

Longboat Key News

December 1, 2006

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FREE

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'Bobby' Doesn't Live Up to Legend

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SOLD!

IRE Tries to Solve Vote Crisis

The indefatigable think-tank executives of IRE are working day and night on what they hope will be the solution to Sarasota's voting machine crisis.

"We think we've found a way," explained one of IRE's spokesmen. "We want to solve a public problem privately. We don't want Sarasota voting to be national news anymore."



Hepburn

IRE's new program calls for a return to the old voting machines — "with verifiable ballots." And they plan to pay for it with public funds, placed voluntarily into recycled parking meters.

The parking meters will display a large electronic "No Vote" statement in black. Whenever a quarter is dropped in, the sign will immediately flash a red, white, and blue "You Voted!"

"We haven't worked out the sound effects yet," the spokesman explained, "and we're unsure how long the 'We Voted' sign should appear. But this way people can privately pay for the voting machines we need. The government won't be out a cent."

Other future IRE proposals Sold, Page 4A

April Wood: Her Side of the Story

'I don't want to put a slant on it. I don't feel the need to be vindictive. I just want my job back. I loved my job, and I didn't deserve to lose it.' —April Wood

In a conversation with April Wood on Wednesday, it was apparent that she did not know there was anything wrong with her work performance as human resources manager at Town Hall on Longboat Key until June 29, 2006.

Wood said prior to that day she did not know that her superior, Town clerk Jane O'Connor, had a real problem with her, though their relationship had always been rocky.

On June 29 when she was

called into O'Connor's office, Wood said it was at that time that O'Connor told her there were many problems which they would need to discuss.

"There were issues, but she couldn't tell me what the issues were?" Wood wondered aloud during our interview, telling me that if she had known there were problems she would have worked them out with O'Connor.

Wood wanted to emphasize that she had never received a

warning.

"I never had a verbal or written warning," Wood said, which was strange. She says that the Town department heads are big on progressive discipline, and if protocol had been followed she would have been warned. They would have tried to resolve the



Wood

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NewsAnalysis

By Lia Martin

St. Denis Knew of DUI

Lia Martin
Associate Editor

One of the major allegations that Jane O'Connor, Town clerk, made against April Wood, who was human resources manager for the Town of Longboat Key until her termination on Aug. 8, 2006, was that Wood had omitted



St. Denis

a DUI charge on her application when she had applied for a permanent administrative assistant position on June 9, 1999.

The following evidence presented during April Wood's hearing on Nov. 2, 2006 shows that former Police Chief John Kintz and Town Manager Bruce St. Denis had prior knowledge of Wood's arrest in 1996.

Other reasons listed in the letter of dismissal were professional grievances given by O'Connor regarding Wood making false or misleading statements regarding testing for the PHR test, which is a human resources certification test, taking sick leave for one day when a second PHR test was taken

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Here Comes the Sun



Mary Lou Johnson

One of the finest views on Longboat is that from the dock at Mar Vista, caught in this photo by Mary Lou Johnson. Johnson spends her time with family and doing portraiture, nature and travel photography.

Flood Control Ordinance Discussed

More comments needed before decision can be made

Lia Martin
Associate Editor

An amendment to change the flood control ordinance is on the Town of Longboat Key commissioner's table.

But, at a mid-October workshop, more than one commissioner said he wanted more public comment on amending the flood control ordinance before they changed it.

According to Vice-Mayor Lee Rothenberg at that meeting, the Town of Longboat Key has always tried to exceed FEMA demands as a governmental entity.

"To discourage continuation of non-conforming houses," Rothenberg said when the Town

commission was discussing flood control policies in the past.

"We always exceeded FEMA specs."

It was discussed at the workshop, and at prior meetings on this subject, that the older homes — whether or not they have historical value — can be a challenging problem for the original or the new property owner.

To illustrate, if a house is non-conforming — not elevated — the FEMA rule is that a property owner cannot spend more than

50% of the worth of the house in improvements. Those are improvements across the board that a property owner would make excluding improvements for health or security reasons.

In the past, commissioners had passed a five-year rule Town ordinance, which ruled that a property owner of a non-conforming house on the Key could not make more than 50% of that house's worth in a five-year period.

"This is a 20-year policy," Rothenberg reminded the commission. "It's a long-term policy. We don't want non-conforming houses."

The proposed flood control ordinance 06-33 would prevent

FEMA compliant homes located in certain A districts from being non-conforming under the new flood code.

"I propose older houses are some of the more affordable houses on the Island," Commissioner George Spoll said at a prior workshop.

"If a person wanted to make improvements — and can't elevate it because of the cost — they are trapped in the older houses," Spoll said.

The regular commission meeting on Monday will discuss the changes to the ordinance. If it is moved forward, there will be a public meeting before the amended change is accepted.



Rothenberg