but also fellow teachers, school administrators, and students, in ways both predictable and very surprising. Modern sensibilities and traditional norms rub shoulders in this beautifully filmed portrayal of an individual struggle.

### Lego Oma (Germany, Short film)

What would you do if you lost all use of your legs in an accident? Lego Oma – or Lego Grandmother – reveals how she coped: first with anger and resentment, then resilience and coping, and finally, humor and outreach. Named “Lego” for the unique Lego ramps she builds to make buildings wheelchair- and stroller-accessible, this grandmother will make you laugh while she inspires.

### Girl No 60427 (Israel, Short Film)

Tel Aviv, 1998, summer vacation. Reut finds and reads her grandmother's secret notebook from the Holocaust. Grandma's story resonates in Reut's well-developed imagination, and the fun week in Tel Aviv with Grandpa and Grandma turns into something else entirely.

Through Women’s Eyes is an advocacy organization dedicated to women’s rights and gender equality. Learn more at [throughwomenseyes.org](http://throughwomenseyes.org).

SOUTHERN  
CIRCUIT

TOUR OF INDEPENDENT  
FILMMAKERS

Screenings are **FREE**  
REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED at  
**WSLR.org/film**

February 20, 7pm

**Breaking the News** - About more than a newsroom. It's about **America in flux**, and the voices that are often left out of the American story, following a scrappy group of fearless women and LGBTQ+ journalists band together to buck the status quo and launch **The 19th\***, a digital news start-up.



March 19, 7pm

**Battleground** - is an urgently timely window into the intersection of abortion and politics in America, following three women who lead formidable anti-abortion organizations to witness the influence they wield. As the nation faces the end of Roe, the film also depicts those on the front lines of the fierce fight to maintain access.

April 16, 7pm

**Razing Liberty Square** - Dramatic changes happening in Miami's Liberty Square are a looking glass for contemporary issues of wide-scale significance: the affordable housing, the impact of systemic racism and climate gentrification. What is happening is a prescient story of what is to come, and strategies put to the test here are being closely observed by the rest of the world.

May 7, 7pm

**1946: The Mistranslation That Shifted Culture** - Let's explore how the misuse of a single word changed the course of modern history. Follow the story of tireless researchers who trace the origins of the anti-gay movement among Christians to a grave mistranslation of the Bible.



Filmmaker Awards Ceremony 2022

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# Conversations Across the Aisle

## STAFF REPORT

Community members from across the political spectrum met on October 12 to tackle some of public education’s thorniest issues during the first Conversations Across The Aisle (CATA) workshop. Participants broke bread and discussed divisive subjects such as books (banning), school vouchers, and representation of non-traditional families in reading materials.

CATA (also known as The CATA Project) is the brainchild of Newtown Sarasota native Bill Woodson, who recently retired from New College of Florida, where he served as the college’s first chief diversity officer and dean of outreach. “CATA was created to promote respectful, informed, and constructive discourse on issues that local community members care most about,” said Woodson. “Conversations can play a vital role in rebuilding a shared sense of community.” CATA’s mission is to create inclusive, safe spaces for productive discussions that invite diverse, opposing perspectives, create an opportunity to recognize common humanity, and to build understanding and empathy across the aisle, he said.

To spearhead CATA, Woodson mobilized community leaders and volunteers from a wide range of organizations including the League of Women Voters of Sarasota County, Women of Manatee County Republican Club, Miracle on the Key, The New College Foundation, SRQ Strong, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, SavingDemocracyNow, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), and the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA).

The second CATA dinner/workshop will be **February 22**, at The Academy on Glengary. The featured speaker will be League of Women Voters of Florida President and civil rights lawyer Cecile



CATA Co-Chairs Dr. Bill Woodson and Dr. Becky van der Bogert, CATA Planning Board member Dr. Andrea Blanch

Scoon, and the topic will be “Protecting voting integrity, and preserving voter access—striking the balance”. For more information contact Bill Woodson at 612-644-6609 [bill.woodson@yahoo.com](mailto:bill.woodson@yahoo.com) or [events.cata@gmail.com](mailto:events.cata@gmail.com)

# Grassroots Action to End Gun Violence

## BY CAROL RESCIGNO

Brady Sarasota, United Against Gun Violence have been holding rallies at the Sarasota Bayfront, every Thursday in the fall, winter and spring for more than a decade. This grassroots chapter of Brady has been raising signs and waving to passing cars in an effort to assure citizens that the battle for better gun laws is not over.

Meanwhile, ten gun bills – good and bad – have been filed in the State Legislature for the session that starts in January. Florida Rep. Michele Rayner, (D-District 62, covering parts of Hillsborough and Pinellas) whose passion for gun safety goes beyond legislative borders, is scheduled to speak at the Jan 4 Brady Sarasota meeting to explain bills.

THB 145, one of the bills Rayner is sponsoring this session, would require background checks for

the sale or transfer of ammunition. Another bill, requiring background checks for firearms, did not advance in the legislature.

Rallies resume at the southern end of the Bayfront parking lot beginning Jan. 11. Signs and free t-shirts will be provided to all newcomers.

Brady Sarasota Meeting will be held at the First Congregational United Church of Christ in the Oasis Center on South Euclid Avenue at **4 pm. on Jan. 4, 2024.**

*Erica Dorsey, guest speaker at the Brady annual vigil for victims of gun violence, describing her family’s ordeal after her son, Aaron, 13, was shot in the head this summer while playing in their neighborhood. With the care of medical experts and physical and occupational therapists, Aaron has made remarkable progress toward recovery. Photo by Nancy Goethe.*





**Robert Vodnoy, Music Director**  
**First Presbyterian Church of Sarasota**  
**Tickets: adults \$39, students \$5**  
Order online, or buy at box office one hour before concert

**Celebrating Chopin, with Matthew Graybil, piano**  
**Thursday, February 29, 7:30pm**  
Chopin: Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Minor, Matthew Graybil, piano  
Chevalier de Saint-Georges: Symphony Concertante, Cindi Qi and David Qi, violin  
Adler: Concertino No. 3

**Mozart + Haydn, with George Maxman, violin**  
**Thursday, March 21, 7:30pm**  
Mozart: Violin Concerto No. 5 in A Major (Turkish), George Maxman, violin  
Haydn: Symphony No. 83 in G Major (The Hen), Overture to La Fidelta Premiata

Visit us at [www.chamberorchestrasarasota.org](http://www.chamberorchestrasarasota.org), or call us at **219-928-8665**





# Fogartyville Showcases New Singer-Songwriters Series

BY ROBIN RUSSELL

The Fogartyville Songwriters Series is a new showcase opportunity to highlight some of the region’s best songwriting talent. Beginning in January 2024 on the second Monday of each month at 7 p.m., musicians and music fans are invited to gather to hear an invited trio of Songwriters in the Round playing their craft and describing their songwriting experience. An Acoustic Open Round will follow the curated round of songwriters with musicians selected at random from the audience. The combination of curated and open rounds creates a wonderful musical evening, centered around and celebrating the craft of songwriting, guaranteeing a fantastic live listening experience, and also giving newcomers a chance to be seen, heard, and get involved.

Our first event in the series on **Monday, Jan. 8** will be hosted by Carmela Pedicini, lead vocalist with the band Passerine. Joining her on stage will be songwriters Justin Kaiser and Kelly Goddard.

**Carmela Pedicini** has been a singer/songwriter and active locally as a performing musician since she played her first professional gig at age 16. She has recorded five full length albums — one with Radio Free Carmela and the Transmitters — four with her current band, Passerine.

**Kelly Goddard** is a singer and songwriter from Tallahassee. As one-third of the band, The New 76ers, she has toured and played in venues and



Hosts of the Songwriter Series: Carmela Pedicini, Matt Frost, Rebekah Pulley, Dean Johanesen, and Justin Layman

festivals all over Florida and the southeast.

At age 15, **Justin Kaiser** took a guitar and plunged into a twisted odyssey of self-taught chords and outlawed tunes. His music? Picture John Prine on a bender with Elvis Costello, while Johnny Cash deals blackjack in the corner with XTC in his AirPods.

“We love the songwriter round format because it facilitates a deeper connection between the individuals sharing the stage, and encourages storytelling and spontaneous collaboration”, says Arlene Sweeting, WSLR+Fogartyville’s General Manager.

The inaugural year of the Singer Songwriter Series is sponsored by the **Watts Family Endowment for Arts & Education**. The series will run from January to May on the second Monday of the month from 7 to 9 p.m. Doors open at 6. Admission is \$5.

Fogartyville is located in downtown Sarasota at 525 Kumquat Ct, Sarasota. For more information and tickets visit <https://wslr.org/Fogartyville/> or call 941-894-6469.

Upcoming dates/songwriters to be featured in the series:

**February 12:** Host Matt Frost will be joined by Andres Colin and Tanya Radtke.

**March 11:** Host Rebekah Pulley will be joined by Kip Kelley and Doug Burns.

**April 8:** Host Dean Johanesen will be joined by Karlus Trapp and Sara Nelms.

**May 13:** Host Justin Layman will be joined by Bill Vinhage and Emily Frost.

## Series Aims to Grow Local News Ecosystem

*continued from pg 1*

“With this project we hope to leverage our existing resources to build a local media ecosystem that better serves all of our community by fostering collaboration, coordinating coverage, and connecting local newsrooms,” said Arlene Sweeting, general manager of WSLR+Fogartyville.

All forums are free and open to the public and will take place at Fogartyville, located at 525 Kumquat Court. Registration is required at [wslr.org/fogartyville](https://wslr.org/fogartyville) or by calling 941-894-6469.

The forums will be recorded and made available via WSLR’s YouTube channel and website.

They will be complemented by a free **Feb. 20** screening of “*Breaking the News*,” which documents the honest discussions at The 19th nonprofit newsroom around race and gender equity. The screening, which includes a discussion with director

Chelsea Hernandez, is a presentation of WSLR, South Arts and WMNF.

In addition, the WSLR News team will invite six members of the community to participate in a 4-session Hands-on Citizen Journalism Training, during which they will learn how to: identify and share important stories in their communities, conduct interviews and find credible information, and record and edit a story for radio broadcast. To apply for the hands-on workshops, visit [wslr.org/news](https://wslr.org/news).

The public newsroom series is made possible thanks to a \$7,000 Community Projects Grant from Florida Humanities, the statewide, nonprofit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).



Co-director Chelsea Hernandez will be touring with the film ‘Breaking the News’. Hernandez is an Emmy-nominated Mexican-American Director and Producer based in Texas. Named as DOC NYC’s 2021 40 Under 40 Class, she is a 2021 Telly Award Winner for her feature documentary *BUILDING THE AMERICAN DREAM* (SXSW 2019).



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FROM DARKNESS

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Sarasota County

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Florida  
ARTS & CULTURE



ALL SHOWS: Student tickets available at 1/2 price (show ID at door); Kids 12 and under are free.

7 PM Thursday  
1/11

*Nellie McKay*

A 21st Century bohemian folksinger who deals in offbeat piano pop with light Broadway and punk leanings Ironically quirky  
\$35/\$40

8 PM Friday  
1/12

**PAUL THORN**

bluesy, rocking and thoroughly Southern American, yet also speaking universal truths. \$40/\$45

2-5 PM Sunday  
1/14

**Hannah's Whirl**

Tampa-based folk duo

7 PM Thursday  
1/18

**SETH WALKER**

a multi-dimensional talent who combines a gift for melody and lyric alongside a rich, Gospel drenched, Southern inflected voice  
\$15/\$18

8 PM Friday  
1/19

**Claudia Schmidt**

a quirky + wonderful hodge-podge (her words!) of music, poetry, story, laughter, drama, and celebrating the moment.  
with **Alice Howe & Freebo** \$20/\$24

8 PM Saturday  
1/20  
Sunday  
1/21

**Mary Gauthier**

with Special Guest **Jaimee Harris**  
Brandi Carlile has said, "Mary's songwriting speaks to the tender aspects of our humanness..." The AP says: "one of the best songwriters of her generation." \$30/\$35

8 PM Friday  
1/26

**BLAKE CHRISTIANA**

a founding member of YARN, singer, guitarist and primary songwriter, hits the road for some duo shows with  
**Andrew Trongone**. \$20/\$24

8 PM Friday  
2/2

*Cassie and Maggie*

Sisters with deep Nova Scotia musical roots, enjoy an unparalleled unity of strings, voices + fabulous Celtic step dancing. \$20/\$24

8 PM Saturday  
2/3

*Susan Werner*

Susan is as much a stand-up comedian as she is a musician & singer/songwriter. \$27/\$30

**Twisted Pine**

Boston-based spacecraft of a band that was once bluegrass but is now *something else*, a wider version of a stringband, boundary jumpers akin to outfits like Punch Brothers, or Crooked Still.  
\$20/\$24

7 PM Sunday  
2/4

*House of Hamill*

Upcycled Celtic Folk \$20/\$22

8 PM Friday  
2/9

\$15 Will McLean Foundation Audible Art Series presents:

*Ashley Gang*

2-5 PM Sunday  
2/11

**Reverend Raven**

& *The Chain Smokin' Altar Boys*  
Smoking blues grooves, served up with hot harmonica and smooth stinging guitar. \$15/\$18

8 PM Friday  
2/16

**GRANT PEEPLES**

Famous for his unflinching social insight and cultural acuity delivered with an unmatched conviction and wit. \$15/\$18

8 PM Saturday  
2/17

**Steve Forbert**

American acoustic folk rocker -BBC says: "One of the most distinctive voices anywhere" His real claim to fame is he was Cyndi Lauper's boyfriend "Girls Just Want To Have Fun" video. \$27/\$30

8 PM Thursday  
2/22

8 PM Saturday  
2/24

**BRUCE KATZ TRIO**

Keyboard Legend, played in Greg Allman's Band +++ \$20/\$25

8 PM Sunday  
2/25

*Mike & Ruthy*

Hot fiddle+banjo, emotionally potent harmonies, dynamic stories of being singers and storytellers, poets, embodying a down-home approach to Americana that is honest, beautiful and raw. \$20/\$24

8 PM Saturday  
3/23



# What's New on air?

By: Jesse Coleman  
Station Manager

WSLR's 2024 is looking **BRIGHT** with this great selection of New Programming Vibes joining our already fantastic broadcast schedule.

Starting with **Paul Junior's Soul Kitchen** will be sharing the **Sunday 7-9pm** groove with **Lavender Blue Radio** where host **Lindsey Hudson**'s selections are specially designed to craft a surrealist feeling for listeners - a dreamy, weird, funky, out of place (in a good way) feeling. As a visual artist, she is a big fan of musicians who can translate the same feeling that surrealist painters and photographers create but through their music - like a beautifully weird put-together masterpiece.

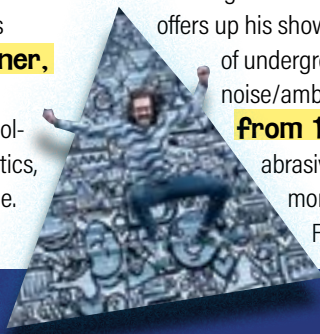


**DJ Nomad's SynthWorld** has been electrifying **alternate Monday Nights 9-11pm** through pulsating beats and nostalgic melodies, transporting listeners to a neon-soaked retro-future with often overlooked and obscure electronic music sub-genres, such as Synthwave, SynthPop, Dreamwave, Outrun, IDM, Vaporwave, Glitchwave, Post-Rock, Darksynth and Chillwave. Nomad curates an immersive experience, blending iconic tracks with hidden gems, celebrating the vibrant fusion of '80s nostalgia and futuristic soundscapes



Complementing **Kathleen's Murray's ArtBeat** on **Mondays from 9-10am** is new local public affairs program, **Voices Up!** Co-hosts **Shannon Fortner, Andrew Ensign, and Grace Korley** open up wide-ranging discussions around LGBTQ+ issues - from policy and legislation to mental health, to art, music, and politics, all while educating folks about how they can bring change.

The **Cat Lady** is rotating in with **Tom Dooley's Old Folk and Americana Festival** on **Wednesdays from 7-9pm** as she brings you **The Cat's Meow** - catnip for the ears, spinning tasty nuggets and paw-licking gems that will get you purring. The old-timey cats may be coaxed gently into loving more "recent" evolutions and incantations of the Folk Rock era as The Cat Lady shares her love and personal connections with early Indie, 90's Grunge, Anti-folk, Grrrl bands, Lo-fi, Post-punk, and singer-songwriters from the 90's, oughts, and today.



The late nights are heating up as **DJ Milo Minderbender** offers up his show **Milo After Hours** with a unique mix of underground hip-hop, mutant techno, thrash, and noise/ambient music on **late-night Saturdays from 11pm to 1am**. The show offers more abrasive & cutting-edge sounds tuned for the more adventurous listeners who relish the FCC safe harbor hours.

## wslr lp 96.5 fm WEEKLY PROGRAM GUIDE

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Music

Public Affairs

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
12 mid.		Down The Road Syndicated	Lumpytunes! The Head Lump, Rob Demperio	Dystopian Lullaby Nice Guy Eddy	That Driving Beat (Syndicated)	All Mixed Up Syndicated	Milo After Hours Milo
1 a.m.	Deep Threes Syndicated					Synthelectico Syndicated	
2 a.m.	Music Automated playlist	Midnight Special Syndicated	Music Automated playlist	Upfront Soul Syndicated	Music Automated playlist		
3 a.m.							
4 a.m.	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Music Automated playlist	Music Automated playlist
5 a.m.							
6 a.m.	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)	Donne Del Mondo Syndicated	Keeping Democracy Alive Syndicated
7 a.m.							
8 a.m.	Blues to Bluegrass John D.	Corduroy Sebastian Wegeng	Music with a Purpose Pat Monahan	Indie Psych Show Alecia Harper	Eclectic Blender Dave Pedersen	Latin Explosion Juan Montenegro	Saturday Morning Gospel Beat Jonah Ray
9 a.m.			ALTERNATE WEEKS				Interfaith Voices
10 a.m.	ArtBeat Kathleen Murray	Voices Up Shai, Andrew & Grace	Our Changing Environment	Healthy Living Hour	Peace & Justice Report Tom Walker & Bob Connors	The Detail Cathy Antunes	Surreal News Lew Lorini & Steve Norris
11 a.m.	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Radio Reset Sharon Preston-Folta
NOON	Music of the World Marco Ciceron	World Rotations Rotating	Afro Cuban Jazz Frankie Piniero	The Blue Groove Mark Gruder	Metropics Carlos Pagan	Complex Waveforms Mark Zampella	Juke In The Back Syndicated
1 p.m.		ALTERNATE WEEKS				WSLR NEWS (Rebroadcast)	Shortwave Report (Syndicated)
2 p.m.	Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)	Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)	Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)	Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)	Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)	Attitude of Gratitude The GratiDude	Dadee-O's Collector's Corner Dadee-O
3 p.m.	Positive Friction John Haupt	Second Wind Seany G	Louisiana Gumbo Kid Red	Outta the Basement, On the Road Purple Mike	High Tide Susan Runyan	Everything But The Kitchen Sink Jazz Edition Art on the Air	Everything But The Kitchen Sink Jazz Edition Art on the Air
4 p.m.				ALTERNATE WEEKS		Community Conversations Mel Lavender	Afrosonic Taxi (Syndicated)
5 p.m.	Music Museum Ed Foster	Synthetic Age JR	Indie-licious Sheila Jane	Jazz And More Brian Jones	Ted's Head Ted	Friday Happy Hour Bartender Tommy D.	Rhythm Revival Reverend Billy C. Wirtz
6 p.m.		ALTERNATE WEEKS					
7 p.m.	Economic Update	Ralph Nader Syndicated	Voices Up Shai, Andrew & Grace	WSLR NEWS	Alternative Radio Syndicated	WSLR NEWS	Global Village (Syndicated)
	Capitol Update State News			Ruthless Truth Ruth & Ali		Counterspin	Book Show
8 p.m.	Yesterday's Dead Today Mark Binder	The Root Cellar Roger & Peter	The Cat's Meow The Cat Lady	The Old Folk & Americana Festival	Longboat Luau The Ho-Dad	Velvet Radio Elissa Bello	Ripper's Rarities Russ Yodice
9 p.m.			ALTERNATE WEEKS		ALTERNATE WEEKS		New Radio
10 p.m.	SynthWorld Damon	First Voices	Bullwinkle's Corner Keith Winkle	Random Precision Alex	Music Is The Best Mark Markus	Microgroove Fallon Markwell	The In Between Jay Ackermann
	Indigenous Nation						
11 p.m.	ALTERNATE WEEKS						
12 mid.	Down The Road Syndicated	Lumpytunes! The Head Lump, Rob Demperio	Dystopian Lullaby Nice Guy Eddy	That Driving Beat (Syndicated)	All Mixed Up Syndicated	Dave Radio Dave Wilkens	Milo After Hours Milo

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# The August 2024 School Board Election. Why Should You Care? And Why You Should Vote!

**BY SHAWN BARTELT, PRESIDENT,  
SARASOTA LEAGUE OF WOMEN  
VOTERS**

The August 20, 2024 “primary election” is actually a general election for two seats on the Sarasota County School Board. Calling it a primary is misleading! Since Florida is a closed primary state, voters with no party affiliation are not permitted to vote in partisan elections. However, since our School Board election is non-partisan, all registered voters can cast their vote either in person or by mail. This distinction from partisan elections may be confusing and deter those with no party affiliation from voting.

According to the Sarasota Supervisor of Elections, of the 352,480 registered voters, 98,791 are neither Democrat nor Republican. That’s 28% of registered voters who might think they can’t vote in this coming August’s election for Sarasota’s School Board. Unless there are more than two candidates for each seat, the August election will determine the final winners. Voting by every voter is essential so that the elected school board truly represents the will of the community it serves.

Some voters may think that School Board membership doesn’t concern them if they don’t have children in the public schools. Yet, all property owners in Sarasota County fund our public schools and the School Board makes decisions about how everyone’s tax dollars for schools are spent. They influence what children learn, how effectively they think about complex issues, which career skills they develop, how well they get along with others and respect fundamental freedoms. Public school children are our future. The School Board can greatly affect the kind of community Sarasota will be.

Because we recognize the importance of Sarasota’s School Board, in April of 2023 the Sarasota LWV established a School Board Observer



Currently declared School Board candidates: Karen Rose, Liz Barker, Tom Edwards

Corps to monitor Sarasota County School Board meetings, shine a spotlight on our elected officials and document how meetings are conducted. Since the Observer Corps has been issuing and posting “Report Cards”, there has been a marked improvement in the Board’s governance and communication style. (Report Cards for past meetings can be found on our website [LWVSRQ.org](http://LWVSRQ.org) under Resources/Public Materials/expanded.)


To further inform the public, the LWV of Sarasota County is hosting a forum online and in person with candidates for the upcoming School Board election to give voters the opportunity to determine who will best serve their community. Additionally, our one-stop election website, [vote411.org](http://vote411.org), will provide unbiased information on each candidate. Voters can also download “Choosing a School Board Member: Things to Consider When You Vote” from our website, [LWVSRQ.org](http://LWVSRQ.org), by selecting Resources/Public Folder expanded/Voter Education.

We want all voters to cast their ballots in this August’s School Board election and to appreciate the importance of their vote. The LWV of Florida believes “public education is the cornerstone of our democracy, and parents, teachers, administrators, community members and school boards working together...will make the best educational decisions for students.”

We realize that many full-time residents leave Sarasota in the summer and forget to request a vote-by-mail ballot. Witness the August 2022 primary election that had a countywide voter turnout of just 36.53%. We cannot have an effective School Board that represents all of our community and works in everyone’s best interests if more than two-thirds of our eligible voters don’t vote.

Your vote is your voice.

To find out more about who's running for office visit: <https://wslr.org/elections-2024/>



**Two Truths in One Heart  
Two Peoples in One Land**  
Sunday, February 18, 7pm  
Noor Awad & Rabbi Hanan Schlesinger  
Unitarian Universalists of Sarasota  
3975 Fruitville Road

## YVote Contest Winners Recognized



*Six high school students received awards for their winning entries in the LWV’s YVote Contest on November 28, 2023 during Sarasota School Board’s Moments of Pride Special Event. The contest gave students the opportunity to express their views about why it was important for every eligible person to vote. Winning entries will be on display at several of Sarasota’s public libraries during 2024.*

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# 2024 Florida Legislative Session Preview

The Florida Legislature meets in session every year for 60 consecutive days. The 2024 regular session convenes January 9 and ends May 8.

The Republican Party maintains a supermajority in both the House and the Senate. A supermajority can override the Governor’s veto, override legislative rules, and act without any buy-in from the minority caucus or greater public.

Senate President Kathleen Passidomo (R-Naples) and House Speaker Paul Renner (R- Palm Coast) will be serving their second session as presiding officers of each chamber and will play a prominent role in determining policy and budget priorities. Senator Ben Albritton and Representative Benny Perez are the incoming leadership for the 2025-26 term.

In November, Senator Passidomo issued her goals for the upcoming legislative session, focusing on the healthcare system. Her "Live Healthy Initiative" is designed to increase access to healthcare, improve delivery and lower cost through prevention and early medical intervention.

Renner’s priorities for 2024 are to increase the number of healthcare providers in the state, improve access to mental healthcare, and to begin conversations that will ensure Florida’s independence in the energy, pharmaceuticals, and food industries.

In the weeks leading up to DeSantis’ announcement that he was going to run for president, the Legislature in May passed an exception for the governor to the state’s resign-to-run law, initiatives to further restrict access to abortion, as well as a ban on gender affirming care for minors. Lawmakers also okayed permitless concealed carrying of firearms, and provided taxpayer financed universal scholarships for private schools. For the third time in four years the legislature approved a pay raise for the state’s 97,000 workers.

DeSantis recently rolled out his budget proposal for the 2024-25 fiscal year. The proposed budget—a decrease from the current fiscal \$119.1 billion spending plan— includes a variety of tax cuts and spending on such things as teacher salary increases and police recruitment bonuses. The budget is lower in part because it doesn’t contain billions in Federal coronavirus relief dollars. DeSantis’ spending plan sets aside millions for some of his top political priorities, including another \$5 million to continue his controversial migrant relocation program, \$853 million for job training programs and \$45 million to pay 15,000 teachers to undergo civics training crafted by conservative organizations.

## 2024-25 Proposed Funding Highlights

**ENVIRONMENT:** \$745 million for Everglades restoration efforts; \$157 million for rising sea level and coral reef protection; \$100 million for Florida

Forever (land conservation), \$20 million for citrus research. DeSantis is also proposing to spend \$100 million on the state’s rural and family protection program even though he line-item vetoed a similar provision this past spring

**EDUCATION:** \$27.8 billion injection for the Florida Education Finance Program (the main funding formula for public schools and voucher programs). The increase represents a \$175 boost to the per-student funding in public schools over the current year. DeSantis is also requesting a \$200 million increase to raise educator pay. The governor is proposing to maintain \$350 million that was included in the current year’s budget to help school districts handle unanticipated demand for vouchers after the lawmakers approved a massive expansion of voucher eligibility in the 2023 session.

**TRANSPORTATION:** \$14.5 billion for transportation projects, with \$630 million earmarked for the second phase of the “Moving Forward Florida” initiative.

**PROPERTY INSURANCE:** \$109 million to replenish the My Safe Florida Home program, which helps residents make home improvements to reduce insurance premiums.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT:** DeSantis requested \$87 million to upgrade correctional facilities, \$100 million to improve the state’s cybersecurity framework and \$10 million to improve security at houses of worship, schools and community centers.

**TAX CUTS:** \$1.1 billion in tax breaks, including six sales-tax “holidays” on such things as back-to-school items. \$409 million for one-year exemption on certain taxes, fees and assessments on property insurance policies. \$22 million would provide an exemption on insurance premium taxes on flood-insurance policies. DeSantis also wants to permanently eliminate sales taxes on over-the-counter pet medications (projected to have a \$37 million impact on revenue).

The 2024-2025 budget takes effect July 1.

## Some 2024 Proposed Bills

**HB459: Declarations of a Public Health Emergency** – requires 2/3 of legislature to approve any attempt by the Governor to extend a public health state of emergency for any longer than 60 days; prohibits the State Health Officer from requiring anyone to be vaccinated during a public health emergency.

**HB599: Gender Identity Employment Practices** would bar state employees from using their pronouns, and prohibit nonprofits from training employees on issues of gender and sexuality; bar employers from asking any worker to state their own pronouns; prevent trans employees from sharing

their pronouns; protects employee’s deeply held religious or ‘biology-based’ beliefs from being a basis for adverse personnel actions.

**HB187: Antisemitism** – defines the term ‘antisemitism’; provides contemporary examples of antisemitism.

**HB17: Expiration of the Mandatory Waiting Period for Firearm Purchase** – weakens mandatory waiting period for gun purchases.

**HB359: Voting Systems** – Allows supervisors to count votes by hand rather than machine and also imposes new restrictions on which election equipment vendors can be used.

**HJR: Requiring Broader Public Support for Constitutional Amendments or Revisions** – raises percentage approval needed from voters to pass a constitutional amendment to 67%.

**HB57: County Commission Term Limits** – proposes 8-year term limits for County Commissioners

**HB347: Exemptions from Product Liability Actions** – restricts lawsuits against distributors, retailers and applicators of pesticides.

**HB395: Protection of Historical Monuments and Memorials** – prohibits removal of confederate monuments; allows the governor to remove local government officials who vote to remove confederate monuments, as well as subjecting them to fines and civil lawsuits.

**HB 267: Residential Building Permits** – forces cities with more than 30,000 people to develop ‘expedited’ building permits for homebuilders by August 2024; makes a bunch of other changes that seem to give local governments less time to review development plans and force them to issue approvals more often and more quickly.

**HB333: School District Levies** – proposed constitutional amendment that would apply all of the property tax breaks in the constitution to school property taxes too.

**HB 609: Local Business Taxes** – would eliminate local taxes; estimated \$220 million budget cut for local governments.

**HB 49 - Employment and Curfew of Minors** – eliminates all restrictions on the hours and days 16- and 17-year olds can be required to work.

[All meetings of the legislature are livestreamed on The Florida Channel](#)

They are also available for on-demand viewing within 24 hours of the conclusion of the meeting. To keep up with what’s happening in Tallahassee, you can also tune in to Capitol Update on WSLR on Monday and Wednesdays at 6:30pm from January -March.

## LOCAL LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION:



**Senator Jim Boyd, District 20**  
717 Manatee Avenue West,  
Suite 100  
Bradenton, FL 34205  
(941) 742-6445  
[Boyd.Jim@flsenate.gov](mailto:Boyd.Jim@flsenate.gov)



**Senator Joe Gruters, District 22**  
381 Interstate Boulevard  
Sarasota, FL 34240  
(941) 378-6309  
[Gruters.Joe@flsenate.gov](mailto:Gruters.Joe@flsenate.gov)



**Representative Mike Beltran, District 70**  
For Mail Only  
235 Apollo Beach Boulevard,  
Suite 234  
Apollo Beach, FL 33572-2251  
(813) 653-7097  
[Mike.Beltran@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:Mike.Beltran@myfloridahouse.gov)



**Representative William Robinson, District 71**  
1051 Manatee Avenue West #305  
Bradenton, FL 34205-7801  
(941) 744-5097  
[Will.Robinson@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:Will.Robinson@myfloridahouse.gov)



**Representative Tommy Gregory, District 72**  
8470 Enterprise Circle, Suite 108A  
Lakewood Ranch, FL 34202-4105  
(941) 893-5434  
[Tommy.Gregory@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:Tommy.Gregory@myfloridahouse.gov)



**Representative Fiona McFarland, District 73**  
3131 South Tamiami Trail,  
Suite 206  
Sarasota, FL 34239-5101  
(941) 361-2465  
[Fiona.Mcfarland@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:Fiona.Mcfarland@myfloridahouse.gov)



**Representative James Buchanan, District 74**  
5900 Pan American Boulevard  
Building A: Unit #102  
North Port, FL 34287-3425  
(941) 429-4560  
[James.Buchanan@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:James.Buchanan@myfloridahouse.gov)



**Representative Michael Grant, District 75**  
4355 Pinnacle Street, Suite C  
Port Charlotte, FL 33980-2902  
(941) 613-0914  
[Michael.Grant@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:Michael.Grant@myfloridahouse.gov)



# Clean Water Initiative Falls Short

## STAFF REPORT

November 30 was the last day to collect petition signatures for the Florida Right to Clean Water (FL RTCW) citizens’ initiative to place a constitutional amendment for the right to clean and healthy waters on the 2024 ballot. The campaign is now working to process all signed petitions for final validation with the Supervisors of Elections.

After collecting well over 100,000 signed petitions, organizer Joseph Bonasia said, “The dedication of the initiative’s more than 100 active volunteers and active supporting organizations has been nothing short of exemplary.”

While the campaign fell short of the nearly

900,000 validated signatures required to be placed on the ballot for a vote next year, it is more than ready to start again, hitting the ground running, come early February when the new petition will begin circulating.

Support for the right to clean and healthy waters continues to grow among Florida’s leaders across the aisle, including U.S. Rep. Brian Mast, Florida Rep. Anna Eskamani and Lindsay Cross, and other experienced clean water advocates such as Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch, Jane West and many more. “It has become obvious to all that there is no partisan divide when it comes to clean water. Rather, it is a fight between Floridians and the politics of state-

sanctioned pollution. This is why Florida needs to clarify and enshrine its priorities – clean water first – in its constitution,” says Bonasia.

Throughout December and January, the FL RTCW citizen’s initiative will be securing professional campaign services and fundraising consultants to assure success for the 2026 campaign. All are invited to provide insights and leads during this time through [this form](#).

Details of the 2026 Success Plan will be announced on Thursday, Jan. 25, 2024.

Subscribers to the campaign’s website [www.floridarighttocleanwater.org](http://www.floridarighttocleanwater.org), will receive a notice and link to the event announcement.

# Commentary: We Must All Become Antifascists

BY DALE ANDERSON, FOUNDER  
CHOOSE DEMOCRACY

If there was any doubt of the fascist nature of Donald Trump and the MAGA-movement, that doubt has been erased over the past two years. Prior to the ex-president’s attempted “coup” on January 6, scholars and media pundits debated the appropriate political label for Trump and his followers. Populists? Right-wing extremists? Illiberal democrats? Christian nationalists? This was despite the fact that prior to Trump’s election in 2016, a Washington Post article, “How Fascist is Donald Trump” scored the former president alarmingly high on a fascist scale based on the opinion of seven historians.

His macho-theatrical behavior, his labeling of the media and oppositional groups as “enemies of the people”, his campaigning on “big lies” (a Hitler tactic), his recurring hate rallies and his encouragement of violence all raised alarms about the nature of his political movement.

During his presidency, his fascist nature was further revealed by desire for military parades, his surrounding himself with generals, his continued sacking of cabinet members and staff based on their “loyalty” and his racist attacks on Muslims, Hispanics, and African Americans. Trump’s assault on expertise was in full view with his hostility towards the State Department, Intelligence Services, the Justice Department, the scientific community, and individual members of congress – all actions from the fascist playbook.

And now, as Trump is poised to run as the Republican candidate in 2024, he has ratcheted up his fascist speech, referring to his opponents as “vermin” and pledging to root out and punish his domestic enemies on DAY ONE.

Eric Posner compares demagogues and statesmen in his book “The Demagogue Playbook”. He writes whereas the statesman appeals to reason, interest, values and positive emotions, the demagogue appeals to fear, hatred, prejudice, and negative emotions. The statesman seeks public good while the demagogue seeks personal power. The statesman’s character is ideally virtuous and prudent, while the demagogue is universally amoral, narcissistic, and violent. The statesman’s authority is based on experience, expertise, and virtue while the demagogue’s authority is based on his connection to people. The statesman’s style is technocratic and unifying while the demagogue’s is vulgar, angry and divisive. Finally, the statesman is respectful towards institutions and expertise while the demagogue displays only hostility.

Demagogues are propelled into the public

sphere during times of economic stress and cultural transition. They ascend by their ability to tap into their follower’s fears, claim they can protect their followers from threatening change, convince them they are the morally and intellectually superior group and thus justified in using violence to maintain power and subjugate others.

For decades, conservatives have watched society move towards equality for women, people of color and the LGBTQ community. The MAGA revolution is an attempt to stop these groups from attaining the freedoms and equal opportunity enjoyed by whites, males and the Christians.

Trump is now the leading Republican candidate for the 2024 presidency. He is backed by billionaires, corporations, a massive media infrastructure and a political party ready to fulfill his fascist vision – one that is a profound threat to our nation.

What must each of us do? Lower our profile? Hope and pray? Plan to leave the country? While these may be reasonable Plan B strategies, Plan A must be to defeat the fascist threat. Each of us must make it our mission to help save our democracy. Working alone as a pro-democracy activist is difficult, so a first step is to join one or more of the 200+ pro-democracy organizations in Florida (e.g. The League of Women Voters, Floridians for Democracy, Choose Democracy Now, the Florida Veterans for Common Sense, Indivisible). Make it your mission to help save our democracy. Write it down. Tell your family and friends of your new commitment. Schedule time for

pro-democracy work on your calendar. Then go to work using your voice, your pen, your skills, your dollars, and your vote.

The sanctity of our elections, the integrity of our rule of law, and the guarantee of our hard-earned freedoms are at stake. Our freedom to vote, freedom of religion, freedom to speak, freedom to peacefully protest, freedom to choose who we love and when we have a family, freedom to read and learn. These are priceless gifts of our democracy. Let’s guarantee them for future generations.

Each of us must now act.

We all must become antifascists.

[choosedemocracynow.com](http://choosedemocracynow.com)

FOGARTYVILLE 2024

Spoken Word Series

Second Saturday of the Month

Featured Poet at 8pm Open Mic at 9pm

January 13 BlacJak

Transplanted from St. Louis, MO to Tampa, FL. Her appreciation for the arts is deeply rooted in her childhood. A seasoned artist, BlacJak offers a bold perspective on the world around her through her work. She is a published author of three books.

February 10 Curtis Davis

The founder of **GrowHouse LLC** a creative collaborative incubator; Davis, a Tampa native, has been performing and competing in *Slam Poetry* competitions since '10 he has become a staple in the Bay-area Poetry community. He also mentors a youth poetry slam team through the **Heard 'Em Say Youth Arts Collective**.

March 9 Gemini Fox

The love child of Dr. Seuss and Maya Angelou. Her poems foster healing, understanding and create connections. An active member of **Growhouse** Tampa artist collective.

April 13 Charles Hines

Majoring in English: creative writing at **UCF**. Wins include: **2020 & '21 Orlando Fusion Fest Slam** Champion, **GrowHouse Tampa Gab and Jab Poetry Slam** Champion + **Slammadness '23** Runner Up **Plus:** 3rd ranked Indie Poet at the **'23 Southern Fried Slam**.

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DISC CULTURE



# Commentary: Three Sarasota Icons at a Breaking Point



BY TOM MATRULLO

Sarasota is in the grip of a growth machine that threatens to render three of its most iconic places unrecognizable.

*US News & World Report* recently tagged Sarasota County as the [second fastest growing region in the United States](#). That “success” has had consequences: Between 2013-23, housing prices shot up by 148% here -- way above the national average.

While local boosters point with optimistic glee to the prosperity new residents and tourists bring, residents have pinpointed growth as their #1 concern four years in a row, citing failing roads, development incompatibilities, and the exodus of working people unable to buy or rent. As gated communities and strip malls crop up, developers ask for -- and often receive -- maximum densities.

As we move into 2024, exorbitant developer proposals threaten three unique places beloved by the public. Could these assets be at a breaking point?

**1. Siesta Key:** With its walkable village and famed beach, Siesta has long been the number one tourist feature in the county. Developers want high-rise hotels that would far exceed the current density limit of 26 units per acre; residents have lined up to oppose them.

“Siesta Key has the most intensive residential development in Sarasota County,” says Lourdes Ramirez, a resident who took the county to court for violating its Comp Plan, and succeeded in blocking the County Commission’s efforts to bypass those limits.

Benderson Development Inc. now wishes to change county policy to allow hotels with virtually no unit limit. After more than a dozen community leaders offered cogent reasons why that would disrupt the character of their neighborhood, they watched the Commission direct staff to process Benderson’s proposal.

“Increasing density for mega-size hotels on a hurricane prone barrier island will put residents and visitors at increased risk,” says Ramirez. Will the Board listen?

2. At the opposite edge of the county, residents of northeast Sarasota oppose the eastward march of Lakewood Ranch. At risk are 4,123 acres of **Old Miakka** with 5,000 dwelling units removed from the county’s oldest rural community. Folks there believed they were protected by an [“Old Miakka Neighborhood Plan”](#) developed by the County 20 years ago. To their dismay they learned that the plan was never formally adopted by the County -- it was merely “accepted.”

Founded 170 years ago -- before Sarasota was a county -- Old Miakka now fears for its very way of life. Leading the impetus to expand Lakewood Ranch to the east are two powerful developers, Rex Jensen and Pat Neal. Old Miakka has appealed a Comp Plan amendment approved by the Board, and a judge’s ruling could come in mid-December. If the ruling goes against them, their distinctive world will become part of Lakewood Ranch -- without the ranch, wood, or lake.

3. Midway between Siesta Key and Old Miakka sits the **Celery Fields**, which began in the late 90s as a stormwater management effort. The area now protects hundreds of homes on [Phillippi Creek](#) that earlier had been ravaged by a fierce 1992 flood.

From that project rose an unexpected dividend -- actually, two: First, more than 250 species of native and migratory birds discovered a serene wetland haven where they can rest and nest. Soon after, “Mt. Celery,” the elevated plateau created from muck, began to attract Sarasotans to a unique recreational space where, after a gentle climb, they see birds in flight below. These days residents and tourists who love to hike, walk their dogs, work out with their track and athletic teams, or just watch the birds and the sunset, gravitate to the Celery Fields. At night, a “Dark Skies” policy mutes the streetlights, and amateur astronomers sometimes bring huge scopes to explore the heavens.

The public investment in creating this Trifecta approaches \$50 million, and it has captured the hearts of the people. When a developer sought to build a dump next to it, the overwhelming public reaction was fiercely articulate and unambiguous. He lost.

After Sarasota Audubon built a Nature Center at the Celery Fields at a cost of \$1 million, the County granted them an easement on 27 acres west of the Celery Fields. Along with the Conservation Foundation, Audubon plans to buffer and diversify the habitat through a [\\$5 million “Re-Wilding”](#) of the Quad parcels.

Now, however, Texas builder DR Horton proposes to build 171 homes on farmland immediately east of the nesting wetlands on Raymond Road. This intense cluster will impact wildlife, traffic, runoff, the dark skies and more.

“The effort and funding going into the Quad parcels to buffer the western edge of the Celery Fields will be adversely affected by this development planned for the southeastern edge,” says Jeanne Dubi, president of Sarasota Audubon, adding, “A lose-lose all round.” [A petition circulating by a concerned citizen is closing in on 6,000 signatures opposing Horton’s plan.](#)

Siesta Key, Old Miakka and the Celery Fields contribute immensely to the diversity, beauty and quality of life for all. Each is a beloved and iconic public asset. At coming hearings, each could be sacrificed for the sake of private profit.

Old Miakka will soon learn if its challenge to the Neal/Jensen project holds up in court.

The public hearing for DR Horton’s proposal at the Celery Fields is expected in March.

Timing on Benderson’s mega-hotel proposal is as yet unknown.

Imagine Sarasota County without modest Siesta Village, or once-peaceful evenings at the Celery Fields with a Horton neighborhood next door. Picture the rural legacy of Old Miakka paved into oblivion by an extra subdivision of Lakewood Ranch.

Sarasota could lose its [genius loci](#) -- the unique aura that makes it Sarasota. All three of these irreplaceable communities will need widespread community support if they are to keep the places they love intact..



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# Where’s Our Water Coming From?

continued from pg 1

pumping Peace River water as well, more reservoirs will be needed.

The water in the new reservoirs will be taken from the Peace River - but due to excessive pumping elsewhere, the upper Peace River already often goes completely dry during drought. To be sure, the Peace River Authority is, on average, still far from reaching the allowed diversion from the river, according to its use permit. However, between seasonal shifts - in dry season, the Peace River Authority cannot take from the river - declining inland lake levels due to excessive pumping, and climate change - by way of rising sea levels, saltwater intrusion during storms, and extended drought periods - the authority's allowable diversion is likely to shrink.

### First challenge: Cost

The way higher water demand and increasingly scarce supply will first be felt is in our pocketbooks. At a recent town hall meeting, Manatee County Commissioner George Kruse - who represents his county on the Peace River Authority's board - warned his constituents that the nearly 10% water rate hikes over the past two years may have just been a prelude.

"If you think nine and a half percent increase in water now is bad, wait until we tell you you're buying water from the Peace River, because we don't even have the adequate pipes to get it here," Kruse said. "So, we, Manatee County, have the sole responsibility of building those pipes. We, Manatee County, have the sole responsibility of building the reservoirs to create the capacity of Peace River to hold the water for us, and we, Manatee County, have to buy water from Peace River whose rates are twice what ours are."

### Reuse - a more sustainable solution?

Meanwhile, the City of Sarasota, which is not a member of the Peace River Authority, seems to be

headed towards re-use. That approach sounds yucky to some, and it does not come free either. But it may be more affordable and sustainable than importing water from elsewhere.

River dwellers in Europe have long been drinking former wastewater after going through treatment plants. However, in the United States only regulators in Colorado and Texas so far allow the reuse of water.

Here in Florida, we're not an exception. But in fast-growing Plant City - the unofficial capital of phosphate mining and strawberries - they're trying to change that. In a pilot project, the city utility now pumps all the water processed at their central wastewater treatment plant to further filter it at a reuse facility. After filtration, it is chlorinated for disinfection and pumped into storage tanks. And from there, it could go back into the water system.

Because Florida regulators don't allow that yet, Plant City's treated water so far only goes to select reuse customers for industrial use, for cooling towers and for irrigation of orange groves, plant nurseries and lawns. Most of it actually goes unused. So, in yet another step, they strip the remaining water of chlorine and dump it. But Plant City started the process with state regulators to allow them to use that reclaimed water as drinking water.

That pilot project is a big deal for the City of Sarasota. Bill Riebe, the city utility's director, believes that recycling is the best solution to cover future water needs. The city relies on pumping groundwater from

the downtown and Verna wellfields. That water, when it comes back as wastewater, is treated in one of the most advanced treatment plants in the region - only to be dumped into the estuary at Whitaker Bayou to the tune of five to six million gallons a day.

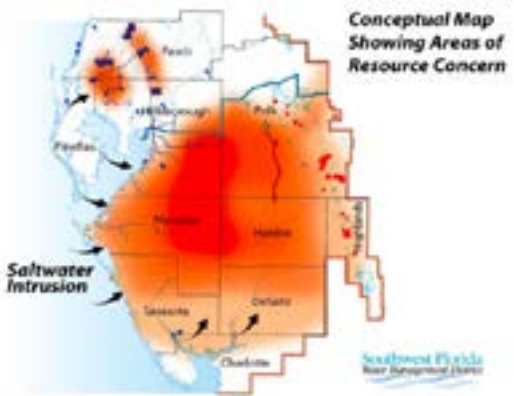
Given estimated population growth in the city and salinization of groundwater, this will be sustainable only until 2040. Then we would have to begin pumping more water from the aquifer - which is unlikely to be allowed; buying water from other sources further inland - which is expensive; start desalinating seawater - which Florida regulators discourage because of its high energy needs; or use reclaimed water.

Riebe says that all these options are on the table, but reuse looks like the most feasible solution. Here's how the utility director put it to city commissioners in a recent workshop:

"This is the future of water. The state of Colorado already has implemented this, the state of Texas - you're going to see many, many other states do the same thing. The technology is in place to do this safely and effectively."

"It's very, very good water. If we put our reclaimed water in a jar and we put our finished water in a jar, they're indistinguishable. You couldn't tell the difference just from looking at it. You just can't."

The cost of implementing this will be high. However, the alternatives are probably costlier and less sustainable.



## Faith & Society Speaker Series

Church of the Palms is once again presenting their “Faith & Society Speaker Series”. Join nationally recognized thought leaders as they share their stories and explore issues surrounding faith and society. Events are free and open to all.



Thursday, February 22, 6:30-8:30pm

Dr. Kristin Du Mez is a professor of History at Calvin University. Her research areas focus on the intersection of gender, religion, and politics in recent American history. She is the author of the bestselling book *Jesus and John Wayne*.



Thursday, March 14, 6:30-8:30pm

Jim Wallis is a bestselling author, public theologian, renowned preacher, founder of Sojourners Magazine, and commentator on ethics and public life. He served on The White House Advisory Council on Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships and has taught faith and public life courses at Harvard and Georgetown University.

Thursday, January 25, 6:30-8:30pm

Dr. Glaude is a bestselling author (*Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for our Own*) and Chair of Princeton's Department of African American Studies. He regularly appears on Meet the Press on Sundays. Combining a scholar's knowledge of history, a political commentator's take on the latest events, and an activist's passion for social justice, Glaude challenges all of us to examine our collective American conscience.

### Love a Parade?

Join WSLR as we march in the MLK Unity Walk on Monday, January 15 at 11am. Walk begins at RLTaylor Community Center and ends at MLK Park. See website for details.

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# RUBY

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