Along the Coast

Staying safe to stay open

County masks up in renewed effort to contain virus

By Charles Elmore

Within days of summer’s formal start, hopes for a season of easing restrictions on daily life collided with a wave of troubling reports of COVID-19’s spread, spurring Palm Beach County to make masks mandatory for customers at businesses like Annie Blake’s restaurant in Delray Beach.

She hopes people understand, and maybe also accept an “air hug” instead of a traditional embrace. “It goes against the nature of us being hospitable, but it’s the new normal,” said Blake, who co-owns Death or Glory on Northeast Sixth Avenue.

She knows people want to relax, get together and enjoy life a bit after months of strain. Yet the situation has forced the rethinking of even the simplest human impulses, such as blowing out candles on a birthday cake that guests are about to eat.

Now masks in public no longer can be left to personal choice, as far as county commissioners are concerned. Palm Beach County was slower to take that step than other big counties in South Florida, but then went on to announce it would mail masks to all households in the county of 1.5 million people.

“From a guest perspective, it will be interesting,” Blake said. “I guess we will have to do some mask policing if people don’t wear them. On the other hand, it’s a little easier if we can blame someone as bad cop.”

Employees were already wearing masks, she noted, and now patrons are required to do the same under county rules passed June 23.

County Vice Mayor Robert Weinroth, said he “hates” the idea of requiring people to wear masks. It goes against his grain, he said.

But Weinroth, whose district includes communities along the county’s southern coast, said he felt compelled to join fellow commissioners in a 7-0 vote to make masks compulsory.

“The numbers we saw this week were just out of this world,” he said. “The system was poorly designed and maintained and has been a disaster.”

Along the Coast

Sea turtle nesting season off to robust start

By Larry Keller

South Florida beach closures because of the coronavirus pandemic may have annoyed some people, but if sea turtles could talk, they likely wouldn’t complain.

The turtles’ nesting season along South County beaches is off to a strong start, and false crawls — incidents where turtles come ashore at night to lay their eggs but turn back without doing so — are down.

“So far this has been a very busy and successful season,” said David Anderson, Gumbo Limbo Nature Center’s sea turtle conservation coordinator. He oversees monitoring of sea turtle activity over 5 miles of Boca Raton beach.

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On Feb. 4, the city of Delray Beach was told by the Florida Health Department that it must implement a citywide boil water order after receiving complaints that the city’s drinking water had become contaminated with reclaimed water.

The order was avoided only by an agreement to shut down the reclaimed water system while the problems were identified and repaired.

Move forward to late June. About 90% of customers are back on line, and the cost for fixing the system is nearing $1 million.

Yes, you saw that right: $1 million. Add that to the $8 million budget shortfall already facing the city.

Taxpayers have a right to know who is to blame for this expensive debacle. After all, they are going to pay for it.

City Manager George Gretsas did the right thing in his first few months on the job by contracting with a consultant to analyze what went wrong, and hiring a highly respected director for fresh oversight of the Water Utilities Department. The DOH supports these decisions.

Then, on June 24, city commissioners voted 3-2 to suspend Gretsas and file a notice to terminate, even before an independent counsel released results of an investigation into a personnel matter that alleged bullying, gender bias and emotional abuse by Gretsas.

According to one complaint, Gretsas was irate over how the reclaimed water project repairs were being managed.

Is that a surprise? Management failures have long plagued City Hall. There have been five city managers and three interim managers since the water project began in 2006. That leadership void at the top allowed a revolving door in the department overseeing the project. Mismanagement and a lack of oversight were the result.

Whether anything criminal occurred has not been determined.

At press time, it was not clear if Gretsas’ termination is warranted, but there’s little doubt it would be dramatic, divisive and expensive for the city.

The residents of Delray Beach have had their health jeopardized by systemic mismanagement. The truth must be known. Investigations begun by Gretsas must not be abandoned because of his suspension, and Hassan Hadjimir, the new Water Utilities director, must be retained and given authority to assure confidence in the water system.

Elected officials owe taxpayers that much, and more.

— Mary Kate Leming, Editor

Editor's Note

Delray commission owes taxpayers the truth

By Charles Elmore

Isolation. Loneliness. Underemployment or no job at all.

Millions are grappling with that reality in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, hoping that threats to health, lives and livelihoods subside and better days lie ahead.

But such challenges are not new for many people that Best Buddies was created to serve — those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, said Ocean Ridge resident Robert “Bobby” Kane.

In January, Kane was named chair of the county’s Best Buddies advisory board.

The organization promotes one-on-one friendships and inclusion. It works to explore job possibilities for people whose unemployment rate ranks among the highest in society, often exceeding 75%.

“A lot of people have a family member with I/DD,” Kane said. “I just feel like too much of the burden gets placed on the families. We as a society should be the ones helping.”

Kane, 34, handles complex commercial litigation, among other things, as a shareholder in the law firm of Greenberg Traurig. On the way to earning undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Florida, he suited up for national championship football teams with the Gators.

“I walked on,” Kane said, meaning he joined the team without an athletic scholarship. “It was right when (coach) Urban Meyer got hired. I was a backup. I got on the field as a special teams player. Then I got two national championships in four years with Tim Tebow at quarterback. The talent we had … he laughed before adding, ‘Not myself. But the talent was just unbelievable.’

Kane calls his role in Best Buddies “a natural progression.” He joined volunteer programs in college and undertook legal aid work during his professional career, with the blessing of an employer he said encouraged it.

Since 2017, Kane has been a member of the local Best Buddies board.

With headquarters in Miami, Best Buddies International describes itself as the world’s largest nonprofit devoted solely to “providing opportunities for friendship, advocacy, leadership development and inclusive living” for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Founded in 1989, it counts nearly 3,000 chapters around the world, serving 1.3 million people. Best Buddies has chapters in 30 schools in Palm Beach and Martin counties.

Theresa Galindo, a senior at Olympic Heights High School in Boca Raton and a Best Buddies member, shared online that growing up watching her older brother, Michael, contend with multiple disabilities “inspired me to pursue a purpose-driven life.”

Best Buddies is having to adapt to a world with the coronavirus. A June 28 Best Buddies Friendship Walk in Palm Beach County and other locations around the state became a “virtual walk,” with participants connecting online, not gathering in large groups.

The virus also has complicated job initiatives. Local participants have found employment from bagging groceries to working in companies’ social media campaigns over time, Kane said.

Best Buddies in Palm Beach and three other regions in the state is supporting 155 adults and youths with disabilities in Florida who are either seeking or successfully employed in jobs.

In some cases, job participants placed by Best Buddies were disproportionately affected by COVID-19 because they were often the first to get terminated or furloughed. The organization has also wrestled with budget constraints during a time of economic uncertainty.

Still, it’s a program worth fighting for, Kane said.

“To our Buddies, their jobs help provide a sense of independence, belonging and accomplishment,” he said.

Kane said his role would not be possible without his wife, Lynsey, who is active with community work, including Best Buddies.

In his free time, you will likely find him boating with his family, including son Bobby IV, 3, and daughter Elie, 20 months. The couple are expecting their third child in October. Kane likes to sneak out before work to go fishing at sunrise on his Conch 27 center console.

He donates fishing excursions in the Florida Keys for honorees in the Best Buddies Champion of the Year Gala, which is virtual this year on Oct. 23. He also plays an organizing role with the Palm Beach County Bar Association’s Nonprofit Fishing Tournament, which benefits the Legal Aid Society’s Education Advocacy Project for children.

“Best Buddies is something we do together as a family,” Kane said. “It’s important for me to expose my children to people from all walks of life and encourage inclusion. They need to see life through other people’s prisms and experiences.”
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**Boca Raton**

**Navy calls up deputy mayor for overseas mission**

By Mary Hladky

Deputy Mayor Jeremy Rodgers, a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy Reserve, will deploy in August to Qatar in support of NATO operations in Afghanistan.

Rodgers, who announced his deployment at the June 23 City Council meeting, said he wants to complete his term of office by attending city meetings remotely.

If that cannot be accomplished, Rodgers, 41, said he would submit a leave of absence and council members would appoint someone to temporarily fill his seat until his term ends on March 31, 2021. But he will step down as deputy mayor, saying that position should be held by a council member physically present in the city. He asked that his colleagues make the selection at the next council meeting on July 28.

The job of a reservist is to be ready for active deployment, he said. "Recently, I received that call," Rodgers said. "It is my turn to serve and I am needed. The military selected me for deployment and I stand ready." Rodgers was elected to a three-year council term in 2015 and won re-election in 2018. In an interview, Rodgers said he had planned to mobilize after his term ended but was selected earlier than he expected.

Rodgers, a cryptological officer, will manage an intelligence team for missions in Afghanistan. His position may entail travel to that country, he said.

Rodgers, the father of four children, has worked at IBM for almost 20 years and now leads a technical sales engineering team for IBM's security product.

He comes from a military family. Rodgers' father was an Army master sergeant, and his two grandfathers served in the Navy. While he has not served in the active-duty military, he joined the Navy Reserve in 2011. Council members wished Rodgers well.

"I just request that you please stay safe," said Councilman Chris Hazlett. "We will miss you, Deputy Mayor Rodgers," said Andy Thomson. "Godspeed, sailor." ✯

**Boynton Beach**

**Riverwalk has finished parking lot, most landscaping**

By Jane Smith

Within a week of receiving Boynton Beach City Commission approval in mid-June, Riverwalk Plaza had finished landscaping the parking lot and entrances off Woolbright Road.

"The easternmost entrance had a weird S-curve shape," said Luke Therien, who reopened his family’s Prime Catch restaurant on June 24. "Now you can drive south to Jo-Ann Fabric and Crafts store or turn left to Prime Catch."

Therien closed his restaurant in mid-March when all nonessential businesses were shut down to limit the spread of the coronavirus. He did not reopen Prime Catch in May for takeout orders because the parking lot was torn up to install storm drains. He waited until that work was finished.

"Now the parking lot in the whole center is paved," Therien said. "All the landscaping is done, and new storm drains have been installed."

Riverwalk Plaza, owned by Isram Realty, sits at the southeast corner of Federal Highway and Woolbright Road in Boynton Beach. It has city approval to replace the main building with a 10-story apartment project.

The Hallandale Beach-based company paid $8.5 million for the aging center in March 2011. The nearly 10-acre plaza contained a Winn-Dixie grocery store that closed in January 2015.

Throughout 2019, Isram built a dual-space Federal Highway building, which houses a Chipotle's fast-casual restaurant and has space for another tenant. Isram renovated another building in the plaza that houses Walgreens drugstore, Jo-Ann Fabric and Craft, Sushi Simon restaurant and Bond Street Ale and Coffee.

At the same time, Isram had to update the underground utilities, fix the drainage for the complex and raise the parking lot, creating driving challenges for shoppers and diners. Isram has submitted its building plans to the city for the 10-story apartment complex, said Baruch Cohen, chief operating officer for the firm. Construction will start Sept. 1 and take two years to finish.

The rainy weather and the coronavirus shutdown are not responsible for the delayed start, Cohen said. The parking lot work was complex, he said.

Initially, Isram had wanted to use the part of the westernmost parcel of two it owns on the plaza’s south side for a construction staging area for the project. But because the parcels contain mangroves, their use must be approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Isram plans to donate the easternmost parcel, about 5.8 acres, along the Intracoastal Waterway to Boynton Beach. On June 9, Isram supplied additional information that still must be reviewed, according to the Army Corps spokeswoman in Jacksonville.

In other action at the June 16 meeting, city commissioners approved the rezoning of the 108-acre Boynton Beach Mall. It went from the community mall category to a suburban mixed-use category. The city became the petitioner on the second reading while the five owners try to create a master plan for the property. The site plan will come up for approval in the future. ✯
Ocean Ridge

Aug. 18 ballot issue to affect decision on future of police

By Dan Moffett

Ocean Ridge commissioners want to make it a lot more difficult for the town to merge its Police Department with another law enforcement agency. With a unanimous vote on June 12, the commission gave final approval to a charter amendment proposal that requires voters to pass a ballot referendum before any police merger can move forward. Beyond the consent of voters, the proposal would mandate a four-vote supermajority from the Town Commission just to get a merger referendum measure on the ballot.

The ordinance hopefully establishes a clear message to the PBA that at this time we’re not interested in making a change,” Mayor Kristine de Haseth said, referring to the police union.

The proposed town charter change still needs the approval of the town’s voters to become law. It will be on the ballot for the Aug. 18 Florida primary election, and de Haseth said she is concerned residents might not be paying attention.

“With the combination of it being in summer, and people not being comfortable going to public places because of COVID, this could get lost,” the mayor said. “People need to get their absentee ballots early and plan to vote by mail if they don’t want to go to the polls.”

In recent weeks, the Police Benevolent Association and the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office have made overtures to Ocean Ridge officials and residents about the sheriff’s taking over the town’s law enforcement. Some officers in the department have expressed support for the idea and floated the concept of a supermajority referendum.

Last year, South Palm Beach disbanded its department and contracted with the Sheriff’s Office, citing a potential savings to the town of five years. Facing a tight budget year and rising personnel costs, Ocean Ridge commissioner Phil Besler had expressed reluctance to support the ordinance’s supermajority requirement. Cox said he was “very, very uncomfortable with the concept of a supermajority” and worried it could set a troublesome precedent.

Besler said he changed his mind from an earlier “no” vote and concluded that the supermajority stipulation could end up saving the town money over the long run. Both Besler and Cox voted for the ordinance at the final reading.

“The supermajority is not something I take very lightly,” said Commissioner Susan Hurlburt. “But this is a specific situation where without it we could have some political overtones. This extra layer of defense I think is necessary.”

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De Haseth

Ocean Ridge mayor
Septic-to-sewer study funds take backseat to budget woes

By Rich Pollack

With the town’s budget still in flux, Ocean Ridge’s septic-to-sewer citizens advisory committee has agreed to hold off on requesting funds for a cost analysis from an outside firm.

Voting unanimously, the five-member committee, charged with studying the feasibility of replacing septic systems with a sewer system, agreed that it would be premature to request funding for a study to be conducted by Raftelis Financial Consultants.

The committee did, however, agree to seek $6,000 in the town’s upcoming budget for assistance on uncovering possible grant opportunities that could help cover some of the initial costs as well as $3,000 for engineering costs and $1,000 for legal fees.

In addition, the committee asked the Town Commission to allow funds coming to the community from the countywide 1-cent infrastructure sales tax to stay earmarked for the septic-to-sewer conversion, should the town decide to go forward with such a project.

That fund has close to $400,000, according to Town Manager Tracey Stevens, and it initially was expected to grow to about $1 million during its 10-year lifespan. But that is likely to change.

“We have seen a sharp decrease in sales tax revenue due to COVID-19, so that number is expected now to be lower,” Stevens said.

An expected shortfall in the town’s overall revenue for the coming year was one of the factors behind the committee’s decision to delay going forward with a financial analysis, which would include a rate study and identifying funding sources.

In a memo to members of the committee, Stevens said that the town is likely facing an $800,000 budget shortfall in the coming fiscal year. She later told the committee that the cost for the financial study by Raftelis was estimated to be around $30,000.

Committee members, citing the shortfall, agreed that there was no need to rush for the financial study.

“I see little value in using money for Raftelis,” committee Chairman Neil Henningan said. “I don’t think anything they’re going to give us would be urgent.”

The committee, which has not yet made a recommendation on whether to proceed with a septic-to-sewer conversion, agreed to wait for additional direction from the commission before meeting again in August.
Town agrees to sue AT&T to finish underground work

By Steve Plunkett

The town will ask a federal judge to order AT&T to finish putting its lines underground after the telecommunications giant walked off the job in May. The contract dispute could add another year to the overall project, which started in 2013. AT&T wants more than $1 million to complete the job; Gulf Stream says it owes only $400,000.

Joanne O’Connor, an attorney for the town, showed town commissioners a draft lawsuit at their June 12 meeting. Commissioners unanimously agreed to file suit.

“I don’t think we have any alternative but to follow this advice and get a lawsuit filed as soon as possible,” Mayor Scott Morgan said.

Robert Wright, a Tallahassee lawyer who specializes in utilities, will assist the legal action. O’Connor said the lawsuit will be filed in the U.S. District Court in part to get action more quickly.

“We can’t get the lawsuit done over the summer. But compared to being in state court where this could take three to five years, if we file imminently… generally they set trial dates one year out,” O’Connor said.

Wright agreed to discount his legal fees to $250 an hour.

Town officials, surprised by AT&T’s demand for more money, are continuing to ask the company for more details to explain the higher cost.

Comcast, which also put its lines underground, said it encountered nothing in the field to make its job more costly, Assistant Town Attorney Trey Nazzaro said.

Morgan said AT&T put its lines underground in the southern half of town for $160,000 and now wants $1.2 million for the northern half, “a striking difference,” he said.

In other business:

• Foster Marine Contractors began installing a new water main along State Road A1A on June 8. The $1.9 million project will force traffic detours into town at times. Residents close to the work will receive an informational flyer 24 hours ahead of time and can call 888-267-0321 with concerns.

• Commissioners gave Chet Snively permission to demolish the decrepit house at 2775 Avenue Au Soleil and sod the lot. Snively, who is also president of the Place Au Soleil Homeowners Association, bought the house for $400,000 after the heirs of deceased homeowner Richard Lavoie paid Gulf Stream $125,000 in code enforcement liens.

Plastic netting surrounds the historic Australian pine trees that line A1A in Gulf Stream to ensure that workers installing a water main do not damage the roots. Jerry Lower/The Coastal Star
Highland Beach

Commission balks at Delray plan to add four paramedics

By Rich Pollack

Highland Beach commissioners, faced with a 10.3% increase in how much they're charged for fire service from Delray Beach, are questioning why they are being asked to pay for four additional firefighter/paramedics to be assigned to the station in town.

Under a 20-year agreement signed in 2016, Highland Beach pays for the salaries of 22.5 firefighter/paramedics assigned to the station next to Town Hall — a staffing level that includes two personnel on the one rescue vehicle operated out of the station.

In its latest projection of costs to Highland Beach, however, Delray Beach local government in 2020 included the addition of four firefighter/paramedics, helping to push the cost to $4.4 million to $4.8 million, an increase of about $458,000.

The increase sent shock waves through the town and residents who for years have contended the fire contract was unfair.

“Is this really happening to our little town into how much it is being charged. We can’t afford this, we don’t have the flexibility,” Commissioner Elynvald David said after hearing of plans to add four personnel. “They may not have taken into account that we don’t want this or need it.”

While the request to add staff took the town by surprise, Delray Beach Fire Chief Keith Tomey said his department has been telling Highland Beach officials this would be coming for the last three years.

Delray Fire Rescue administrators say the city already has three paramedics assigned to each rescue truck at all of the stations it operates, with the exception of Highland Beach.

Currently all medical calls in Highland Beach require that a rescue wagon and the ladder truck assigned respond so that a paramedic/firefighter is available should one be needed to assist while a patient is being treated and taken to a hospital.

With a third person on the rescue wagon, the ladder truck would not be needed and could be available to respond to a simultaneous call, Tomey said.

Helping to cover the cost of the additional staffing — at least for three years — is a Safer Grant that Delray received from the Department of Homeland Security to pay for eight additional firefighter/paramedics.

Four would be going to the Highland Beach station.

During the first two years, the grant would cover about 75% of the cost but only about 35% of the cost the following year. After that the communities would have to cover the full cost.

That will add to Delray’s already projected operational costs, which increased even more in June when Delray commissioners voted to approve the first contract for four department battalion and three division chiefs.

The contract with the chiefs includes a special stipend of $8,242 per year for working special events such as parades or festivities outside normal hours.

The cost to taxpayers was estimated to be $189,000 annually.

Highland Beach leaders say they too are facing financial challenges and having to pay for four additional personnel will create a hardship for the town both in the short and long run.

Town officials said they were given no opportunity to discuss the addition of four personnel prior to giving the cost estimate for the upcoming year.

“We are customers of Delray Beach Fire Rescue and the Delray Beach commission and we were not brought into the discussion,” said Highland Beach Mayor Doug Hillman.

“This is not treating us as a partner or a customer.”

The mayor said he and other commissioners also were concerned about what they were told would happen if Highland Beach didn’t agree to pay for the additional four staff members.

“We were informed that if we didn’t accept this, the Delray Beach commission would cancel the contract,” he said. “Is this the proper way to treat a customer?”

In an unusual move, the Highland Beach commission held off on voting to reject Delray Beach’s request to amend the contract to include the additional staffing. Instead they dispatched Vice Mayor Greg Bahia to meet with three Delray Beach commissioners who voted for the Safer Grant and share with them why voiding the contract would not be in Delray Beach’s best interest.

Highland Beach commissioners and residents have repeatedly pointed out that the vehicles and crew at the station in town often respond to calls in Delray Beach. From May of last year to May of this year, the staff at the station responded to about 750 calls in Highland Beach and about 600 calls in Delray.

Hillman said that should Delray cancel the contract, it would lose the staff to respond to those calls outside of the town and it would lose about $5 million a year in revenue from Highland Beach.

Tomey agrees that the relationship between the two communities is mutually beneficial and pointed out that since Highland Beach is considered part of Delray Beach’s service area, it has access to all of Delray Beach Fire Rescue resources.

During the meeting, residents dial 911 and the crew at Station 116 is dispatched to a call, the town’s residents are getting access to more than they may realize and more than they pay for, he said. “From backup vehicles such as ladder, rescue and tactical trucks to extra personnel such as battalion chiefs, a medical director, fire investigators, human resources, purchasing and logistics specialists, they have the support of the entire department.”

Highland Beach officials said they want to continue the contract with Delray but need more information on how their bill is determined.

“We would like to maintain our partnership with Delray Beach,” Town Manager Marshall Labadie said. “One way to do that is take a serious look at the financial elements of the contract and improve collaboration.”

Turtles

Continued from page 1

Crawls. That is a significant improvement from previous years, where the ratio was the reverse. Anderson said the ratio has dropped lately, with false crawls now exceeding the true. Specifically, 2019 saw about 50% more nests than last year at this time, and fewer false crawls, said Barbara James, the marine turtle permit holder there. Since the beach has no public access, she said she couldn’t attribute this to fewer people on the beach.

Sea turtle nesting season is March 1 to Oct. 31, although small numbers of nests are dug before and beyond those dates. The first nest discovered this year in Boca Raton was on Feb. 23. It was a leatherback.

That was less than a week before a nourishment project began with beach builders widening the northern five miles of Boca Raton’s beach from 50 to 250 feet. One early nest was moved to an unaffected area.

The first loggerhead in Boca Raton was spotted on April 21, which is when the nesting season officially begins for loggerheads, which return to the beach by the thousands each year to nest. They usually continue to come ashore through September.

All local species are ‘listed’

Five sea turtle species nest on Florida beaches. All are listed as endangered or threatened.

Only loggerheads, greens and leatherbacks typically deposit eggs in South County, and very few of the latter, which are the largest of the species, sometimes weighing 1,500 pounds or more. By late June only 13 nests of leatherbacks had been discovered this year on Boca Raton’s beach. They usually finish nesting before June. Still, it’s no cause for concern. Only 18 leatherback nests were found in each of the past two years. Boca Raton’s modest numbers were more than offset elsewhere. Delray Beach recorded 21 leatherback nests, surpassing last year’s record of 15, Scarola said.

And 20 leatherback nests were found on the beaches that have been surveyed by Kingdon’s group for 21 years. That too was a record, topping the previous high of 16 in 2009, she said.

Leatherback nests are more common to the north. There were 397 nests for all of Palm Beach County, and 380 in Martin County in 2019, according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. That was 78% of all leatherback nests.

There have been more nests overall so far this year on the beaches Kingdon monitors. They include about 400 loggerhead nests, well above the total for the same time last year, she said.

“I think it will be a pretty good year,” Kingdon said. But 2019 was a banner year for loggerheads in Boca Raton too. There were 495 by June 29, putting that beach on track for a strong season, Anderson said.
Along the Coast

Peaceful rallies show support for justice, police

DELRAY BEACH, RIGHT: A group of about 100 gathered May 31 at Veterans Park to peacefully protest the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, while he was in the custody of a white Minneapolis police officer. By the end of June the protests had largely stopped in South County. They were peaceful, according to police.

DELRAY BEACH, ABOVE: As Dan Allen and Mary Adams joined dozens of others at a May 6 protest in Delray Beach, they started talking, realized they shared many of the same concerns, and decided to start dating. He has lived in a variety of places, including Boca Raton, she in Boynton Beach. Ten days later they were planning a vacation together. ‘We have been talking every day; can’t believe it, it never happens this way,’ Allen says.

BOCA RATON, LEFT: A group of nearly 400 people, including supportive police officers, marched from 100 NW Second Ave. to Federal Highway on June 6 in a peaceful protest.

Photos by Tim Stepien and Jerry Lower/
The Coastal Star

BOCA RATON, ABOVE: Nearly 120 people rallied in front of the Boca Raton Police Station on June 22 to demonstrate their support for law enforcement and President Donald Trump’s administration.

BOYNTON BEACH, LEFT: On May 31, dozens of protesters gathered around the city, including this group that traversed the Ocean Avenue bridge into Ocean Ridge a few times. The sign paraphrases Martin Luther King Jr.: ‘It’s not the violence of few that scares us, it’s the silence of the many.’
PROPERTY VALUES RISE
Appraiser likes 5.9% growth as county awaits impact of pandemic

By Mary Hladky

The taxable value of Palm Beach County properties has increased for the ninth year in a row, although the rate of growth continued a multiyear trend of slowing down. The numbers, however, do not reflect any impact from the coronavirus pandemic since they are based on market conditions as of Jan. 1.

Countywide taxable property values jumped 5.9% from 2019 to 2020, down from last year’s 6.2%, according to the 2020 preliminary tax roll that the Palm Beach County Property Appraiser’s Office submitted to the state.

The total taxable value of countywide properties is $277.6 billion, up from $210.3 billion. The total market value of countywide properties increased to $288.6 billion from $277.6 billion in 2019.

New construction added to the tax rolls totaled $3 billion, up from $2.6 billion in 2019.

The taxable value rise “is very healthy,” said Property Appraiser Dorothy Jacks. “It is not too high and not too low.”

It is too early to predict what impact COVID-19 will have on next year’s values, Jacks said, but she expects hotels, non-essential retail and restaurants will take a hit.

“A lot of that property is a tenant-landlord relationship,” she said. “If tenants don’t return, or tenants ask for some dispensation from their rent for a period of time, all that impacts the owner’s income. The income will be reduced.”

As of mid-June, she had not seen an impact on the residential market. “But what it will be over the next six months is the real rub. We are just not sure if there is going to be a larger recession that will cause a decline in residential.”

So far, signs are hopeful. Lots of Realtors report people from New York and the surrounding areas are looking, maybe making decisions to move up retirement, or work from home. A lot of people have ties to this area. They may choose to move on their plans sooner rather than later. That helps the market, Jacks said.

Since 70% of the county’s taxable value comes from residential, a solid residential market would offset commercial market losses, she said.

Despite the pandemic, the Palm Beach County median home sale price was holding steady at $365,000 as of May, Jarrod Low, president of the Broward, Palm Beaches and St. Lucie Realtors, announced on June 22.

That’s virtually the same as last year. Yet the median sale price usually increases year over year. Last year’s increase was 3.1%.

But Low was upbeat. “Most would assume that the market would be derailed after the past few months, but this just goes to show how resilient our county is,” he said. “If you are looking to sell, there are also fewer competing properties right now and fewer days on market.”

Closed sales decreased by 47% because many closings were postponed due to the coronavirus, he said, adding that he expects to see the market begin to normalize this summer.

Like last year, new apartment complexes, hotels and warehouses bolstered the rise in new construction.

Jacks said countywide taxable property values, which increased by $8.6 billion from last year’s $25 billion, continues to outpace every other city in the county. The city’s value rate was up 4.75%, compared with 4.9% last year.

“We are continuing to see robust investment and steady growth in our assessed values,” Mayor Scott Singer said in an email. “Even with the COVID-19 downturn, residential properties are selling briskly and we are seeing more interest from people and companies from other states.”

Delray Beach’s taxable value jumped 7.6%, up from last year’s 6.6%. Boynton Beach’s value increased by 6.8%, down from 7.4% in 2019.

Delray Beach added $225.6 million in new construction to its tax roll, narrowly beating Boca Raton’s $223.7 million. High-value redevelopment projects in the city’s eastern communities and downtown added to the tax roll, said Anthea Gianotto, Delray Beach’s development services director.

“We are growing like crazy,” she said. “A lot of this is a realization of a lot of the hard work that went into revitalizing our downtown over the last 20 years. We have created a beautiful downtown.”

Gianotto said next year’s new construction numbers would be strong as well, as the iPic theater building, Ray Hotel and portions of the Atlantic Crossing project will be added to the tax roll.

The overall taxable value percentage growth leader in south Palm Beach County was South Palm Beach, which jumped a whopping 21.7%.

Town Manager Robert Kellogg attributed that to the addition to the tax roll of 3550 South Ocean, a seven-story oceanfront luxury condo, as well as a new single-family home on the ocean.

That’s a one-year boon for the town, as Kellogg said he does not expect any new construction to take place in the foreseeable future.

Property values increased by 11.1% in Briny Breezes, 2.8% in Gulf Stream, 2.5% in Highland Beach, 6.8% in Lantana, 1.5% in Manalapan, and 4.8% in Ocean Ridge.

The largest Boca Raton projects added to the tax roll this year were a new $57 million headquarters for prison and immigrant detention center operator GEO Group at 4955 Technology Way, new construction at the Pride Boca Raton apartments at 950 Broken Sound Parkway NW, and a six-bedroom, nine-bathroom mansion at 1410 North Royal Palm Way.

Delray Beach’s largest were the 66-condo 111 SE First Ave., the Aloft Hotel at 202 SE Fifth Ave., and a Courtyard Marriott at 135 SE Sixth Ave.

Boynton Beach’s biggest were the 324-unit Pacifica apartment complex at 1080 Audace Ave., The Club at Boynton Beach assisted living facility at 623 S. Federal Highway, and an Aldi supermarket at 1452 W. Boynton Beach Blvd.

Local governments use the taxable value numbers to calculate how much property tax they can expect in the coming year so they can set their annual budgets and 2020-2021 tax rates.

The overall increase in taxable values was welcome news for municipal leaders since a decline would have meant less tax revenue coming in and forced difficult budget decisions.

But as the coronavirus pandemic continues, cities will see a decrease in other expected income, including sales tax revenue. As of late June, it was not yet clear how big those losses would be.

LETTERS:
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Preferred length is 200-500 words. Send email to news@thecoastalstar.com.
Agents say residential market shows recovery in sales, rentals

By Rich Pollack

June is normally when real estate professionals — who help connect sellers and buyers of luxury homes along South Florida’s coast — can relax a little and catch their breath. This was not a normal June, however, and instead of kicking back, many real estate professionals went into July working overtime as the residential home market kicked back up.

“This has been the busiest June we’ve had in my 17-year real estate career,” said Nick Malinosky, executive director of luxury sales for Douglas Elliman Real Estate. “I’m three times busier than I would normally be this time of year.”

The driving force behind this seeming real estate boom — with increased demand for rentals as well as condo and single-family home sales — may be COVID-19.

Pent-up demand in the real estate market, which all but dried up early in the pandemic, combined with people’s desires to flee urban areas hit hard by the virus, made for busy phones in local real estate offices.

“I’ve never seen it like this,” said Steven Presson of the Corcoran Group, who specializes in coastal homes in South Palm Beach County. “Every day I’m seeing homes that were on the market for a long time being sold.”

In Palm Beach County, there were 138 closed sales of homes over $1 million in March, down 25% from the previous year and only 93 in April, down 37% from April 2019.

But from May 1 through late June there were about 250 closed sales of homes over $1 million. That’s still down from the 392 similar sales during the same period last year, or 36%, but it shows that a recovery is taking place.

“The fact that we’re that close and that high considering the pandemic is indicative of how quickly we’ve recovered,” said Jarrod Lowe, president of the Broward, Palm Beaches and St. Lucie Realtors. “It’s a testament to how much of a thriving market we’re in.”

Lowe said the trend crosses all aspects of the residential home-buying market in Palm Beach County. “The residential market is just on fire,” he said.

Rentals also heating up

Demand also is high for rental properties, especially from residents of the Northeast and the Chicago area. Demand began growing soon after the number of coronavirus cases began rapidly increasing in those areas, according to agents.

“We started getting an incredible amount of calls from people looking for rental properties,” Malinosky said. That helped push the price of rentals up — in some cases dramatically.

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To illustrate the point, Presson highlights a coastal home that rented for $25,000 a month for three months. Normally, he said, that same home would have rented for about $10,000 a month during the same period. Even higher offers came in after the first offer had been accepted.

Real estate agents will tell you that the market could be even hotter were it not for some unexpected obstacles.

“Our biggest problem right now is law inventory,” says Patricia Towle, a sales associate at Sotheby’s International Realty in Palm Beach who sees the market on track to make a strong come back. “Sellers pulled their homes off the market because of uncertainty.”

Buyers were a little nervous as well.

Towle says she had a buyer who put in an offer on a home prior to the pandemic but pulled it once conditions deteriorated.

The buyer stayed in touch with her and came back after the slowdown with the same offer on the table with no conditions and a quick closing.

Towle, who specializes in Point Manalapan and Hypoluxo Island, said that in mid-March there had been seven closings and three sales pending. After a fall in activity during April and May, sales picked back up, with 12 closings by mid-June.

One area where there’s not as much activity as there is with single-family homes is in the condo and townhouse market — with restrictions brought on by the pandemic having a lot to do with that.

Condo buyer frustrated

Many condo associations, according to Malinosky, didn’t allow showings, while others restricted access so that even after a unit was purchased the new buyer could not move in right away.

That proved to be frustrating for 84-year-old Tom Carr, who closed on a condo in Highland Beach on March 9 but discovered two days later that the condo association would not allow his furniture to be delivered.

“The virus made it impossible for me to move in,” he said.

Carr, who had to be out of his nearby rental unit by the end of April, ended up living in a neighbor’s apartment and overseeing some repairs while the neighbor was away. He was able to move into his new condo in mid-June, with all of the deliveries coming in one day.

Another challenge for those selling condominiums and townhouses has been travel restrictions and a reluctance of prospective buyers to fly in.

To get around that problem, some agents have been offering virtual tours and have seen units sold without the buyers’ ever stepping foot inside.

Malinosky says there were still quite a few sales in the condo market as well as inquiries, and he foresees improvement as restrictions are loosened. “The demand is there,” he said.

The demand is especially high, he believes, for spacious condos where residents can work from home, perhaps with a window view of the ocean.

Privacy is also an issue, with some buyers looking for units that come with a private elevator and even private pools.

When it comes down to it, what buyers of both condos and single-family homes are looking for is the same thing — the Florida lifestyle.

“People are figuring that if they’re going to be anywhere, they would rather be in Florida,” said Malinosky, adding that some see it as a more open and safer environment.

It doesn’t hurt, either, that taxes in Florida are more affordable than those in many parts of the Northeast.

Presson says a lot of buyers he’s seeing these days are people who have been indecisive about moving to Florida.

“COVID pushed them off the fence,” he said.
Surge in property values paints rosy budget picture for town

By Dan Moffett

Town Manager Robert Kellogg had plenty of good news to report about the financial health of South Palm Beach during the Town Council’s meeting on June 9.

Kellogg told council members that the town’s taxable value has skyrocketed 21.7% this year over last, far more than any other municipality in Palm Beach County.

Two reasons for the surge: the $70 million luxury condominium building, 3550 South Ocean, has finally come onto the tax rolls. And so has developer Frank McKinney’s five-bedroom, five-bath single-family home at 3492 S. Ocean Blvd., currently on the market for $13.9 million.

The net result is a $78 million jump in taxable value for the town, from $361.5 million in 2019 to $439.6 million in 2020, according to the Palm Beach County Property Appraiser’s Office.

But wait. Council members have more good news as they begin to deliberate next year’s budget.

The town is projected to save about $200,000 this year because it has merged its Police Department with the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office. Moreover, cash reserves are healthy, too, because money that for years was set aside to pay for an expensive beach stabilization project won’t be needed. That beach plan fell apart last year and has been replaced with a far less costly sand dune replacement project.

“Is this the best it’s ever looked,” said Mayor Bonnie Fischer, who has served on the council since 2011. “What we do with the revenue will be determined during a budget workshop as a decision by everybody.”

The continuing budget issue facing the council is whether to repair or replace the aging Town Hall building. Officials have wrestled with a decision on that for the past three years, going through a number of false starts and aborted plans over how much to spend and how far to go in upgrading the building.

“It’s a live wire,” said Fischer, who said she expects the debate to begin anew as the council begins deliberating this summer on a budget for the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

One thing the mayor has already promised from the new tax windfall, however: “We will be able to buy more masks,” she said with a laugh.

In other business, the council unanimously approved a contract with The MS Factor Inc., a West Palm Beach public relations and advertising firm, to improve communication services between the government and residents.

Fischer said she wants the town to have a stronger internet presence and be able to inform residents quickly during emergency situations with text messages and emails.

“We hope to see improvements on our website and how we get information out to our residents,” Fischer said.

Vice Mayor Robert Gottlieb has argued for months that the town should use up a $200,000 this year because it has merged and expanded an ambitious multiyear, multimillion-dollar septic-to-sewer conversion project looms on the horizon.

“We’re working really hard to bring in the budget and make some cuts to it so hopefully we can absorb the reduction and not increase the tax rate,” Stumpf said. “But I can’t say for sure if I’ll be able to do that.”

The commission unanimoously approved an ordinance that allows the placement of liens on properties with unpaid water service charges. Until passing the law, the town had little means of enforcing collection of delinquent water bills, Stumpf said.

Manalapan is claiming a first for the town. Because of COVID-19 restrictions that have closed Town Hall, video of the commission meeting on June 23 was streamed live via Zoom on YouTube.

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For paying the company on an hourly basis for specific assignments the council approves. The MS Factor is a partnership between former state Rep. Sharon Merchant and marketing specialist Valerie Staggs. Merchant’s firm has done work for West Palm Beach, Palm Beach and Boynton Beach, as well as the Florida Department of Transportation.

Manalapan

Vote fast-tracks dock, allows town to start work on water line

By Dan Moffett

Manalapan can move forward with a plan to improve water delivery to its oceanfront homes after the Town Commission approved two ordinances that will allow an easement for pipeline construction across property owned by Commissioner Hank Siemon.

One ordinance removes the requirement that homes be built before docks are added as accessories. The change means that Siemon can get his dock construction underway before completing his new residence at 1660 Lands End Road.

The other ordinance removes the requirement that the town’s Architectural Commission must review dock projects.

Both passed unanimously on June 23.

Because the positioning of Siemon’s dock can now be laid out and approved, the town can determine its easement space and begin work on installing the pipe that will significantly increase water flow to homes along the ocean.

In January, the commission approved a variance to code that allows Siemon to build a dock some 30 feet farther out into the Intracoastal than existing limits. Some neighbors and two former mayors objected to allowing the exception.

Commissioner Stewart Satter commended Siemon for working with the town to get the water project going.

“He’s doing us a favor,” Satter said. “He’s not trying to pull a fast one. He’s trying to cooperate with the town because that dock needs to go in before the water line.”

Mayor Keith Waters said the commission has been talking about improving its water delivery for 15 years, and Siemon’s willingness to work with the commission is making it possible.

“We asked him. He didn’t ask us,” Waters said. “We asked him to go ahead and move forward because we need that dock in place.”

In other business:

• Manalapan commissioners are facing some hard choices as they begin deliberations in July on the town’s 2020-2021 budget.

Tax revenues are down and expenses are rising.

Property tax valuations are essentially flat year-over-year, up only 1.5%, the lowest increase in Palm Beach County. Several Manalapan property owners petitioned the value adjustment board and had their valuations decreased, Town Manager Linda Stumpf said. Meanwhile, next door in South Palm Beach, valuations are up almost 22%, the highest in the county, which will take a toll on Manalapan.

The town and South Palm are connected in a package deal with the county for fire rescue services. The big jump in South Palm valuations means both municipalities will have to pay the county significantly more this year.

Also, the COVID-19 pandemic has crippled business at Plaza del Mar and Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa, reducing tax streams to the town. Manalapan’s county and state tax receipts are down, too.

On the expense side, personnel costs keep rising, the Police Department has expanded and an ambitious multiyear, multimillion-dollar septic-to-sewer conversion project looms on the horizon.

“We’re working really hard to bring in the budget and make some cuts to it so hopefully we can absorb the reduction and not increase the tax rate,” Stumpf said. “But I can’t say for sure if I’ll be able to do that.”

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Manalapan is claiming a first for the town. Because of COVID-19 restrictions that have closed Town Hall, video of the commission meeting on June 23 was streamed live via Zoom on YouTube.

“This is the first in the history of the town that we’ve had a video Town Commission meeting,” Waters said, smiling.

“We are the astouns of the future for town government.”

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Lantana

Less money from sales tax, gas tax to pinch town’s budget

By Mary Thurwachter

During Lantana’s first budget workshop on June 8, Mayor Dave Stewart warned residents that the upcoming budget years would be very challenging.

“Property taxes will bring in about $4 million,” he said. “What it costs to run the town from A to Z for everything we do is about $19-$20 million. Your property taxes are very necessary, but they are only about 20% of what it costs to do all the services.”

Other money comes from gas tax revenue, sales tax sharing and revenue sharing from the state.

“The state last I heard, with its almost $90 billion budget, was projecting a $5 billion deficit, and that trickles down to everybody,” Stewart said. “Our sales tax receipts are projected to be considerably less — people aren’t buying in the same manner they were before the virus. And of course, with fewer people driving, there’s less gas being purchased. It’s a good thing to have some reserves, because things are going to be very, very tough.”

Stewart is proud that the town has built up a healthy $9 million in reserves, something he says took 20 years. The account had just $600,000 when Stewart took office in 2000.

“It’s a good thing I’ve been a little cheapskate with spending all these years,” he said.

Finance Director Stephen Kaplan, in presenting the budget, said property values increased by $78 million, or 6.9%, to $1.21 billion for the coming fiscal year. That number includes $14.4 million in new construction.

Property taxes, using the same $3.5 tax rate as the current fiscal year, would bring in $4.05 million. Total revenue projections are for $12.4 million, an increase of $229,000 compared with the current budget.

Kaplan said the town projects receiving $80,000 in federal Community Development Block grants.

The town is planning to give employees a 1.5% cost-of-living raise and possible merit raises up to 5% based on annual evaluations.

Pension costs are projected at 39.5% of wages for sworn police officers at a cost of $932,000. Pension costs for other employees are 7% of wages with a matching program of up to 2%. The total cost for this is $325,000.

Health and dental insurance are expected to increase 20% each for a total cost of $1,720,000.

Money the town receives from the penny sales tax surcharge, an estimated $785,500, is earmarked for projects such as a launch deck at Sportsman’s Park ($9,000), beach walkway rails ($120,000), playground relocation and upgrade at Bicentennial Park ($120,000) and paving projects ($40,000).

The budget calls for adding a dispatcher and a detective to the Police Department; and reclassifying and promoting several positions in the finance and development services departments.

Also on the expenditure list is increasing part-time staff hours at the library and spending $15,000 for books. The library is due for massive renovations and expansion, much of which was covered in the current budget and from donations. The remaining $300,000 will come out of reserves.

The town is looking into costs associated with body cameras for police at the mayor’s suggestion.

“I know we’ve had this discussion before, but when you see all that we see on TV, that officer from the sidewalk, I really think — and you know how I am about spending money — maybe we should spend money for body cameras to protect ourselves,” Stewart said. “I know that’s a controversial thing.”

Kaplan says the town expected to receive certified taxable values from the county’s property appraiser on July 1.

A second budget workshop is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. July 13 — the same night a proposed tax rate will be set. There will also be two public hearings on the budget in September.
By Dan Moffett

It lasts about 10 seconds, demands some careful nasal navigation and nearly always leads to a snotty, yet relatively happy ending.

People are really happy to get it over.

As of the summer of 2020, testing remains the most effective weapon in the fight against the growing COVID-19 pandemic.

On June 16, a steady stream of residents and neighbors came to the Palm Beach County Health Department’s medical truck parked outside the Briny Breezes Clubhouse to be tested for coronavirus infection.

“It’s a little uncomfortable,” said Briny resident Nancy Signorielli. “But, you know what? It’s something we should do to protect ourselves and to protect everybody else.”

The truck with a half-dozen county health care workers and hundreds of nose swabs spent seven hours administering the free tests to anyone willing. By day’s end, 151 people had been tested.

Town Council President Sue Thaler arranged to bring the mobile unit to Briny. She heard complaints from a few residents who thought that it was unnecessary because the town has had no confirmed COVID-19 cases. Testing is how to keep it that way, the skeptics were told. “We have a fair number of people who find it difficult to get to the other testing sites,” Thaler said. “I heard they had the unit in other towns. I called right away and asked, can you bring it to Briny?”

Thaler said she showed up when the truck opened at 9 a.m. to be first in line. “There were already people here waiting to be tested,” she said.

The unit has the capacity to test about 300 people a day, said Wendy Shields, a member of the county crew who was soon to graduate with a degree in health care management from South University in West Palm Beach. “The line moves pretty fast,” Shields said. “We’ve been to Boynton Beach, Palm Springs, Lantana and Lake Worth — all around the area.”

No news is good news when it comes to COVID-19 tests. If your results are negative, you will hear nothing from the Health Department. If the test comes back positive, then the department will contact you in three to four days.

Brinyites James and Brenda Dooley were among the first to be tested.

“It’s like they told us — uncomfortable but not at all painful,” James said. “There is no pain involved,” said Brenda. “It was nice of the county to set this up for us.”

Longtime County Pocket resident Stuart Malin walked over to take advantage of the testing next door. Thaler put the word out to neighboring communities, and people from Ocean Ridge, Lantana and West Palm Beach came to the Briny test site.

“What they told us was right,” Briny resident Peter Theodoroff said after exiting the swab tent. “It’s uncomfortable but bearable. I’ve had many worse operations than this.”

Ann Carmody rose from the test seat laughing. “I wasn’t screaming,” she said. Having lived in Briny for 31 years, Carmody, 85, has witnessed her share of crises, natural and manmade, local and global. But 2020 is a year unlike any other in the last three decades.

“I’ve seen a lot, but never a world like this,” she said. “Isn’t it awful?”

By Dan Moffett

Along the Coast

Brinyites, neighbors line up for COVID-19 testing

Briny Breezes resident Ann Carmody receives a COVID-19 nasal swab test from Palm Beach County Health Department nurse practitioner Guerlyne Estime during the one-day testing June 16.
Along the Coast

Municipal grants help small businesses smacked by virus

By Mary Hladky and Jane Smith

As small-business owners reeled from shutdowns related to stop the spread of COVID-19, South County cities pitched in to help them offset calamitous revenue losses.

According to Greater Boca Raton Chamber of Commerce pleas, the City Council on May 27 authorized spending $500,000 in money from a Small Business Recovery Relief Grant program that would provide $5,000 grants to small businesses with at least three employees and no more than 25.

Council members debated over many weeks how to structure the program, and then were stunned when city officials said they would not be able to get the money out the door until late July — far too late to do much good, council members read.

After they simplified the program so money could be doled out in June, the city began accepting applications online for grants that were used for salaries or rent, utility payments or personal protective equipment. But the expected deluge of applications didn’t happen.

Seven applications were submitted because business owners applied for larger grants offered by Palm Beach County from federal CARES Act money it received, or because the city’s grant criteria were too strict. City Manager Leif Ahnall said that as of June 5, the city had received 104 applications, but 80% did not meet the criteria. For example, 12% didn’t have a business in the city, 40% had too few employees, and 33% had received county or federal funding that made them ineligible.

The number of applications had grown to 119 by June 24, and the city had disbursed money to seven businesses. Two more would get grants soon, and Boca Raton was continuing to process applications.

Boynton Beach and its Community Redevelopment Agency gave out $1.06 million in loans that became grants if businesses showed they spent the money on rent, payroll or utilities within six months.

Under the programs approved by the CRA and City Commission on April 21, the CRA distributed $1 million to businesses within its borders in $10,000 allotments. The city gave out $60,000 in $5,000 allotments.

Boynton Beach also found another source of help to money businesses. It made available $300,000 in Community Development Block Grant money awarded to the city by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development through the CARES Act.

Officials offered businesses $10,000 grants that could be used to cover payroll, utilities, rent or mortgage and COVID-19-related expenses such as personal protective equipment and lost inventory. Businesses within the CRA area are not eligible to receive that money.

Businesses are qualified to receive the money if they have gross receipts under $3 million and 25 or fewer employees, and if they had not received any other coronavirus-related assistance. They can apply online beginning June 26, and David Scott, the city’s director of economic development and strategy, expected the money to go quickly.

The Delray Beach Downtown Development Authority on June 19 awarded 30 small businesses affected by the coronavirus shutdowns with $1,000 grants.

To be eligible, a business must have operated for at least five years, have 25 or fewer employees and be locally owned and operated.

The grant application period opened at 8 a.m. June 16 and ended at 11:59 p.m. June 17. The first to apply that met requirements were awarded the grants.

Mayor Shelly Petrolia said at the June 2 City Commission meeting that she preferred to use city tax dollars to support group ad buys.

“Grant to businesses are not really fair. They are more about who has the fastest computer,” she said. “Advertising for all would be better.”

The executive directors of the DDA and Greater Delray Beach Chamber of Commerce will return with marketing options in July.

Lantana did not launch a grant program but did implement certain fee waivers.

They include:

-- Fees for new permit applications are waived until Sept. 8, business tax receipt delinquency fees for 2020 are waived for businesses that become compliant before Sept. 8; restaurants can apply for temporary permits for surrounding off-street parking; and the city suspended penalties and stopped turning off water service due to non-payment.

-- Mayor Scott Singer in Boca Raton said he supported the county’s mask policy “instead of potentially confusing measures to be enacted city by city.”

-- Low enforcement officers are expected to issue warnings and correct people first, but fines start at $25 for individuals, $50 for a second offense and $100 after a third, under rules approved by county officials. Business face fines starting at $250, and up to $500 after repeat offenses.

“Of course, some individuals cannot wear a mask because of health concerns, and it is our hope that neighbors continue to act with kindness and respect,” Singer said in an email to constituents.

“If you see someone not wearing a mask, there’s no need to be confrontational.”

He asked residents not to call 911 to report someone not wearing a mask, saying that should be reserved for emergencies.

Instead, concerns about compliance can be relayed to covidcompliance@cityofboacafl.org or 561-242-6843, where county staff will track such matters, he said.

It all leaves businesses coping with a new form of hospitality that might not feel entirely comfortable to other customers or staff. But the alternative could mean a higher risk that someone ends up in a hospital.

“I’m not at all against that,” Singer said. “I say, ‘Hey, take off your mask and give us a hug,’ ” Bitcoin in Delray Beach. “I hope they are not offended by what I said. If it would make us all hyper-aware.”

Beaches closed for holiday weekend

An emergency order puts beaches out of bounds for the Fourth of July weekend across Palm Beach County.

The county’s order to temporarily close beaches joined similar decrees in Miami-Dade and Broward counties aimed at avoiding large gatherings during the three-day weekend to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Palm Beach County Mayor Dave Kerner told media outlets it would be “highly irresponsible” to keep beaches open and said the county’s priority remains “public health first and foremost.”

Beaches are set to close from 12:01 a.m. Friday, July 3, until 11:59 p.m. Sunday, July 5, reopening Monday.

The order applies to “all public, municipal and private beaches,” according to a county statement. Individual violators face potential civil fines of $25 for a first offense, with subsequent offenses drawing $50 to $100, according to the order.

Restaurants and retail establishments within beach parks are allowed to remain open if they follow rules on mandatory masks and social distancing, officials said.

-- Charles Elmore

MAKES

Continued from page 1

setting daily records of new cases including 9,557 by June 26. Four days later, the state reported more than 152,000 total cases.

In Palm Beach County, 18.2% of those tested were confirmed as positive for the virus on June 23, spiking above an average that has typically landed in single digits. Palm Beach County had more than 14,000 cases reported by June 30, with 13% of those resulting in hospitalization and 4% in deaths, state records show.

The death rate, disproportionately affecting those 65 and older, has been falling as more people become infected. New infections are increasingly occurring among younger people, ages 25 to 34, who are statistically less likely to need hospitalization.

But the Office of Vital Statistics noted two 17-year-olds have died in Florida and many younger people have experienced painful symptoms. And in the larger picture, each new case increases the risk of spreading the virus to others of varying ages and health conditions, and it can take weeks or months to know how many cases of initial infection might end in hospitalization or death.

“This is our wake-up call, folks,” Palm Beach County Mayor Dave Kerner said June 26.

Local officials voice support

The mask order introduced a new layer of governmental authority to a range of policies that local governments, organizations and municipalities already had adopted. Catholic churches in the Diocese of Palm Beach, for example, announced in a May 11 letter from Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito that “it is highly recommended that face masks be utilized while in church except for the reception of Holy Communion.”

The return of Sunday and daily Mass was accompanied by precautions, including social distancing of 6 feet and the “use of every other pew.”

Under the county order, exceptions exist for people with medical conditions such as asthma, those eating and drinking, children under 2 or younger, those exercising while social distancing, and people “for whom a facial covering conflicts with their religious beliefs or practices.”

The diocese “will follow the directives of the county commissioners and the CDC,” said Jennifer Trefeln, director of communications.

Before the county move, Ocean Ridge reopened its town meetings to the general public, with restrictions:

"Chairs are spaced out by 6 feet for proper social distancing and masks must be worn in Town Hall," said Town Manager Tracey Stevens. "No-touch hand sanitizer stations have been installed. Teleconference is still available for those that wish to attend from home.”

Mayor Scott Singer in Boca Raton said he supported the county’s mask policy “instead of potentially confusing measures to be enacted city by city.”

Low enforcement officers are expected to issue warnings and correct people first, but fines start at $25 for individuals, $50 for a second offense and $100 after a third, under rules approved by county officials.

Jun 29 Business face fines starting at $250, and up to $500 after repeat offenses.

"Of course, some individuals cannot wear a mask because of health concerns, and it is our hope that neighbors continue to act with kindness and respect," Singer said in an email to constituents.

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"Some say, ‘Hey, take off your mask and give us a hug,’” Blake said in Delray Beach. "I hope they are not offended by what I said. If it would make us all hyper-aware."

Jess Lee and Bridgette Smith of Delray Beach talk with hosts Terraine Dowles and Alec Leonardo at Tin Roof in Delray Beach prior to entering the food, drink and music establishment. Tin Roof requires patrons to wear masks upon entry, exit and while moving around the premises. Customers are not required to wear masks while sitting at tables.

Tim Stepien/The Coastal Star

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Lantana votes to postpone fireworks, joining other municipalities in exercising caution

By Mary Thurwachter

Lantana reversed course during the June 22 Town Council meeting, postponing its Fourth of July fireworks show. Until then, the town had planned to have the pyrotechnics display from a barge in the Intracoastal Waterway next to Bicentennial Park but without the traditional celebration in the park.

With the coronavirus pandemic lurking, one by one towns and cities up and down the coastline have been putting the kibosh on fireworks.

Boca Raton, Delray Beach, Deerfield Beach, Boynton Beach, Lake Worth Beach and North Palm Beach canceled or postponed fireworks and other Independence Day gatherings for fear of community spread of COVID-19. Like cities nationwide, they have been advised by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention not to hold events with large crowds.

Since March, council members in Lantana said they wanted the $30,000 Zambelli fireworks show to go on, even if the party in the park wouldn’t be part of it. Residents were being encouraged to watch from their homes. All town parks in the vicinity — including Sportsman’s Park across the street from Bicentennial; Lyman Kayak Park just around the corner; Bicentennial; Lyman Kayak Park across the street from downtown restaurant and shopping district. Considering what’s going on in the country, where people are using different circumstances as an excuse to make trouble, I don’t want to see windows broken from my member businesses on Ocean Avenue,” Arm said. “I don’t want to see people hurt. And I don’t want to see Lantana in the national news because we were stupid enough to have fireworks.”

Arm said it would be “insane and irresponsible” to have fireworks this year.

Council member Malcolm Balfour, who made the motion to postpone fireworks until a later date — perhaps New Year’s Eve or next April for the town’s centennial celebration — said he thought fireworks should not be held, especially with the number of COVID-19 cases steadily increasing.

Vice Mayor Lynn Moorhouse said he couldn’t second the motion for postponement — the thought of it made him sad, he said — but inevitably he voted in favor of delaying fireworks, as did all council members.

Fireworks a go in WPB

While Lantana officials were mulling the option of cramping together to watch the show from the bridge — or anywhere.

But Police Chief Sean Scheller said keeping people off the bridge — historically a favorite spot for watching the fireworks — would be a problem. He said he was concerned about crowd control. He wasn’t the only one worried about unruly crowds.

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Along the Coast

History in the making

Stories from pandemic are being preserved for posterity

By Ron Hayes


The cemetery was a single acre then, situated at what is now an entrance to the Royal Palm Yacht & Country Club, just across the roundabout from the Boca Raton Resort & Club. We know Frank Chesebro had donated that acre in 1916. We know now John E. Rogers was only 10 years old when he died, and we know his brother, Jasper H., was 8.

But we don’t know what killed them.

Could it have been the Spanish flu pandemic, which appeared that spring and would claim about 50 million lives, including as many as 800,000 in the U.S., before subsiding the following summer?

“We’ve always wondered,” says Susan Gillis, curator at the Boca Raton Historical Society & Museum. “Could they have died of the Spanish flu? But we haven’t been able to document that.”

Now, a century later, another pandemic is sweeping away lives throughout the world. This time, area curators and archivists want to make sure that people 100 years from now will know what life was like for us during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020.

In addition to the Boca Raton Historical Society, the Boynton Beach City Library and Delray Beach Historical Society are asking residents to share memories, photos and other memorabilia of their lives under quarantine.

“We’ve been getting a lot of photos, a donation of face masks, and student submissions from the schools,” says Patricia Fiorillo, the assistant curator at the Boca Raton Historical Society, who’s leading its campaign. “We’ve had a lot of photos of graduation signs in front of houses. I’d like one of those signs.”

A fourth-grader named Jacob took the lockdown with grown-up patience.

“My cousin Chris graduated,” Jacob wrote, “so we celebrated at our house. Quarantine changed our lives but there is still joy to spread; we’re in this together.”

How to contribute

- Boca Raton Historical Society: Send submissions to research@bocahistory.org with the subject line “Letters to the Future,” or mail to the Boca Raton Historical Society & Museum, 71 N. Federal Highway, Boca Raton, FL 33432.
- Boynton Beach City Library: Go to boynton-beach.org/library/share-your-covid-19-stories for instruction and links.
- Delray Beach Historical Society: Email video diaries, essays, poems, photos and artwork to info@delreyaibechistory.org

At the Boynton Beach City Library, archivist-librarian Georgie Charmes wants residents to know they don’t have to be a doctor on the front lines of the virus or an ICU nurse to have a story worth saving.

“We tend to think of history as famous people or wealthy people,” Charmes says, “but it’s the stories of ordinary people that give people in the future a sense of what life was really like now.”

Hudson Hiblurn arrived in Fort Pierce on April 8, a healthy baby girl born during an unhealthy time.

“This is not how I expected to bring a baby into the world,” Julia Christy Hiblurn wrote the Boynton library’s project. “I pictured a waiting room full of family all anxiously awaiting Patrick to tell them Hudson has arrived and how much she weighs.

Instead we asked a friendly neighbor to FaceTime so my grandma could see her first great-grandchild. Instead, we nervously told everyone we were headed home only to tell them they couldn’t stop by.”

Winnie Edwards, executive director of the Delray Beach Historical Society, began soliciting donations in early March.

“When you’re researching things like an old hurricane, you go to mainly the newspapers, but it’s really hard to find those personal stories unless somebody wrote them down. With this pandemic happening in our lifetimes, I know everybody’s got stuff on their phone, and I thought we’d better collect it now.”

So far, Edwards reports, she’s gathered more than 100 contributions, including this optimistic essay from Kenya Spear of North Swinton Avenue.

“I swim about four times a week, go to mainly the newspapers, but it is not the same as being in a group.”

“I miss volunteering at The Arts Garage and at The Boca Raton Library Bookstore, tutoring children, helping with their reading and math, playing cards with friends, visiting The Norton Museum, walking in the park near Lake Ida Road.

“Amazingly, I now have time and finally, patience and I have rediscovered an old favorite passion, crocheting. It is tremendously relaxing, rewarding. And I feel accomplished, productive. I look at my completed items and know that I am blessed. I have options. I am thankful. I am safe and alive.”

Someday, Edwards hopes, she will work with commercial photographer Matt Sturgess of 4th Avenue Photography to turn the videos, photos and poetry into a documentary. But like the other archivists, she has put no deadline on submissions.

The history hasn’t ended because the pandemic hasn’t ended, and so the collecting continues.

Someday soon, they hope, the COVID-19 pandemic will become, like the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918, history. And this time, that history will have been preserved.

The Rogers boys did not stay in Frank Chesebro’s cemetery. When Addison Mizner began to build his resort, the cemetery was moved to 10 acres on the northeast corner of Second Avenue and 16th Street. And in 1943, they were moved again, to the present cemetery on Southwest Fourth Avenue. Their graves are still there.

The collections of local historians include these photos.

ABOVE: Members of the staff of Cornell Institute for Rehabilitation Medicine at Bethesda Hospital in Boynton Beach. TOP LEFT: Kenya Spear of Delray Beach shows her crocheting. LEFT: Delray’s Jim Chard in mango season. Photos provided

Did they die of the Spanish flu? Perhaps. But in 1918, the entire state of Florida had fewer than 1 million residents, and fewer than 1,000 deaths were reported statewide.

“Palm Beach County was not super densely populated, so there was a lot of space between people in 1918,” Patricia Fiorillo of the Boca Raton Historical Society said. “Social distancing wasn’t that hard back then.”
Briny Breezes

Town budgeting for major drainage system maintenance

By Dan Moffett

A healthy 11.1% rise in taxable property value means the Briny Breezes Town Council will have more revenue to work with as it takes on several important projects during the next budget year.

Town Manager Michael Thrasher told the council during a budget workshop on June 28 that the Palm Beach County property appraiser has assessed the town’s valuation at $99.2 million, up from last year’s $53.8 million, the fourth-largest percentage increase among the county’s 39 municipalities.

That’s great news. The challenging news is that Briny has some bills to pay. Most notable among them is the cost of doing major maintenance work on the town’s seven lift stations. The pumping units are essential to moving stormwater out of the town and into the sewage collection system.

Thrasher said the lift stations will need an extensive overhaul after many years of service, and they are needed more than ever now because of the new Gulf Stream Views development in the County Pocket that is straining the area’s drainage capability.

“The estimated cost for each lift station is $11,000, somewhere in that range,” Thrasher said, citing evaluations from Harvel Utility Construction, the town’s contractor. “These things are really essential. It’s kind of scary if something malfunctions.”

Thrasher recommended using a $25,000 surplus from last year’s budget to begin overhauling the stations. Council members agreed, and said they wanted to try to complete work on two stations per year until all were restored. Other significant expenses include $30,000 for a Tallahassee lobbyist to help bring state grant money to Briny and $8,500 to complete work on changes to the town’s charter and put them on the ballot in March 2021.

On Thrasher’s recommendation, the council approved a 8.2% raise to $32,500 a year for Town Clerk Sandy DuBose, who oversees building permit processing. Council President Sue Thaler suggested setting money aside to give Thrasher a raise, but he rejected the idea, saying he didn’t need one and the budget was too tight. The manager, who earns $37,500 a year in the part-time position, told the council to give his raise to the town’s staff instead.

“You help me when you help them,” said Thrasher, who with DuBose started working for the town in January. Briny will again be capped at the statutory tax maximum of $10 per $1,000 of homeowners’ property value. The town receives about 36% of the cost for fire-rescue and police services from the Briny corporation — an annual total of roughly $417,350 goes to Boynton Beach for fire-rescue and $192,300 to Ocean Ridge for police.

In other business, Bobby Jurovaty, chair of the town’s charter review committee, told the council during its regular meeting on June 25 that he expects the panel’s work to be done by September.

Jurovaty said the goal is to make changes “that are cost-effective and improve the town’s ability to function.”

Since its incorporation as a municipality in 1963, Briny has operated without a formal town charter, relying instead on a hodgepodge collection of resolutions, ordinances and amendments.

The review committee hopes to update existing rules, procedures and definitions and send the revisions to the voters for approval in the March election.

County Pocket

May storms turned into floodwaters in some parts of the county. Especially hard hit were the County Pocket and Briny Breezes.

ABOVE: On May 25, Liz Loper photographs the muddy waters that flowed into her home on Winthrop Lane for multiple days.

RIGHT: By May 29, the waters on Winthrop had receded, but not disappeared as state Rep. Mike Caruso and County Commissioner Gregg Weiss toured the area and sought input from a dozen of the neighbors.

“City of Palm Beach County and we should not have homes underwater,” Caruso said. On June 24, Caruso sent a letter to the Palm Beach County administrator requesting a meeting to clarify road ownership and discuss health and public safety in the County Pocket.

Photos by Jerry Lower/The Coastal Star

Delray Beach

City votes to keep auditor in place as needed

By Jane Smith

Delray Beach commissioners decided unanimously June 16 to rehire the previous internal auditor on an as-needed basis.

Julia Davidyan, who resigned in January, will be paid $160 an hour and junior accountants in her firm, JMD Premier Group Inc., will receive $80 an hour.

City voters overwhelmingly said in a March 2021 referendum they wanted an internal auditor. It took more than two years for the city to hire one. The internal auditor reports directly to the commission, as do the city manager and city attorney.

Davidyan played a lead role when her investigation found the prior city manager had engaged in “unprofessional and arguably unethical” actions. She testified at a special commission meeting held March 1, 2019, that led to the firing of Mark Lauzier.

But in early June, two city commissioners did not think Delray Beach needed an internal auditor. Vice Mayor Ryan Boylston and Commissioner Adam Frankel wanted to have a workshop to discuss the need for one.

“We have a new city manager who is getting his team in place, then we will be hit by the pandemic,” Boylston said at the June 2 meeting.

But Commissioner Juli Casale wanted to move forward.

Davidyan’s audit plan for fiscal year 2019 found we were high risk in four areas: information technology, finance, purchasing, and parks and recreation. Casale said June 2. “Everyone will know what she is doing.”

The June 2 vote was split, 3-2, with Boylston and Frankel voting no.

Then-City Manager George Gretas entered the fray when he met individually with commissioners to try to convince them an internal auditor was not needed.

The main reason, according to his PowerPoint presentation, was that city department heads had at most three years’ experience in their positions.

On two slides, he questioned whether the internal auditor was “an in-house assassin.”

The review committee hopes to update existing rules, procedures and definitions and send the revisions to the voters for approval in the March election.
Lisa Marie Browne, standing in front of a mural inside Dreyfoos School of the Arts, fell in love with the mission of the school. Her involvement grew to the point that she now chairs its foundation. Tim Stepień/The Coastal Star

10 Questions

A

n invitation to a Dreyfoos School of the Arts luncheon 15 years ago proved to be more than an eye-opener for coastal Boca Raton resident Lisa Marie Browne. It was a revelation.

The last board chairman, Simon Offit, invited me and he told me how successful these students were and how hard they work,” said Browne, who was recently named to succeed Offit as board chair of the Dreyfoos Foundation.

“At the luncheon a girl named Ariel, who weighed about 98 pounds, got up and belted out these songs from ‘Broadway,’ Browne recalled.

“And then two pianists sat down and played side-by-side and I couldn’t believe what I was experiencing. I found myself sitting there saying, ‘These are students. These are students.’

Browne was so intrigued she asked to take a tour of the school, after which she was invited to serve on the board. A few years later she became vice chair, a position she held 10 times prior to succeeding Offit, who retired after serving as chairman for 23 years.

“At the time Louis was about 9, and I found myself getting more and more involved,” Browne said of her son. “It was, ‘OK, you’re having an event, I’ll do this. You need someone to tutor, I’ll do that.’

Her observations made her decide to move to Palm Beach County to be on the board.

“I learned how hard the students work, and how they come from every walk of life imaginable. From the student whose mom is bagging groceries at Publix, to ones coming from other countries — we even had students who took care of during hurricanes. It’s a great public high school.

Browne’s loyalty to the program was tested a few years ago. She was involved with the Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art, had close friends in Broward County and was considering a move to get closer to both.

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Dreyfoos is not her only passion. A trip to Florence, Italy, years ago introduced her to the Uffizi Gallery art museum and she’s been closely connected ever since. Today, she serves as executive director of Friends of the Uffizi Gallery, a U.S.-based nonprofit whose mission is one of art conservation, historic preservation and education.

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“At the time Louis was about 9, and I found myself getting more and more involved,” Browne said of her son. “It was, ‘OK, you’re having an event, I’ll do this. You need someone to tutor, I’ll do that.’

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Her involvement grew to the point that she now chairs its foundation. Tim Stepień/The Coastal Star

Q:

Where did you grow up and go to school? How do you think that has influenced you?

A:

I grew up in the small community of Bayonne, New Jersey, and attended Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic School in a community dominated by Italian-Americans. It was there that I developed my lust for travel. In the 1980s, I moved to Boca Raton and attended Florida Atlantic University, earning a B.S. in developmental psychology. During an art therapy master’s course I was invited to join a docent program at the Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art, which changed my course of study to this day. I was enchanted with the arts and how art reveals history, both past and present. I have been supporting and teaching the arts on a daily basis ever since.

Q:

What professions have you worked in?

A:

My very first work experience was at Burger King ... my dad called me the Burger Queen. I then worked in business in different office positions. My favorite position found me 14 years ago when I was asked to become the executive director of the Friends of the Uffizi Gallery, a 501(c)(3) U.S.-sanctioned organization created in Palm Beach County supporting the preservation of the artwork in the Uffizi in Florence, Italy.

Q:

What professional accomplishments are you most proud of?

A:

Laocoon and His Sons was a monumental yearlong onsite restoration at the Uffizi Gallery set behind a plexiglass barrier allowing museum visitors to see the restorers at work. Leonardo Da Vinci’s Adoration of the Magi was a 6-year-long restoration project that at completion revealed never-before-seen areas on the masterwork.

In 2019 my friends and family supported the Uffizi’s newest room, The Titian Room, featuring the Venus of Urbino.

Q:

What advice do you have for a young person seeking a career today?

A:

Never be afraid to embrace a second chance.

Q:

How did you choose to make your home in coastal Boca Raton?

A:

I remember vividly the first time I entered Boca Raton via A1A from Deerfield Beach. The street screamed out to me as the asphalt changed from black to white upon entry. I was enchanted at that moment and still today I am thankful to be a Boca Raton resident.

Q:

What is your favorite part about living in coastal Boca Raton?

A:

The sunshine and easy access to everything — especially the beach, parks, the turtles, the Boca Raton Museum of Art, the proximity to airports and the smiles on the face of every tourist that enters our magical world.

Q:

What book are you reading now?

A:

I am reading Art in Renaissance Italy for an art and architecture class I am taking online. The “Crazy Rich Asians” series was my last fun read, so much so that I read it twice. Historical fictions are my all-time favorites.

Q:

What music do you listen to when you want to relax? When you want to be inspired?

A:

Andrea Bocelli for relaxation and soulful pop for inspiration.

Q:

Have you had mentors in your life? Individuals who have inspired your life decisions?

A:

Yes, I was blessed with strong, intelligent and kind parents as my first mentors. One girlfriend that inspired me was my friend Davey, who is now in heaven. Davey’s wisdom was worth writing in books. During a crisis she traveled to Florence, Italy, to study art. Years later, I mimicked her therapy during my own change in life. Studying art history in Italy for me was life-changing.

Q:

If your life story were to be made into a movie, who would play you?

A:

Juliana Margulies. She’s someone I admire as an actress.
Boynton Beach

Restored mural coming to new fire station after controversy

By Jane Smith

Boynton Beach held a soft opening of its new Fire Station No. 1 on June 3. As part of the city’s Public Art program, a mural featuring a collage of photos of the city’s fire rescue staff had been installed in the station’s lobby windows the day before, facing Northeast First Avenue.

Elected leaders, development partners and the media joined the walk-through of the new station, as mural artist Lyn Doyal enthused about her first public art project.

The next day, the mural was removed.

The reason? The mural was altered from what had initially been approved by the city’s Arts Commission. The faces of two Black ex-fire-rescue leaders had been whitewashed and made indistinguishable. Photos of the altered mural were posted on Twitter and Facebook starting on the afternoon of June 3.

The altered mural created an uproar in the community at the same time as widespread unrest over race and policing followed the May 25 death of George Floyd, a Black man who died while in the custody of Minneapolis police.

In Boynton Beach, Black people make up nearly 32% of the population, according to the July 2019 U.S. Census estimates. Retired Deputy Chief Latasha Clemons, whose mural images were altered, grew up in and still lives in Boynton Beach. She and local Black church leaders say her legacy as the city’s first Black woman firefighter was erased.

“I sincerely apologize this occurred and will take every measure necessary to ensure this never happens again,” said Lori LaVerriere, city manager.

June 11 meeting, members agreed to reinstall the mural they approved in November, restoring Clemons’ image. But the controversy led LaVerriere to fire Debby Coles-Dobay, the Public Art director, and seek the resignation of Fire Chief Matthew Petty on June 6. Both former staffers are white.

Still, the Black community was outraged.

Rae Whitely, spokesman for the Boynton Coalition of Clergy, said someone sent him photos of the doctored mural on the morning of June 4.

“I was upset because I know Latasha personally, knew her passion for the job and firefighting,” Whitely said. “Throughout history there were examples of Black history being erased. Here, it was happening in our backyard.”

Whitely immediately called Woodrow Hay, a Black city commissioner for District 2, where the new fire station sits. Hay promised to do something, according to Whitely.

As the clergy spokesman, Whitely sent the city a massive public records request on June 8. “It doesn’t make sense,” Whitely said. “A lot of people are wondering: What is the full story? We are not jumping to conclusions. We want to know what happened.”

For Clemons, her emotions ranged from shock when she first saw photos of the altered mural to hurt to disrespect to outrage.

“I am the one who created the artwork,” she said at a June 11 news conference held outside her West Palm Beach attorney’s office.

She explained how she came to be a Boynton Beach firefighter. Back in 1995, she met with the city’s first Black fire chief, Floyd Jordan. He stood 6 feet 7 inches, and Clemons’ height is barely over 5 feet. “Chief, think I have what you are looking for,” she said. “I had a sense of pride as the first and only Black female in the department. It was bigger than me. It was for the whole community to be able to walk by the mural,” she said. “The hopes and dreams are shattered of the young girls.”

The community wants to know why it happened and who made the changes. She also wants to see a thorough investigation.

Clemons and her attorney, Nicole Hunt Jackson, filed a public records request with Boynton Beach to find the answers.

“We’re reviewing all of our options,” Hunt Jackson said, when asked if Clemons was planning to sue.

Clemons did not apply to be the chief after Glenn Joseph left that position in late November. As the city’s second Black fire chief, his face also was whitewashed. He did not respond to numerous phone messages seeking comment.

The information has been revealed about why the mural was modified, and many questions remain.

At its November meeting, the city Arts Commission members approved a mural called Community Heartbeat. The mural is a collage of firefighters in action and at city events with a red heartbeat line running through. Doyal was paid $7,500 for her work.

Community commissioner Clover Moodie, who is Jamaican American, wanted to ensure the photos represented the city’s culture and diversity.

The members did not see the altered mural that was installed. Coles-Dobay, the fired Public Art manager, wrote in a June 4 email to the city manager that the mural was modified in April at the direction of Petty and Fire Marshal Kathy Cline.

Little information is also available in a letter the city’s Art in Public Places program and her professional role as a mentor to artists locally and internationally, Mayor Steven Grant said.

Pettie and Coles-Dobay about the mural changes, but Cline’s role was not described.

Cline referred questions to the new Assistant City Manager Kathy Matos. Matos sent the questions to the city spokesman, who declined to explain Cline’s role in the altered mural.

On June 19, Coles-Dobay told The Coastal Star that senior fire rescue staff assured her the city manager would approve the changes.

Pettie did not return cellphone messages. Matos said she heard that retired Fire Chief Joseph did not want to be in the restored mural. Nicole Banks, the assistant Public Art manager, will contact the current and former firefighters who appear in the mural, in case they change their minds about being in it.

The results will be given to the Arts Commission members at their July 9 meeting.

At the City Commission meeting on June 16, LaVerriere announced that Ray Carter, retired former fire chief, agreed to lead the Fire Department for the rest of the year.

“The will allow us to do a nationwide search,” she said.

The commission had received numerous emails in support of Coles-Dobay’s contribution to the city’s Art in Public Places program and her professional role as a mentor to artists locally and internationally, Mayor Steven Grant said.

“Please reconsider her firing,” said artist Barb Lentz, who owns the ArtSea Living Studio in Boynton Beach. Lentz was one of 13 artists who spoke at the webinar-style meeting. “I didn’t think the commission supported the city manager’s decision to fire Coles-Dobay and seek the resignation of Petty.”

“Two prominent Black individuals were removed. One still lives in District 2 and has family here. I am offended,” Commissioner Christina Romules said at the June 16 meeting. “I’m grateful for the work of Coles-Dobay in helping put us on the map for the arts, but erasing and defacing people is not an excuse.” Romules is Haitian American.

“Debby Coles-Dobay became a close friend of mine when I entered the political world in 2007,” Commissioner Hay said. “It still boggles my mind was the thinking that this would not come out?”

The new fire station is part of the city’s barrier island towns of Ocean Ridge and Briny Breezes.

The city has announced that the new City Hall and Library building will open on July 7.
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mismanaged practically from its inception in 2006. Instead, he headed a firm run by Fred Bloetscher, an associate dean at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, to conduct a total review of the city's reclaimed water program, Carter said. Bloetscher's firm will receive a maximum of $20,000 under an emergency order. The forensic engineering investigation will be finished in September.

These costs and ongoing system repair costs come at a time when the city has an 8$ million deficit for the current budget year, Petrolia said. The city lost revenue from parking meter income, parking violations, valet stand income and rental income from city-owned properties because of the coronavirus shutdown.

"It's in bits and pieces, but it all adds up," Petrolia said.

In early May, City Manager George Gretsas apologized to the City Commission and residents and graded the program a D-minus. The only reason he didn't give it an F was the initial good intention to stop piping raw sewage into the ocean.

The reclaimed water lines provided partly treated wastewater meant solely for lawn irrigation. The lines were installed as part of a settlement that Delray Beach reached with state and federal regulators.

The city must reuse 3.85 million gallons a day by 2023, according to the settlement. Its current level is 2.85 million gallons a day.

Most of the city's water customers on the barrier island have reclaimed water service for lawn irrigation. Golf courses, city parks and facilities, and master-planned communities west of the interstate also use reclaimed water. There are about 1,500 reclaimed water customers in the city, according to Gretsas.

On Feb. 4, the city shut down Delray Beach's reclaimed water program to conduct a citywide boil water order. The Florida Department of Health wanted that drastic action to begin after an investigation into complaints that the city's drinking water had become contaminated with reclaimed water.

In late April, the city discovered 30 barrier island homes had reclaimed water lines installed within three feet of the drinking water lines. The city requested that it be allowed to restore the reclaimed water service to the homes soon, instead of waiting for four months to be moved in six months.

The close proximity of the lines was thought to be a potential Florida Department of Environmental Protection violation. In Florida, the local DOH enforces the DEP rules. But when the local DOH leaders met with their counterparts at the Florida DEP, they "determined there was a distinction between the mains and service lines," Steven Garlin, a DOH department administrator, wrote in May 28 email to his supervisor.

Delray Beach is inspecting each reclaimed water system at the behest of the local DOH.

As the city made the inspections, it found 268 locations with drinking water backflow prevention devices, which prevent the wastewater from mixing with city water and backflowing. Slightly more than 71% served barrier island residences.

The city has not found records indicating why the backflow preventers were not installed.

Garcia has written that the DOH is waiting for the entire Delray Beach reclaimed water system to be restored before possible violations will be forwarded to the DOH legal team.

Pressure devices as issue

As of June 17, five condominium buildings on the barrier island were still not reconnected to the reclaimed water service, Carter wrote. One required a reduced pressure zone device, which is the owner's responsibility to install, she wrote.

The RPZ is a type of high hazard backflow device that protects the drinking water system by disposing of any backward-flowing water if check valves fail.

The other buildings have installed their RPZ devices and are ready for inspection, according to Carter. The other two were awaiting DOH approval.

"However, all commercial accounts and when a larger than 14" RPZ is used, more than 71% served barrier island residences. The city has not found records indicating why the backflow preventers were not installed. Garcia has written that the

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DOH is waiting for the entire Delray Beach reclaimed water system to be restored before possible violations will be forwarded to the DOH legal team.
The new owner of the Boca Raton Resort & Club is planning a massive makeover of the iconic property. In a frank admission that the 337-acre luxury property had lost its luster, MSD Partners said in documents filed with the city that improvements are needed. Despite pandemics over the years, the resort “is not the global player in the luxury hotel market that it once was,” the company said in submissions filed by the Dunay, Miskel and Backman law firm. “Significant renovations to the building … improvements to the property and new world-class amenities are required to transform the property back to such a world-class resort.”

MSD Partners, formed by billionaire Michael S. Dell’s private investment firm, bought the resort last year for $885 million in Palm Beach County’s biggest property deal. While the planned changes will touch most parts of the resort, key elements include the demolition of the nearly 42,000-square-foot Great Hall and construction of a 10,000-square-foot Mizner Ballroom. The plans emphasize making better use of the resort’s location on the Intracoastal Waterway.

Built in 1969, the Great Hall is now dated, said John Tolbert, the resort’s president and managing director. What he and MSD Partners envision is the “most elegant” ballroom for all types of celebrations. They also want to better connect members and guests to water views. “One of the most underused parts of the club is the 800 feet of waterfront,” he said.

Meeting and conference space will decrease, but “we will have better, more flexible and more relevant space,” he said, that is part of “revising our conference space for today’s market.” The improvements “will allow us to have the foremost club and hotel and resort in the country,” he said. Members of the city’s Community Appearance Board got their first look at the designs at their June 16 meeting. Scott Lake, principal of the planning and design firm EDSA, said the resort had “fallen behind” other resorts and that “we are trying to bring the resort back to its former glory.”

CAB members liked what they saw. “I think you guys have done a crazy good thing,” Tyier Boykin told architects Jorge Garcia and Peter Stromberg of GarciaStromberg/GS4Studios in West Palm Beach. “I really like this project.”

Once the Great Hall is gone, its conference and meeting facilities will be relocated to the Mizner Ballroom, which will be located adjacent to the existing Mizner Center. The Great Hall space would be redeveloped as a new luxury pool club and amenity area. The existing Flowrider wave simulator, slide, cafes and cabanas, now located north of the Great Hall, would relocate to this area.

The company also plans to upgrade the main resort entrance with new landscaping and add a new porte cochere, allowing improvements to valet service. The Morimoto restaurant, which is open only to members and guests, will move and replace the existing Monkey Bar. The Lucca, Garden room and Palm Court restaurant area will be enhanced.

MSD Partners also plans renovations to hotel rooms and common areas. The company’s plans were submitted to the city on May 12, and some of the changes will require city approval. The Planning and Zoning Board will review them on July 9 and will make a recommendation to the City Council. More presentations also will be made to the CAB.

A Fitch Ratings report one year ago said MSD Partners planned to invest $75 million over four years. Tolbert said the cost of the project is still being calculated, but $75 million is the minimum. He said it would be “one of the most significant capital investments into a resort and club in the world.”

The project completion date is not yet set. Tolbert said the work would move forward as quickly as possible but will be done in a way that minimizes disruption to resort and club operations.

Tolbert, a high-profile member of the city’s business and philanthropic community, will depart in July after accepting an executive position with BRE Hotels & Resorts, Blackstone’s hospitality platform. An affiliate of Blackstone acquired the resort in 2004 and invested more than $300 million in the property before selling to Dell.

While the Fitch report described the resort as well maintained, it said the resort’s room revenues underperform those of its competitors, including PGA National Resort in Palm Beach Gardens, The Breakers in Palm Beach and Eau Palm Beach resort in Manalapan. About 60% of the resort’s demand in 2018 came from meeting and group business, vs. seven swimming pools, 30 tennis courts, a 32-slip marina, 13 restaurants and bars and 200,000 square feet of meeting room revenue. But the resort’s total revenue per available room in April 2019 was $620, “which is considered strong,” the report said.

The resort dates to 1926, when founder Edward Ordway and his supporter, billionaire Michael S. Dell’s private investment firm, bought the property for $1047 hotel rooms, two 18-hole golf courses, a 50,000-square-foot spa, seven swimming pools, 30 tennis courts, a 32-slip marina, 13 restaurants and bars and 200,000 square feet of meeting space.

The Boca Raton Resort & Club partly reopened on June 4 with new safety protocols and the coronavirus pandemic forced the closure of hotels and resorts in March.

While he is pleased with the number of people booking rooms, Tolbert said “our emphasis is on quality and luxury and not at this time.”

Like other properties, the resort is offering incentives to help get guests back. The company said on Saturday that it would release a “You’re Summer Restored” package that offers a fourth night’s stay at no charge and a waiver of resort fees. “We are seeing a return of our guests and the potential for new guests,” Tolbert said.

When the Fitch report was released in June 2019, analysts predicted a significant turnaround in the property’s financial results.

The proposed Mizner Ballroom will occupy 10,000 square feet and house conference and meeting facilities now in the resort’s Great Hall. Rendering provided

By Mary Hladky

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Tolbert

By Mary Hladky

Virus forces another delay for Haynie’s trial

Former Boca Raton Mayor Susan Haynie’s trial on public corruption charges has been postponed until Sept. 21 due to disruptions caused by COVID-19.

Prosecutor Brian Fernandes and Bruce Zimet, Haynie’s criminal defense lawyer, agreed to cancel a scheduled July 20 trial and to set the new trial date because the pandemic has made it difficult to complete pretrial discovery.

They also were concerned that not enough potential jurors would be available in July.

Prosecutors contended that Haynie used her position on the City Council to vote on six matters that financially benefited James Batmasian, the city’s largest downtown commercial landlord, and failed to disclose income she received from him.

Haynie has pleaded not guilty to the charges. Zimet has repeatedly said she will not accept a plea deal.

Then-Gov. Rick Scott suspended Haynie from office, but she never resigned.

Her option expired in 2020 because a political group that second-guessed her was not certified by the Florida Division of Elections.

As mayor, she was paid $96,000 a year and had no official duties attached. She did not accept a pension when she left office.

Her trial on public corruption charges has been tentatively set for July 21, but it was postponed on June 17 Florida Chief Justice Charles T. Canady ordered the postponement extended until at least July 17.

Haynie, 64, was arrested on April 24, 2018, on charges of official misconduct, perjury, misuse of public office and failure to disclose voting conflicts. She faces more than 20 years in prison if she’s convicted.

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Iconic Atlantic Avenue shoe store shutters after 68 years

Mary Ford, manager and employee of Vince Canning Shoes for over 14 years, helps Judy Uhrman, a customer of seven years, try on shoes during a going-out-of-business sale. The family's store Tootsies remains across the street. Tim Stepien/The Coastal Star

Mary Ford, manager and employee of Vince Canning Shoes for over 14 years, helps Judy Uhrman, a customer of seven years, try on shoes during a going-out-of-business sale. The family's store Tootsies remains across the street. Tim Stepien/The Coastal Star

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distributes 600,000 diapers each year, but the demand has grown because of the economic repercussions of the coronavirus. Some of the diapers were secured through the organization’s Amazon wish list and some were made possible through monetary donations.

Some 280,000 diapers were donated by the National Diaper Bank Network, to which the league belongs.

All My Sons Moving & Storage delivered them. “We are glad we were able to help with this large shipment that will in turn be delivered to so many families in need during these challenging times,” said Jameson Olsen, the company’s director of marketing and business development.

To donate diapers, email diaperbank@jlbr.org and a volunteer will pick up the donation. Or use the Junior League’s Amazon wish list and have diapers shipped directly to the organization’s headquarters. The link for the wish list is http://a.co/6hoQI8P.

The Senada Adzem team of Douglas Elliman recently delivered more than 1,000 washable children’s masks and several infrared thermometers to Florence Fuller Child Development Centers in Boca Raton, which reopened its doors June 1. Adzem’s team turned to a second nonprofit, one based in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for assistance with its contribution to Florence Fuller. Adzem commissioned the Association of Persons with Cerebral Palsy and Dystrophy in Goražde to produce the face masks for children of different ages. The nonprofit employs family members of patients with cerebral palsy and dystrophy.

National Council on Compensation Insurance recently donated almost three tons of food to Boca Helping Hands, which is seeing an average of 2,025 new families and individuals needing food services each day. Its pantry bag distribution has risen from 150–180 bags per day to more than 230, and it now serves an average of 324 meals per day — double what the organization usually serves.

NCCI employees recommend and select the charities that the company supports each year through the NCCI Cares program, which has helped many charities near the company’s Boca Raton headquarters.

The program also has generated community support that included more than $460,000 raised in the last two years for the United Way of Palm Beach County; more than $15,000 donated to Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse; more than $20,000 raised to support hurricane relief efforts; 263 pairs of shoes donated to children in need; and care packages totaling 260-plus pounds sent to Kids’ Chance of Florida scholarship recipients.

A Delray Beach-based company, Safe Space Scan Technologies, recently made available its new infrared temperature scanning technology. It complies with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention standards for business reopenings. The 3S07T scanner, which features proprietary technology, is FCC certified and can scan for elevated temperature and mask compliance in less than one second. People without masks and/or with elevated body temperatures will receive audio alerts, as will business or building management. The Safe Space Scanner sells for $1,499.

For more information, visit www.safespacescan.com or call 888-819-7226.

Steve Plunkett contributed to this column.

Send business news to Christine Davis at cdavis9797@gmail.com.
Live the Coastal Lifestyle

Spectacular New Construction | $3,800,000 | 5 BR, 5.5 BA | Approx. 5,200 sf living, approx. 7,900 sf total | Web# RX-106797661

Oceanfront Condo | Newly Priced | $1,949,000 | 3 BR, 2.5 BA | Approx. 2,912 sf | Web# RX-10570027

Rarely available | $1,800,000 | 3 BR, 3 BA | Ocean and intracoastal views, corner unit designer finished concierge building | Web# RX-10625454

Waterfront Lot | Newly Priced | $1,295,999 | Unique opportunity to build on this 1/2 acre waterfront lot | Web# RX-10566249

Listed & Closed in 10 Days | $875,000 | 2 BR, 2 BA | Charming beach area cottage | Web# RX-10601668

Sale Pending | Ocean Ridge Yacht Club | $799,000 | 3 BR, 2.5 BA | Waterfront townhome in prime location, Approx. 2,286 sf living | Web# RX-10542066

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Call me today. I specialize in the coastal communities of Ocean Ridge, Palm Beach, Manalapan, Gulfstream and Delray Beach.

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John Boden of Highland Beach served in Vietnam as a Marine helicopter pilot. Tim Stepens/The Coastal Star

What freedom means to me

By Janis Fontaine

July 4 is Independence Day. America’s most significant holiday. But what is independence? And what is freedom?

As Americans, we talk about freedom as a “right,” something we are entitled to like the air we breathe. But the truth is, many of us are more confused than ever about what freedom really means. So, we asked our neighbors: “What does freedom mean to you?”

This is what they said.

“Today we are being asked to follow rules that benefit ourselves and others. This is what freedom is all about.” — John Boden, Highland Beach, a former Marine helicopter pilot who served in Vietnam

“I have always taken my freedom for granted. I thought I was born with that privilege and carried it with patriotic zeal. Now, I have never felt so threatened. With an out-control pandemic, civil unrest seeking justice and racial equality, justly so, a government with a political agenda to serve their own good, not we who need their guidance, I am shaken.” — Barbara Cook of Ocean Ridge, a Garden Club member who was instrumental in putting up the Blue Star Highway monument at the Ocean Ridge Town Hall

“I fear for the next generations who inherit our country. How can I assure my grandchildren that all will be fine? They trust me.” — Barbara Cook of Ocean Ridge, a Garden Club member who was instrumental in putting up the Blue Star Highway monument at the Ocean Ridge Town Hall

More thoughts on freedom, Page AT3
Ballroom Battle will have live telecast instead of audience

Jeanette Wynnekener, director of the laboratory, said the funds are going to bring “amazing opportunities for marine biologists in training to gain hands-on experiences in the science and the communication of science.”

"For more information, call 561-297-2676 or visit www.fau.edu.

Impact 100 names winners of grants

Impact 100 Palm Beach County named the nonprofit winners that took home a combined total of $655,000 in high-impact grants.

The five organizations that received $100,000 apiece are CityHouse, CommunityGreening Corporation, Florida Atlantic University Foundation, GFVT, and Roots and Wings.

Five finalists received $13,000 apiece. They are Boca Helping Hands, Coastal Conservation Association, Compass, Junior Achievement of the Palm Beaches & Treasure Coast, and Spady Cultural Heritage Museum.

“These grantees began the application process for funding nearly a year ago,” President Kathy Adkins said. “Given these uncertain times, we know that receiving these high-impact grants is more critical to our finalists than ever.”

Impact 100 Palm Beach County is a women’s 501(c)(3) dedicated to funding South County initiatives. It consists of members who donate $1,000 annually. For more information, call 561-336-4623 or visit www.impact100pbc.org.

COVID-19 emergency fund set up to feed families

Achievement Centers for Children and Families, which serves 900 clients annually from three Delray Beach locations, has mobilized its resources in the wake of the coronavirus.

While learning programs are closed for the safety of students and staff members, the organization is helping with such challenges as loss of employment and food security as well as other critical needs.

“We are committed to doing everything we possibly can, in any way we can, to help our children, families, staff and partners,” CEO Stephanie Seibl said, noting that the newly created COVID-19 Emergency Fund is seeking donations. “Also, in our efforts to support the community as a whole, we are partnering with local restaurants and suppliers to provide meals for our families and are offering opportunities for the community to sponsor meals and support local restaurants.”

ACCf has distributed more than 3,500 meals since making the quick pivot from being an after-school center to feeding people in its aid.

“The demand for our services is greater than ever,” Seibl said. “Our partners and supporters have been instrumental in our efforts to serve meals for over 200 children each week while supporting local restaurants and their employees.”

For more information, call 561-519-0003 or visit www.achievementcenters.org/coronavirus.

Lois Pope encourages others to help the food bank.

Photo provided

Pope donates $1 million to county Food Bank

Philanthropist Lois Pope of Manalapan has donated $1 million to the Palm Beach County Food Bank to support and expand its Food4OurKids program.

The program, a year-round weekend and summer initiative designed to fill nutritional gaps when children are not in school, is now needed every day.

“No child should ever go hungry, here in Palm Beach County or anywhere else in this country,” Pope said. “Children need food. They need proper nutrition to learn and thrive. But now, during this coronavirus pandemic when they are not in school, they are especially at risk of going hungry. So I invite others — in fact, I urge others — to join me in this vitally important, essential effort.”

For more information, call 561-582-8083 or visit www.lifefood.org.

Mentoring program gets boost from Boynton

The $200 donation that the Boynton Beach City Commission made to the Ford & Gladys Alpert Jewish Family Service is helping the nonprofit’s Mentoring 4 Kids program prosper.

The program provides same-gender role models for children ages 6 to 14 who live in single-parent homes. Mentors provide friendship, guidance and support and take the youths to a wide range of community activities.

Studies show mentoring decreases school dropout rates, enhances self-esteem and confidence and strengthens relationships with family members, peers and teachers.

For more information, call 561-238-0205 or visit www.mentoringkids.org.

In other news, the Ford & Gladys Alpert Jewish Family Service celebrated its inaugural “Road to Resilience” luncheon, which drew a pre-COVID-19 crowd of more than 200 to witness a virtual chat between Dr. Jennifer Ashton in New York and Dr. Elaine Rotenberg, New York City’s clinical director.

Their conversation focused on the need to shine a light on addiction, mental illness and suicide and to de-stigmatize myths and remove the stigma attached to behavioral health problems.

All attendees received a complimentary signed copy of Ashton’s book Life After Suicide, which recounts how she and her children picked up the pieces following her husband’s death.

Event proceeds will benefit the service’s annual fund.

For more information, call 561-684-1991 or visit www.alpertfs.org.

Community Foundation leader to retire

After seven years of dedication to the Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties, Brad Hurlburt, president and CEO, is retiring.

Hurlburt will stay with the agency through June 2021 to ensure a smooth transition for his successor.

“Brad has done an outstanding job building the organization into an invaluable resource for our community and beyond, and he will certainly be missed,” Chairwoman Sherry Barrat said.

During Hurlburt’s tenure, combined donations grew to more than $200 million, up from $150 million. The board will engage an executive firm this summer to conduct the search for a new leader.

“This was the opportunity of a lifetime for me, and I will forever treasure the time I spent working with outstanding board members, community leaders, donors and organizations in our community and the meaningful difference,” he said.

For more info on the foundation, visit www.yourcommunityfoundation.org or call 561-639-6800.
What freedom means to me

“Freedom is ethereal; freedom is existential. Years ago in the midst of a project I had a discussion with some tradesmen. The first was Russian—all he ever knew was living in a totalitarian state. He missed the order of it. He thought we have too much freedom here. The other man was a Polish Muslim. He had been in a concentration camp until the Nazis learned he was a plumber. Then he became forced labor. He never broke my eye contact and the look in his eyes expressed a sadness that this Russian had no idea what freedom means. The plumber, with his look, told me the equivalent of ‘freedom is never having a knee on your neck.’”

— Chris Heffernan, Delray Beach, a financial analyst

Freedom is ‘a layered state of being’ for Charlene Farrington, executive director of the Spady Museum in Delray Beach. Photos by Tim Stepien/The Coastal Star

“Each time I ask myself what freedom means, I come up with a different answer. Freedom is a layered state of being, and I have come to the realization that, as a child, I felt like I was free. As an adult, I know that I never have been. I am committed to my own education, and I am trying to influence the future by sharing history with others. In this way, I comfort myself by believing freedom may, one day, be attained by future generations.”

— Charlene Farrington, Delray Beach, executive director of the Spady Museum in Delray Beach and president of the South Florida branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History

“Freedom to me means responsibility. When a person or society has the freedom to make choices about how, when, where and what they say, do, live, love, work, play, etc., then those choices can determine how much more or less freedom they will enjoy. The fastest way to lose freedoms is to either take them for granted or take advantage to the point where we start to infringe on others’ liberties and opportunities.”

— John Miller, Delray Beach, a former chairman of the city’s Historic Preservation Board

“Freedom is the unique product of liberation and the birth of free will. It has a unique self-governance quality, an ideal of independence and a vision of living on your own terms, regardless of ethnic background or political affiliation. Freedom is the God-given song of individual self-determination. To peacefully pray, vote, speak, and believe without fear of reprisal. Freedom is a blank canvas, without any group infringing on your right to hold the paintbrush. Freedom is a vision of broken chains and turning hope into reality.”

— Cameron Newman, Boca Raton, a soon-to-be junior at Saint Andrew’s School and an advocate for social justice and his Jewish faith

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Members of The Coastal Star website at www.thecoastalstar.com submitted photos of their new graduates. Congratulations to them all!

Graduate's name: Catherine Biagiotti
Hometown: Boca Raton
School: Boca Raton High School
Awards and accomplishments: National Honor Society, Boca High Leadership, and worked at Addison Mizner Elementary School as an after-school counselor and camp counselor all four years of high school
What's next: University of Central Florida to study communications
Family in The Coastal Star area: Parents, Chrissy and Carl Gibson, and grandparents Gayl and Jim Hackett

Graduate's name: Giorgina Ritota
Hometown: Ocean Ridge
School: G-Star School of the Arts
Awards and accomplishments: Dance captain for four years during X-Scream; worked special effects makeup for law enforcement disaster simulations
What's next: Florida Atlantic University
Family in The Coastal Star area: Dr. Ted and Lisa Ritota

Graduate's name: Charlotte Marie Donelan
Hometown: Delray Beach
School: Olympic Heights High School
Awards and accomplishments: Model UN grades 9-12 (president 11, 12), grades 9-12 varsity tennis, grades 9-12 Pre-Med Club (also was a cofounder), 10-11 Red Key Club
What's next: Continue at Imagine-Chancellor. Hopes to be a doctor when she grows up.
Family in The Coastal Star area: Dr. Glenn and Marie Chapman and her brother, Finn.

Graduate's name: Rick Garcia
Hometown: Wellington
School: Bowling Green State University graduate school
Awards and accomplishments: M.A. in College Student Personnel; member of Association for Orientation, Transition and Retention in Higher Education
What's next: Working at University of South Florida as a coordinator for New Student Connections
Family in The Coastal Star area: Zury Garcia

Graduate's name: Charlotte Yates Rowley
Hometown: Boynton Beach
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Graduations

Gulf Stream graduates enjoy unique celebration

Given the historic impact of the coronavirus, the 24 students in the class of 2020 may never forget the ceremony honoring their last year at the school.

A car for each student and family provides ample social distancing as a camera beams the June 7 ceremony online.

Gulf Stream School teachers and staff honored graduates with clappers and cowbells. From left are Deborah Handler, Danielle Cooper, Michael Mahady and Megan Bogert.

Aidan Grubman fist-bumps teachers and staff members after receiving his diploma and ringing the school’s bell.

Dr. Gray Smith, the head of school, told the graduating eighth-graders that ‘today’s ceremony is reaching uncharted territory. I hope this is the first, last and only mixed virtual and live graduation ceremony the school and students ever have to endure.’

ABOVE: Board of Trustees President Penny Kosinski, student Tessa Sorenson and Smith.

LEFT: An SUV with a sunroof proved to be the perfect graduation vehicle for Brooke Konrad.

Photos by Rachel S. O’Hara/The Coastal Star
**Highland Beach**

Town recognizes graduates as they celebrate end of school

By Rich Pollack

Soon after she and close to 570 other Wellesley College students received their degrees this Sunday afternoon virtual celebration, part-time Highland Beach resident Diane Schrenzel strolled across State Road A1A to join friends and family in a celebration. At the beach party overlooking the ocean, Schrenzel had a chance to wear the cap and gown that she would have worn to wear the cap and gown to wear the cap and gown to wear the cap and gown to wear the cap and gown to wear the cap and gown. However, wearing a brightly colored bikini that she would have worn to wear the cap and gown to wear the cap and gown to wear the cap and gown to wear the cap and gown to wear the cap and gown, she said. “I just thought it was fun to wear a bikini under the gown,” she said. “But it was also practical.”

In addition to the accolades she received during the May 31 celebration, Schrenzel — along with many other Highland Beach residents — is getting recognition from town leaders for reaching an academic milestone. On its website, the town has listed the names of about 15 graduates, ranging from those who completed kindergarten to those who earned college degrees. Highland Beach is also displaying a banner in front of Town Hall praising the students, and each will receive a letter of congratulations for the achievement.

Commissioner Peggy Giddens returned the favor in her response to a resident’s request, brought up the idea to have the town do something for graduates in a year when traditional graduations went by the wayside. The town put out an email call and learned that six residents had received college degrees, two graduated from high school, four from middle school and three from elementary school or kindergarten.

“We had so many more than we expected,” Giddes-Seyidman said. Vice Mayor Greg Babik, whose son and step-daughter have their names on the banner, said he is glad the town is offering the recognition.

“I think the parents are more excited about it than the kids are,” he said. “They’re just happy school is over.”

**Tots and Teens Calendar**

**Note:** Events are current as of 6/24. Many events are in flux, please check with organizers before making plans to attend.

**JULY 4**

**Saturday - 7/4 - Sensory Saturdays: Special Exploration Hours** at South Florida Science Center and Aquarium, 4801 Drexler Dr. M-F, West Palm Beach. For families affected by autism spectrum disorder. No huge crowds, softened general lighting, decreased noise level. Visual stimulation on interactive exhibits wherever possible. 1 Sat 7-9 pm. 585-5410; sfsciencecenter.org

**Monday - 7/6**

**Virtual Kindergarten Readiness Story Time** with Ms. Tea presented by Gumbo Limbo Nature Center, 21900 S. Ocean Blvd. 586-6410; lakeworthplayhouse.org

**Tuesday – 7/7**

**7/6-10 – South Florida Science Museum Summer Camp** at 4801 Drexler Dr. M-F, West Palm Beach. Daily 8-4 pm; $100 per session. 586-6410; sfsciencecenter.org

**Wednesday - 7/8**

**Summer camps open Delray Beach Surf Camp**

**JULY 5-11**

**Monday - 7/6**

**7/1-5**

**Improve Fun for Kids Camp**

7/6-10 – South Florida Science Museum Summer Camp at 4801 Drexler Dr. M-F, West Palm Beach. Daily 8-4 pm; $100 per session. 586-6410; sfsciencecenter.org

**July/August 2020**

**Sales Tax Holiday**

**JULY 26-AUGUST 1**

**August 2-8**

**August 30-SEPT. 5**

**August 2-8**

**JULY 12-18**

**Monday - 7/13**

**August 8-22**

**Friday - 8/7-20**

**Florida Back-to-School Sales Tax Holiday**

**August 23-29**

**Tuesday – 7/28 - Virtual GEMS Club: Can you Code?** at South Florida Science Center and Aquarium, 4801 Drexler Dr. M-F, West Palm Beach. Empowering young girls to explore STEM fields. Girls grades 3-8. High school girls can volunteer to be mentors. 5-7 pm. Free; $5/ suggested donation. Virtual registration: 393-7710; sfsciencecenter.org

**Wednesday - 8/26 - 3D Design and Printing** at Skills in Action Education Center (across the parking lot from the South Florida Science Center), 4801 Drexler Dr. M-F, West Palm Beach. Ages 8-14. 5-7 pm. Free; $5/suggested registration. Virtual registration: 393-7710; sfsciencecenter.org

**July/August 2020**
How eateries new and old are meeting demands of pandemic

The dining scene has become a mix of takeout delivery — as the coronavirus pandemic has forced restaurateurs to navigate uncharted waters and follow ever-changing rules. Jamie Hess, owner of the newest Atlantic Avenue restaurant, End of the Ave, has pivoted. "We’ve adapted," he said, describing his opening strategies, planned since last fall.

"The day we went for our beer and wine license is the day they shut down everything," he said. All was delayed or put on hold from early February to today as the restaurant worked to restructure its takeout business and then finally opened in Delray Beach. Set in a small former surf shop at 1135 E. Atlantic Ave., it’s a spot serving taco, hot dogs, beer and wine for beachgoers.

A condiment bar that was to offer dozens of toppings is now a behind-the-counter station, with add-ons for the tacos and cooked-in-beer dogs applied by masked and gloved workers.

The restaurant also expanded its offerings, "selling coolers and ice," Hess said, as a way to make up for slower food traffic now at the beach.

He initiated summer Happy Hour with a BOGO deal of anything on the menu 4-7 p.m. daily and decided to begin catering Taco Tuesday parties or Hot Dog Night for neighborhoods, he said.

Hess also shifted hours, closing at 9 p.m. to the plan to capture a bar crowd later at night was suspended while bars remain closed.

Adjustments made by all

In established restaurants, what was once a social scene of full dining rooms and mingling crowds is now rooms of small tables properly spaced and limited numbers of diners at one seating. Outside seating has been added to many spots, including the Station House in Lantana, which reopened in late May.

"But I feel it’s our job if there is a lot of people grouped together in an area especially that aren’t of the same party and they are coming in to dine. We let them know in a nice way that we’re trying to observe the rules that are given to us, and we’re passing them on so we can stay in business and keep giving them the service we’ve been providing them," a takeout plan initiated from the start saved the restaurant. "It was slow at first. But after social media kicked in, and I started posting pictures, it really took off," DeBlasi said.

"I sold a lot of halibut, but the scallops really took off. It was pan-seared diver scallops with cannellini beans, organic spinach and lemon confit," DeBlasi said. "It’s a $42 dish and we sold a gallon of scallops in just four hours after I posted the picture on our Facebook page.

DeBlasi discovered that some of his followers online are new customers who had never heard about the beachfront icon. "We’ve been here since 1997 and there are still people in Delray who’ve just found us," he said. "I’m amazed at that."

Social media have been a savior for some restaurants in that regard, and Facebook and Instagram have fostered whole new businesses. "We need this going forward," they told us. We’re trying to find a way to see if there’s a sustainable model for that," Social media have been a savior for some restaurants in that regard, and Facebook and Instagram have fostered whole new businesses.

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it, whether it’s a membership thing or something like that. Everybody who is volunteering has other jobs."

The club took off beyond all expectations, expanding into other cities and drawing attention to hundreds of restaurants in the county. Restaurants use a catering method. They take orders for pickup a few days before delivery. That allows them to control the staff and inventory with no waste, knowing exactly how much food is to be served.

The club helped restaurants reopen, bringing back kitchen staff and others, Brewer said, and enabled some to keep their leases or fend off creditors. The free program has been especially helpful to smaller restaurants that didn’t have social media savvy or PR groups behind them. Virtual parties also are part of the shift in dining practices.

At The Addison in Boca Raton, a special occasion restaurant that was booked solid for weddings and parties over the summer, a new way of engaging guests is in place. Zoe Lanham, Addison vice president, said the business put a focus on smaller wedding parties and events because of social distancing and capacity limits. People are encouraged to use live video to stream events online, especially to include the “grandmas and grandpas” who are more vulnerable to the virus and need to remain in place, she said.

“We’re telling the brides they can still have a lovely small wedding now. As a couple, you’re still getting married. Get married on the regular date you chose, then celebrate your first anniversary as a big celebration.”

The restaurant will even deliver the reception food to grandparents or people with small children who are homebound so they can experience the dinner, too.

The Addison observes social distancing and asks customers to wear masks and have their temperatures taken at the gate to protect the staff, Lanham said. Staffers are checked daily and list anyone they have contacted who might have the virus. They are paid for two weeks if they need to be out, and the restaurant pays for all virus testing.

In brief: Restaurants coming in with Plan B include The Butcher and The Bar at 510 E. Ocean Ave., Boynton Beach. Eric Anderson, a partner, said plans for an early summer opening were moved to early July. Only the butcher shop is open, serving sandwiches and meats for home cooks. Opening in the same building are Guaca Go, a takeout shop with design-your-own guacamole dishes, and soon, Popo, a South American restaurant...

Delray now has Hawkers, an Asian street food shop doing takeout at 610 E. Atlantic.
The plot thickens for area playhouses planning their futures

By Hap Erstein
ArtsPaper Theater Writer

Optimism tempered by uncertainty is the mood of area theater companies, which project several possible scenarios for reopening their playhouses and getting back to producing shows, based on what the government will allow. While the companies are champing at the bit to be up and running, to have subscribers and single-ticket buyers return, their plans to restart — with one significant exception in Boca Raton — vary over time, with options that stretch into next year. Such is "the new normal."

The Maltz Jupiter Theatre was having a banner year, completing its fundraising for a $32 million expansion to its physical plant and about to open its season-ending musical, How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying, when the coronavirus pandemic brought its business to a screeching halt.

Obligated to a sizable subscription base to deliver the show, artistic director and chief executive officer Andrew Kato mentally slotted How to Succeed as his fall season opener. "Of course we were going to have a fall season," Kato assumed at the time. Now, he is not so sure. "At that time, that was pretty horrible. But yesterday's horrible is today's 'Well, that's not so bad.'"

"The issue isn't about whether we'll be ready to do a season or not — I think everyone is dying to do shows," he says. But will the audience be ready to return? The issue is the cost of productions. "Because of the expense, you almost need a guarantee that they'll come back." And like most of the area's theater executives surveyed, Kato finds firmly that "social distancing is not a possibility, because the finances of doing that are not there."

In his 617-seat theater, Kato says he can need as much as 80% capacity to break even on his larger musicals, like the previously announced Sweeter Charity and Sunset Boulevard for the 2020-2021 season. No wonder he is contemplating downsizing his productions or, in a worst-case scenario, scrapping next season entirely, going dark for 15 months until the audience's safety can be assured. "In terms of emerging out of this, I think that we're going to have to be super conservative," he concludes.

Still, with the status of the virus changing daily, Kato says, "Everything remains on the table, including the possibility of doing a build-out" expansion, rather than a season of shows. "I want to produce a show. This is horrible. Really the reason why the build-out might be the best thing right now is because the idea of doing nothing is not in my DNA."
Arts

Cultural Council turns to virtual world

By Jan Engoren
Contributing Writer

Like many art institutions and organizations, in this time of COVID-19, the Cultural Council for Palm Beach County has shifted its offerings online, with a user-friendly lineup of free virtual programming, including art exhibitions and the performing arts. Its six-performance music series began in June with A Jazz Tribute to Musicals featuring Yvette Norman, Tedd Teger and continues with Jill & Rich Switzer and Friends performing A Latin Affair; on July 11, The Man with the Horn on Aug. 1, and Check to Check on Sept. 15.


Because it’s a virtual performance without a live audience, Keith “Soda Pop” Squire, whose ultimate goal is to perform a Bob Marley film, says it’s a chance to exercise extreme creativity and give it all he’s got. “I’m so honored to perform for the Cultural Council,” says Squire, a West Palm Beach native who began his career in school as a “wonder kid” rapper. “Bob Marley’s message of peace and bringing people together resonated with me and the movement for social justice and Black Lives Matter.”

During the quarantine, he’s been active caring for a new daughter and gardening, where he says he mines his creative inspiration for the show.

On Sept. 12, the focus shifts to dance with Art Shift: An Evening of Dance, featuring Demetrus Klein and his Demetrus Klein Dance Company; Donna Goffredo Murray; Anna Nunes, AGWA Dance Company; Ericka Squire, Natural Movers/Dance Project; and Elizabeth (Libby) Faber, Arise Dance Collective.

Faber, a Palm Beach Gardens native and recent Juilliard graduate who finished her final semester of school online thanks to COVID-19, will create an original seven-minute contemporary dance piece for the Cultural Council.

Inspired by her classmates (“my biggest inspiration and role model”), Faber will collaborate with a jazz musician and utilize improvisation as a catalyst to generate her movement vocabulary. “Performing online is a really great way to reach people who wouldn’t be able to attend a live performance,” says Faber. “It can reach more people and people have time now to watch. Nothing can replace live theater or live performance, but virtual performance is the best option and a good way to stay involved with the arts community.”

Exhibits range from Ken Davidoff’s photographs of the 1969 Palm Beach Pop Festival; Lake Worth photographer Philip Paritsky’s Kodachrome or iPhone; Summer Abstraction by Petrina Easton and Easton Art Galleries; to Delray Beach artist Sharon Koskoff’s Alone Together: A Coronavirus Crisis Collage. . . A Socially Distant Installation.

As soon as the stay-at-home orders were issued in mid-March, Koskoff put out a call for submissions to the local arts community and spent the next three months creating a 30-foot by 5-foot art installation reflecting life in the time of quarantine.

“I was living inside this mural for three months — it took over my living space,” joked Koskoff from her home, where she has been working nonstop, photocopying, cropping, printing, matting, collecting 139 relevant headlines from local newspapers and composing the installation. Of this labor-intensive endeavor, she says her intent was to reflect the opposite of the chaos of the virus, creating an orderly, precise and mathematical landscape.

More than 100 artists submitted 164 images of animals, food and veggies, landscapes, sunsets and items with personal meaning. Koskoff added her own keepsakes to the mix, including photos of Telly-O reminding her of her mother and images from family photos. She took four days to compose the larger installation. Gratified with the results, Koskoff says, “I love every single square.”

Coincidentally, the show opened June 13, a symbolic day for Koskoff and the anniversary of her mother’s passing. “It doesn’t get more personal than this,” said Koskoff.

Making the comparison to viewing the Statue of Liberty in person or exclusively as an image, Koskoff says seeing her installation in person is “spiritually overwhelming.” “It brings you right back to this moment in time, with all the pain, sadness and joy,” she says. “It tells the story of what it is to be alone, disconnected and trying desperately to stay connected.”

Arts Briefs

Chamber Festival goes virtual

The Palm Beach Chamber Music Festival’s traditional summer institution for classical fans for nearly 30 years, has joined the Zoom generation: Its concerts will be presented on video.

The concerts, filmed in late June at Delray’s Creif Theatre, will consist of three taped programs (instead of the usual four) lasting about a half-hour and featuring a mix of well-known and unusual music for chamber groups.

The concerts will be available on Fridays beginning July 17 with music by Dvorak, Milhaud and Robert Muczynski. Weber, Glinka and Paul Schoenfelf are featured on the July 24 concert, and the events end July 31 with pieces by Saint-Saens, Beethoven, Handel and Brahms.

The concerts will be presented on oldschoolsquare.org beginning at 7:30 p.m. Concerts are $10, and will be available for unlimited viewing for a month. For more information, call 564-547-1001 or visit pbscm.org.

Norton’s director resigns after 15 months

WEST PALM BEACH — Elliot Rostick Davis, CEO and director of the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach since March 2019, has resigned.

“The events of the past months have impressed upon me the importance of being closer to my family and I’m looking forward to returning to Boston and beginning the next chapter of my life,” she said in a prepared statement.

Davis joined the Norton a month after the art venue reopened following a $100 million expansion and renovation crafted by the famed British architectural and design firm, Foster + Partners.

Carrollon ceremony to be streamed Aug. 3

FORT LAUDERDALE — The 44th Annual Carrollon Awards, postponed from April because of the pandemic, will be presented virtually, said Donald R. Rogers, board president of the theater and arts honors.

The awards will be streamed on the Carrollon Facebook page and website at 7:30 p.m., Aug. 3, hosted through the YouTube channel of the Broad Art Center for the Performing Arts.

“We are determined to present a fun and exciting event virtually,” said Walts.

Carrollon Awards will be presented in 20 competitive categories. For a complete list of this year’s nominees, visit carrollonawards.org/news/44th-annual-carrollon-award-nominations.

If You View

All performances start at 7 p.m. and will be streamed on YouTube and the Council’s website, palmbeachculture.com. While there is no charge to participate, donations to the Council and directly to participating artists are encouraged.

Performers in the dance series include Libby Faber and her Arise Dance Collective. Photo provided

Ballet Palm Beach’s Smith wins Frank Prize

WEST PALM BEACH — The 2020 Randolph A. Frank Prize for the Performing Arts was awarded June 25 to Ballet Palm Beach founder and artistic director Colleen Smith during the ceremony streamed live.

“In addition to bringing a brilliant choreographer, Colleen has taught more than 5,000 Palm Beach County students and awarded in excess of $200,000 in scholarships to deserving dancers since creating the Ballet Palm Beach Academy in 1993,” said Palm Beach Symphony CEO David Mc Clymont.

As sole winner, Smith received the entire prize purse of $10,000.

Festival BOCA presents ‘virtual’ gala Oct. 8

Festival of the Arts Boca is planning a 15th annual ‘virtual’ gala Oct. 8 to raise money for music education initiatives.

“We are looking forward to going virtual and delivering our message globally,” said Joanna Marie Kaye, the festival’s executive director.

Festivities begin at 7 p.m. when guests will join co-hosts and Festival Board member Olivia Hollia live on Facebook, YouTube, and the festival’s website for an evening of entertainment and visits by festival artists of the past, present and future.

Already scheduled are: presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, former U.S. poet laureate Robert Pinsky, superstars Sir Simon Rattle, Yo-Yo Ma, classical guitarist Milos and Festival Music Director, Conductor David Alan Ross.

The 15th Annual Festival of the Arts Boca will return to the Mizner Park Amphitheater March 5-14, 2021.

Shakespeare fest to present Bard in the Zoo JUPITER — The Palm Beach Shakespeare Festival will mark its 30th anniversary this summer with a COVID-19-revised agenda. The show, normally presented in July at Carlin Park, will be moved to August, and a virtual portion of a Shakespeare performance will be shown online.

Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream will be available at pbshakespeare.org. It is being presented through the help of a PNC Bank grant.

Festival producers are planning virtual watch parties, encouraging families and couples to gather with blankets, chairs, picnic baskets and coolers and enjoy the show. Zoom tickets will duplicate the Shakespeare Festival experience while continuing safe social distancing.

— Staff reports
Theatrical News and Reviews

The Kravis Center for the Performing Arts in West Palm Beach, Florida, has been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the center has had to cancel its season of performances, which was originally scheduled to run through November.

According to executive director Judith Mitchell, the center has been able to continue its operations with the help of donations and grants. "We are thankful for the support of our patrons and donors," she said. "We are working on a plan to resume operations when it is safe to do so."}

In the meantime, the center has been working to stay connected with its audience through virtual programming. "We are continuing to engage with our community through digital means," said Mitchell. "We are offering virtual classes, performances, and educational programs to keep our patrons engaged during this time of uncertainty."}

The center has also been working on a plan for safety and sanitation measures when it is safe to reopen. "We are following the guidelines set by the CDC to ensure the safety of our patrons and staff," said Mitchell. "We are considering a variety of options, such as reduced capacity, increased cleaning, and the use of face masks."}

Despite the challenges, the center remains committed to providing the highest quality of performance and education. "We are looking forward to the day when we can welcome our patrons back to our beautiful venue," said Mitchell. "We are dedicated to providing a safe and enriching environment for everyone who enters our doors."
Along the Coast

Barrier island, mainland Boca are magnets for Tesla cars

By Steve Plunkett

It’s not your imagination: You’re more likely to see a Tesla electric vehicle in Boca Raton or on State Road A1A than anywhere else in Palm Beach County.

Despite being Florida’s 23rd-largest city, Boca Raton has the state’s third-highest cluster of Tesla EVs, behind only Miami and Fort Lauderdale, the California-based automaker says. The concentration continues up the barrier island to South Palm Beach and Palm Beach, making a short skip over Ocean Ridge and Manalapan.

“Two years ago we didn’t see a lot of Teslas. Now when we go to Boca we see 50,” said Craig Henne of South Palm Beach, who bought the company’s premium SUV, a white Model X, in 2017.

Tesla boasts on its website (Tesla.com/carbonimpact) that its vehicles have saved a cumulative 3.6 million tons of carbon dioxide from getting into the atmosphere. Until March it also listed the top cities and top ZIP codes where its cars are saving on greenhouse gases.

Its figures showed Teslas in Boca Raton and west Boca saved the equivalent of 35,979,242 pounds of carbon dioxide that vehicles with internal combustion engines would have emitted, or a per-capita average of 386 pounds.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, that’s a significant amount. Greater Boca Tesla owners have saved the equivalent emissions of:

• Burning 216 tanker trucks full of gasoline, or
• The CO2 equivalent from burning enough coal to fill a mile-long coal train, or
• The emissions that would be produced from driving the average U.S. gas car far enough to get to the moon and back — 101 times.

Boca Raton also ranks No. 27 on the automaker’s list of the nation’s top 50 cities, ahead of much-larger Phoenix and Denver. Miami is 8, and Fort Lauderdale is 23. Tampa, Orlando and other Florida cities are no-shows.

Jeremy Rodgers, the city’s deputy mayor, jumped on the bandwagon for Tesla’s mass-market sedan, the Model 3, as soon as he could, sending his wife and kids to Town Center showroom. “People know it’s Peel when she drives up, she said. “You don’t see that many bright blue ones.”

In March, Tesla opened a new supercharger station at the Wawa store on Hillsboro Boulevard just west of Interstate 95 in Deerfield Beach. Owners who don’t qualify for free charging pay 26 cents per kWh, a little more than doubling what they would pay to charge at home.

The company says it will open another supercharger station somewhere in Boca Raton this year, but has not released a location or opening date.

A map on its website suggests it will be close to the Town Center showroom.

Tesla’s lowest-price electric vehicle, its Model 3 Standard Range Plus, provides 250 miles of driving range between charges and costs $37,990. Tesla’s luxury Model S sedan, with 402 miles of range, starts at $74,990.

Top cities for Teslas

(1) Los Angeles
(2) San Jose
(3) San Francisco
(7) Atlanta
(8) Dallas
(23) Fort Lauderdale
(27) Boca Raton
(28) Phoenix
(31) Denver

Top area ZIP codes

(2) 33494 Boca Raton
(5) 33432 Boca Raton
(25) 33480 South Palm Beach
(30) 33433 Boca Raton
(36) 33487 Boca Raton
(40) 33431 Boca Raton
(49) 33483 Delray Beach/Gulf Stream

*Source: Tesla.com/carbonimpact*
The pandemic has had a tremendous impact on mental health and we’re probably only seeing the tip of the iceberg,” explains Marni Feuerman, a Boca Raton licensed psychotherapist. “We’re in a collective trauma that has us all living in fear.”

Where to find help

- Faulk Center for Counseling’s New Connections Zoom support group. When: 6-7 p.m. Tuesdays. Call: 561-483-5300 for link.
- Real Talk, virtual support group for teens sponsored by Palm Beach County Youth Services Department’s Youth and Family Counseling program. When: 4:30-5:30 p.m. Wednesdays. Call: 561-242-5714 to register.
- 211 Helpline provides support, suicide prevention and help locating available resources. When: 24/7.
- Disaster Distress Helpline: crisis counseling for people experiencing emotional distress related to any disaster. When: 24/7.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. When: 24/7.
- Palm Beach County School District hotline for student mental health. When: 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. Call: 561-432-6389.
- Simply put, people are not wired for isolation. And, Feuerman notes, the usual support system — friends, family, coworkers and in-person support groups — can’t always assist these days.

Above all, don’t give up hope, Feuerman implores. Use time right now and if there’s any way to better prepare for the mental health fallout, I hope it happens. I anticipate more people with complaints of trauma and perhaps even meeting criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder.

Don’t give up hope, Feuerman implores. “There’s much growth that comes out of hardship.”

For more information about the events listed, visit feuermantherapy.com.
New visitor guidelines announced at Boca, Bethesda hospitals

Want to visit a friend or family member in the hospital during the COVID-19 outbreak? Check the new rules first, like these for Baptist Health South Florida, which operates Boca Raton Regional Hospital and the Bethesda hospitals in Boynton Beach.

As of June 15, for inpatient units, one adult visitor at a time is allowed from 3–9 p.m. Patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 will not be allowed visitors except under exceptional circumstances.

For labor and delivery and maternity, one partner may stay continuously with a patient. For outpatient facilities, including emergency department and urgent care centers, one adult visitor may accompany patients at all times.

At physician offices with enough space to accommodate visitors, one adult visitor may accompany a patient.

At the Lynn Cancer Institute at Boca Regional, no visitors will be allowed to accompany adult patients for the duration of the pandemic. This is to protect immune-compromised cancer patients and the center’s employees from the risks of COVID-19.

Limited exceptions may allow a single adult visitor for new patients, pediatric patients, adult patients with identified neuro-cognitive impairments, and patients with physical impairments that require special assistance from their caretakers, as determined by their clinical team.

All visitors must be 18 or older and will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms at time of exposure. Anyone displaying symptoms or risk of exposure will not be allowed to visit.

Masks are required to be worn at all times, and will be provided upon entry. All visitors will need to follow social distancing guidelines, and waiting rooms and other common areas will be monitored to ensure social distancing. For more information, visit www.baptisthealth.net/coronavirus.

HCA Healthcare hospitals, which include JFK Medical Center in Atlantis, continue with precautions against spreading COVID-19.

They include limited entrances where screening and temperature checks will be performed; a separate tower for COVID-19 patients; masks that exceed federal guidelines required for all; and limited visitation with social distancing. One visitor (screened negative and wearing a mask) is permitted to accompany each patient during procedures; the hospital also offers virtual visitation. Common areas have been reconfigured to ensure adequate spacing.

JFK Medical Center, as well as its north campus and Palm West Hospital, now offers an insurance hotline. For people who need insurance coverage option assistance, call 833-867-8771 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Hotline advisors can discuss eligibility and advocacy services such as continuing an employer’s existing plan after job loss; applying for coverage through a spouse’s benefit plan; resources that may help offset the costs of health insurance; Medicaid resources; and state and federal health insurance exchanges, such as the Affordable Care Act, and how to enroll due to a changing life event.

The hospital network is not representing companies or selling insurance plans, and there is no cost for this service.

Tenet HealthCare’s Palm Beach Health Network, which includes Delray Medical Center, has relaxed visitation policies to allow one designated support person to accompany each elective surgery, pediatric and maternity patient. Visitors will be screened for fever, respiratory symptoms or travel to high-risk locations before entering the hospitals, and they are required to wear visitor identification, face masks, and to sanitize their hands.

In mid-June, Delray Medical Center’s Imaging Center at Palm Court resumed its outpatient and diagnostic imaging services with safety standards in place.

“We understand that many of our patients were unable to schedule, or had to postpone their diagnostic appointments due to state orders and social distancing. They can now reschedule these important screenings and tests at our Palm Court location,” said Maggie Gill, chief executive officer of the Palm Beach Health Network and Delray Medical Center.

“We are making sure safety protocols are in place for our patients so they can feel safe and confident about getting the care they need.”

DMC Imaging Center at Palm Court is at 5130 Linton Blvd., Suite I-1, Delray Beach.

Delray Medical Center received the Healthgrades 2020 Patient Safety Excellence Award for the third consecutive year.

“It is an honor to be recognized for our commitment to providing safe care, especially at a time when our community needs us most,” Gill said.

“We are seeing cases where people are delaying care for things like strokes and heart attacks, which can lead to life-threatening illnesses, and we want our patients to understand that our hospitals are safe places. We have always cared for patients with infectious diseases, and we are prepared. We have taken the appropriate steps, and we have the supplies needed to ensure appropriate safety standards are in place.”

SBA Communications Corp. has rolled out a new wellness program with its exclusive corporate wellness partner, Boca Raton Regional Hospital. The arrangement encompasses services that include on-site and off-site doctor’s appointments, blood pressure checks and blood screenings, mobile mammography, meditation and mental health.
services, nutrition, lectures and other services, many of which are available to SBA’s entire 1,500-person workforce by video.

In other news, SBA made a gift of $1 million to support Boca Raton Regional Hospital’s Keeping the Promise campaign.

Sun Capital Partners Foundation Inc., with founders Rodger R. Krouse and Marc J. Leder and their families, donated $1 million to Boca Regional’s Keeping the Promise campaign in May.

“As local residents operating a global business headquartered here for the past 25 years, we and the Sun Capital family truly appreciate the dedication and hard work that frontline health care professionals do every day to keep community residents safe and healthy,” Leder said.

To identify patterns and symptoms of COVID-19, a team of scientists from Florida Atlantic University’s Schmidt College of Medicine launched a study using the Oura ring, a device that tracks body temperature, movement and sleep data. Led by Janet Lougher, Ph.D., senior associate dean for research and chair of the Department of Biomedical Sciences, the university’s research team is part of the TemPredict global study spearheaded by the University of California, San Francisco.

The Oura ring, which looks like a wedding band, is worn around the-clock to provide data in real time. The data alerts the user and the researchers of physiological changes.

The FAU research team has taken TemPredict to the next level by incorporating two additional phases: determining if study participants go on to develop acute COVID-19 infections, and to garner an understanding of the prevalence rate. At six and 12 weeks, the researchers will conduct blood tests to identify whether the study participants have developed immune responses to COVID-19.

Also, the FAU research team members, who have developed a COVID-19 test that uses a saliva sample instead of a sample obtained with a nasal swab, will conduct weekly saliva tests. Once they’ve gathered the data, they will work with scientists of Machine Perception and Cognitive Robotics Lab in FAU’s Charles E. Schmidt College of Science to use artificial intelligence for predictive purposes. They also will be able to correlate their data to the TemPredict study of more than 2,000 health care workers who are caring for COVID-19 patients.

Ethan Strikowski, Rylie Lougher and Megan Lougher, students from Park Vista Community High, started a project through their Facebook page, “Feding our Heroes,” to raise money to purchase food from restaurants to bring to frontline workers caring for COVID-19 patients.

In May they began to deliver lunches from Long Island Bagel and Deli to health care workers at Boca Raton Regional Hospital, and they brought food to workers at JFK Medical Center, purchased from In Good Taste Catering and Gourmet Cafe and Nature’s Corner Cafe.

BeWellPBC, a countywide behavioral health initiative, has launched “Be Well Do Well Mini-Grants,” which will fund creative projects with awards up to $5,000. Applicants must be Palm Beach County residents or organizations with ideas to build behavioral health support, promote workforce wellness, and/or focus on residents most in need. Applicants are not limited to nonprofit organizations.

Residents of all ages, community groups, religious organizations, for-profit businesses, schools, other educational facilities and local municipalities are eligible to apply through July 11 at bowellpbc.org/dowellgrants.

Send health news to Christine Davis at cdavis979@gmail.com.
Surge in adoptions helps old or injured animals find homes

Carl Case, of Boca Raton, adopted Cici, a three-legged corgi mix, from Tri-County Animal Rescue. Photo provided

There is a silver lining to this coronavirus that has limited us for months. Cici, Cooper and Daisy know firsthand.

All three — two sporting gray muzzles and one missing a front leg — languished unadopted in area animal shelters. It’s tough to compete with cute puppies and young, healthy dogs.

Today, this trio of tail-waggers is sheltering in place in happy homes, getting lots of treats, cuddle sessions and comfy bedding.

Credit creative strategies by the teams at Peggy Adams Animal Rescue League in West Palm Beach and Tri-County Animal Rescue in Boca Raton for ensuring that high numbers of dogs and cats in their shelters have found temporary and permanent homes during the pandemic.

“We never closed the doors to the public,” says Suzi Goldsmith, Tri-County co-founder and executive director. “We just changed the way we did business. With few exceptions, any dogs we got in during this time got adopted. And, we were able to foster animals with special needs who are older or require medication.”

At Peggy Adams, Executive Director Rich Anderson reports that adoption inquiries have spiked nearly 250% compared to this time last year. He said in the past, the shelter faced a tough task to find homes for hundreds of kittens born each spring. This year, kittens at the shelter have been adopted as soon as they were deemed old and healthy enough.

The “outpouring of support from the community has been amazing,” says Anderson, “so the point we struggled to keep up with inquiries from people asking to become foster volunteers.”

Which brings us back to the tales of Cici, Cooper and Daisy. Carl Case, of Boca Raton, quickly bonded with three-legged Cici, a 2-year-old corgi mix who had been transferred from a shelter in Miami-Dade. Cici needed amputation surgery at Tri-County on her right front leg, damaged from possibly being struck by a vehicle while she was a stray.

“I told the people at Tri-County that I wanted to adopt a special-needs dog after fostering dogs for a long time,” says Case, who owns a software billing company. “When I met Cici in the parking lot at the shelter, she was a little hesitant as I was wearing gloves and a mask, but now, she is so happy and loving and doing really great with me.”

At age 11, Cooper, a beagle, proved to be the perfect dog for retirees Janice and Vic Romley, of West Palm Beach. The couple were looking for another dog after their last one passed away.

“We really missed having a dog in our lives and told the people at Peggy Adams we were willing to take a large dog or an older dog,” says Janice Romley. “Cooper is a very loving dog and although he is 11, he has a lot of energy. He keeps us on a healthy walking schedule. He has added so much joy to our lives, especially during these challenging and isolating times.”

Divorced and with a college-bound son, Ana Kieckbusch, of Boca Raton, contacted Tri-County about fostering an older dog. The staff told her about Daisy, a 10-year-old terrier mix who had been at the shelter for two years.

“I didn’t want a crazy pup as I work from home and didn’t want a dog who barked a lot,” says Kieckbusch, a marketing strategy consultant. “Daisy had been at Tri-County a long time and was like their beloved mascot. She is low key and has a heart problem, but she takes her pills easily every day. She also has benign tumors on her chest and was chubbier when I got her, but she has already lost two pounds.”

Kieckbusch adds, “Holding her and looking at the way she looks at me is the best medicine for loneliness and for any ailment. I am grateful for her.”

Case knows his life has perked up since the arrival of the fun-loving Cici.

“To me, dogs are the most trustworthy beings on the planet,” he says. “If you adopt a dog, it is a big commitment, but definitely well worth it. I love Cici and can’t wait for the time when I can travel the world with her.”

The outpouring of support from the community has been amazing, says Anderson, “so the point we struggled to keep up with inquiries from people asking to become foster volunteers.”

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Oh Behave! Show on petliferadio.com. Learn more at www.ardenmoore.com

Arden Moore, founder of fourleggedlife.com, is an animal behavior expert and host of Oh Behave!
By Willie Howard

Ocean Ridge native Jonathan Pugh graduated from the Florida Institute of Technology in May with a degree in ocean engineering and is already part of a team that’s making deep-diving history.

Working for Sebastian-based Triton Submarines, Pugh, 21, became a member of the deep-diving expedition team that in early June sent astronaut/oceanographer Kathy Sullivan more than 35,000 feet below the surface of the Pacific Ocean into the deepest known spot on the planet. Sullivan was the first woman to reach that depth.

According to a New York Times report, Sullivan, 68, descended 35,810 feet (about 6.8 miles) below the surface into the Challenger Deep, the lowest point in the Mariana Trench, on June 7 in the Triton-built deep submergence vehicle Limiting Factor.

Victor Vescovo, an equity investor and explorer who paid for the mission, accompanied Sullivan.

Sullivan became the first American woman to walk in space in 1984 and later served as administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Pugh grew up fishing and diving in Ocean Ridge and is the son of former mayor and pool company owner Geoff Pugh, an avid scuba diver and ocean aficionado.

The Pugh family fished together on most Sundays. As a boy, Jon went snorkeling regularly and earned his scuba diving certification at age 12.

He also enjoyed taking things apart to figure out how they worked.

“To the dismay of my mother, I had everything from rocket engines to 3-D printers and old computer parts laying around, which caused my room to look more like a garage than anything,” Pugh said via email from the expedition’s support ship, Pressure Drop.

Pugh started working for Triton Submarines as an intern in January, spending days at the company on Mondays and Fridays while completing his engineering degree at the Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne.

After he graduated in May, Triton hired him as a mechanical assembly engineer.

Soon thereafter, the company asked Pugh to join the team that supported Vescovo and Sullivan during the Challenger Deep dive.

“As one of Triton’s five support crew members, Pugh worked primarily with “lander” operations,” Pugh said landers are rectangular boxes that go into the water before the submarine to carry equipment such as hydrophones, water samplers, lights, cameras and soil samplers.

“They provide crucial data such as density and temperature, which help determine how much weight needs to be attached to the sub,” he explained.

“Working at sea is tough but rewarding work, especially when you’re making history in the process,” Pugh said, noting that he learned about hard work through his father’s pool business.

“I can say without a doubt that tying steel, cleaning pools, and digging ditches for my father when I was younger at Pugh’s Pools has helped instill a work ethic that has helped me immensely.”

Kathy Sullivan emerges from the vehicle Limiting Factor on June 7 following a dive that took her to the deepest known spot on the planet, nearly 7 miles below the surface. At left is Ticer Pfeifer, an engineer with Triton Submarines who acted as swimmer during recovery of the submersible.

Out of the pool business and into the challenges of the deep

Engineer Jonathan Pugh, of Ocean Ridge, worked with Triton Submarines on the dive team that sent Sullivan more than 35,000 feet below the surface. Photos provided by Enrique Alvarez/Caladan Oceanic that supported Vescovo and Sullivan during the Challenger Deep dive.

The diving support and supply vessel Pressure Drop, shown holding Limiting Factor, sits at the dive site near Guam.

The COASTAL STAR

On the Water AT17

Kathy Sullivan emerges from the vehicle Limiting Factor on June 7 following a dive that took her to the deepest known spot on the planet, nearly 7 miles below the surface. At left is Ticer Pfeifer, an engineer with Triton Submarines who acted as swimmer during recovery of the submersible.
Summer is prime time for South Florida anglers to search the ocean for dolphinfish, better known by their Hawaiian name, mahi mahi, or simply mahi. Floating mats of sargassum, the tan-colored marine algae that holds small fish and serves as feeding grounds for mahi, often appear along the coast of South Florida during the long, hot days of July and August. Sargassum mats are floating habitat. They harbor tiny crustaceans and attract small fish such as almaco jacks, triggerfish and filefish, which mahi find tempting.

Many offshore anglers enjoy searching around sargassum mats for mahi, especially in the relatively calm seas of summer. Brightly colored, mahi are easily spotted in the clear Gulf Stream water. They fight hard, jump high and make excellent table fare if handled properly after being caught.

Unlike many other places where mahi reside, they’re often caught relatively close to shore in the waters off South Florida — though runs of 10 miles or more into the Atlantic are not uncommon for anglers searching for mahi during the summer.

Dolphinfish (Coryphaena hippurus) are renewable resources compared with other ocean fish. They start reproducing at a young age and can grow several pounds a month, which is one reason fisheries regulators allow anglers to keep a generous 10 mahi per person daily. (Minimum size: 20 inches to the fork of the tail.)

Anglers searching for summer mahi can troll along lines of sargassum that form along bands of current, or stop near sargassum mats and pitch out jigs, plugs and chum such as chunks of sardines or squid. Another popular method for finding mahi is running from one sargassum mat to the next, favoring larger, thicker mats that shelter lots of small fish. Cast out jigs, dead baits (pieces of sardines, ballyhoo or squid) and splash the surface with topwater plugs to attract mahi.

A small dolphinfish

Once you’ve caught a legal-sized mahi and decided to keep it, ice it well. Try leaving the plug in the fish box or cooler and adding ocean water to create an icy slush. Proper icing will make mahi easier to clean and better at the dinner table.

As of July 1, recreational anglers who fish on Florida’s east coast for reef fish such as snapper, grouper, amberjack and triggerfish will be required to add a free “reef fish angler” designation to their saltwater fishing licenses. The designations were not available until July 1, so law enforcement planned to use an educational approach to the requirement at first, FWC spokeswoman Amanda Nalley said. “We suggest you get it as soon as possible,” Nalley said.

Anglers interested in tagging and releasing mahi for research can get started by visiting www.dolphintagging.com. The Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission is extending its Gulf Reef Fish Survey to the waters of the Atlantic and Monroe County. The FWC plans to use any place that sells fishing licenses can add the reef fish angler designation to a license,
The Coastal Star
July/August 2020

Community Calendar

Note: Events are current as of 6/24. Many events are moving indoors due to the coronavirus. Check organizers before making plans to attend.

JULY 4
May 2020

JULY 5
Tuesday - 7/7 Concert: String Theory Quartet Goes to Movie at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 1856 S Swinton Ave., Delray Beach. 2:30 pm concert; lecture 1 pm; price varies. Registration: 296-4524; musicday@delraybeach.com

JULY 6

JULY 7

JULY 8

JULY 9
Saturday - 7/11 The Book of Lost Friends part of Florida Authors Academy Workshop at Murder on the Beach Bookstore, 104 W Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. Instructor Jane Cleland. 10 am-noon. $25. Pre-registration required: 279-7790; murderonthebeach.com

JULY 10

JULY 11
Saturday - 7/11 The Book of Lost Friends part of Florida Authors Academy Workshop at Murder on the Beach Bookstore, 104 W Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. Instructor Jane Cleland. 10 am-noon. $25. Pre-registration required: 279-7790; murderonthebeach.com

JULY 12
Sunday - 7/12 The Sunday Sushi Bar Book Group Zoom Meeting: A Perfect Storm at the Boca Raton Resort & Club, 5011 Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. 3 pm. Free. Registration: 279-7790; murderonthebeach.com

JULY 13
Thursday - 7/9 Musical Theatre Jazz Class at Theatre on the Beach, 250 W Ocean Blvd, Delray Beach. Class Co-Hosted by Theatre on the Beach, 250 W Ocean Blvd, Delray Beach. Lunch 11:45 am. 251-3388; Theatreonthebeach.com 11:30 am. 251-3388; Theatreonthebeach.com

JULY 15
Tuesday - 7/14 - Socrates Café at Delray Beach Library, 104 W Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. 2 pm. Free. Registration: 296-6969; delraylibrary.org

JULY 16

JULY 17
Saturday - 7/18 Financial Planning 101 by The Board at the Boca Raton Resort & Club, 5011 Lantana Rd, Lake Worth. 10:30 am-1:00 pm. $150. Pre-registration required: 279-7790; murderonthebeach.com

JULY 19
Friday - 7/17 20th Annual Delray Beach Wine & Jazz Festival at the Seagate Hotel & Spa, 100 W Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. Free admission. Registration: 267-1000; seagatehotel.com
Saturday - 7/18 Writers Zoom Workshop: Marketing & Networking at Murder on the Beach Bookstore, 104 W Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. Author Academy Workshop at Murder on the Beach Bookstore, 104 W Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. Instructor Debra H. Goldberg. 10 am-noon. $50. Pre-registration required: 279-7790; murderonthebeach.com

JULY 20
Saturday - 7/19 The Book of Lost Friends part of Florida Authors Academy Workshop at Murder on the Beach Bookstore, 104 W Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. Instructor Jane Cleland. 10 am-noon. $25. Pre-registration required: 279-7790; murderonthebeach.com

JULY 21
Thursday - 7/23 Chamber’s 50th Annual Golf Tournament at The Breakers Resort & Club, 1100 Campus Rd. $110 per person. 7am shotgun start; 12:30 pm lunch; 1:30 pm awards ceremony. 5704-1250; thebreakers.com

JULY 22
Thursday - 7/23 20th Annual Delray Beach Wine and Jazz Festival at the Seagate Hotel and Spa, 100 W Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. Free admission. Registration: 267-1000; seagatehotel.com

JULY 23
Saturday - 7/25 Authors Academy Workshop at Murder on the Beach Bookstore, 104 W Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. Instructor Jane Cleland. 10 am-noon. $25. Pre-registration required: 279-7790; murderonthebeach.com

JULY 26-AUGUST 8
Tuesday - 7/28 Murder on the Beach Bookstore’s Book of the Lost Book Group at Murder on the Beach Bookstore, 104 W Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. 10:30 am. Free. Registration: 296-7986; library@delraybeach.org
Friday - 7/31 Boca Chamber’s 50th Annual Golf Tournament at The Breakers Resort & Club, 1100 Campus Rd. $110 per person. 7am shotgun start; 12:30 pm lunch; 1:30 pm awards ceremony. 5704-1250; thebreakers.com
Saturday - 8/1 20th Annual Delray Beach Wine and Jazz Festival at the Seagate Hotel and Spa, 100 W Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. Free admission. Registration: 267-1000; seagatehotel.com

AUGUST 9-15
Friday - 8/14-15 7th Annual Delray Beach Retailers Summer Sale at the Seagate Hotel & Spa, 100 W Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. 10 am-5 pm. Free admission. Registration: 267-1000; seagatehotel.com
Saturday - 8/15 Writers Zoom Workshop: Conflict: part of Florida Authors Academy Workshop at Murder on the Beach Bookstore, 104 W Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. Instructor Debra H. Goldberg. 10 am-noon. $50. Pre-registration required: 279-7790; murderonthebeach.com

AUGUST 16-22
Saturday - 8/16-17 German Beerfest at Palm Beach Gardens Marriott, 1111 Lantana Rd, Lake Worth. Noon-5:30 pm. Free. Registration: 774-6590; lakeworthplayhouse.org
Saturday - 8/15 20th Annual Delray Beach Wine and Jazz Festival at the Seagate Hotel and Spa, 100 W Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. Free admission. Registration: 267-1000; seagatehotel.com

AUGUST 21-29
Tuesday - 8/25 Poster, Pittalls and Postcards (The Fun part of Florida) part of Florida Authors Academy Workshop at Murder on the Beach Bookstore, 104 W Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach. Instructor Debra H. Goldberg. 10 am-noon. $50. Pre-registration required: 279-7790; murderonthebeach.com

AUGUST 30-SEPT. 5
Saturday - 9/5 – Socrates Café at Boca Raton Library, 400 NW 2nd Ave, Boca Raton. 10 am. Event fee. Registration: 393-7852; bocalibrary.org
Sunday - 9/6 – Socrates Café at Boca Raton Library, 400 NW 2nd Ave, Boca Raton. 10 am. Event fee. Registration: 393-7852; bocalibrary.org

Beachgoers can do their part by staying at least 300 feet away from posted nesting areas and trying not to disturb nesting birds, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission advises.

It’s a stark change from the days of kiteboarding, flyboarding, and dive bombing are signs that you should back off.

Willow Howard is a freelance writer and licensed boat captain. Find her at littledevil@bellsouth.net.
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5 BR | 5.5 BA | 8,438 SF | $5.995M

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6 BR | 7.2 BA | 12,462 SF | $7.985M

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