

NORTH PINELLAS & CLEARWATER TIMES

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DANIEL RUTH

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Pier plans bring out the party poopers

Eventually, when the new St. Petersburg pier becomes whatever it is going to be, could we include just one more additional element?

Could we please have a plain modest edifice erected? Not too big, not too small. It would be called the Whining Wall in honor of all the cluckers, grumps and malcontents who would oppose the pier project if it was the Gardens of Versailles. Too many roses. Not enough petunias.

In the beginning, various Katzenjammer Kids of contentiousness squawked about the original design. That resulted in the current configuration, which is fine but hardly ambitious.

And now a new snit-fit has erupted, perpetuated by a group called the Waterfront Parks Foundation, which opposes the original plan to include three restaurants as part of the pier complex. Three eateries!!! No, no, no a thousand times, no!

Not about to let the Waterfront Park Foundation seize the high ground of poutiness, another group, Concerned Citizens, sent a sternly worded letter to Chris Ballestra, the city's managing director of development coordination, stating for the record they, too, were plenty exorcized over the radical notion three — count 'em, three — restaurants might spoil the pier project. You might say they were — concerned.

Well! When St. Petersburg found itself fending off an unrelenting assault from the Waterfront Parks Foundation to the right and the Concerned Citizens to the left it immediately went into action and called a meeting over the great Pier District Three Restaurant Crisis.

It is probably only a matter of time before another cabal of trust funds gathers together calling itself Worry Warts United for A Better St. Petersburg to dither over the presence of too much water surrounding the pier.

Apparently, the biggest bone of contention was a proposed restaurant that would be at the end of the Pelican Parking Lot, which Waterfront Parks Foundation president Phil Graham said in his tsking letter to Mayor Rick Kriseman would constitute a "blemish on our waterfront." Or that the proposed restaurant, at least in Graham's point of view, would be an architectural zit on the civic forehead of the city.

The city's waterfront is indeed a thing of beauty. And the commercial district connected to it is teeming with chi-chi eateries, saloons and high-end boutiques.

Does anyone seriously believe that one more restaurant in an area of the city already full of restaurants is going to constitute a "blemish" on the area?

Virtually every element of the pier project has annoyed somebody, a reminder of that old joke that a camel is a horse designed by a committee.

Alas, there are still some folks who continue to rue the razing of the old inverted pyramid, as if it was St. Petersburg's answer to the Washington Monument.

And nothing less than an inverted Deva hat ever will satisfy the skeptics. Too many restaurants. Not enough restaurants. Not enough air conditioning. Too much parking. Too little parking. Too long an approach. Too short an approach. Not enough green space. Not enough of a view.

The city could be building the Garden of Eden at the end of the pier and some group of hand-wringers called Party Poopers For A More Petulant St. Petersburg would be caterwauling the project had too many apples and not enough snakes.

Whatever dining establishment survives, let us hope it includes a well-stocked bar.

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City manager blasts Shephard's

He says the number of police use-of-force incidents at the nightclub is "unacceptable."

BY JACK ROONEY

Times Staff Writer

CLEARWATER — Since the beginning of last year, police have needed to use force on disorderly patrons at Shephard's Beach Resort 24 times, and City Manager Bill Horne is not pleased.

"This is completely unacceptable on many levels," Horne wrote in a July 7 email to City Council members. "CPD can't do the owner and GM's job of setting the tone in the nightclub areas through policing."

There were 10 use-of-force incidents at Shephard's last year, the most of any venue in the city. So far this year, the number is up to 14, Horne said.

Horne said he doesn't normally ask council members to act on an issue at a local business like this.

"I don't do it a lot because I don't have to do it a lot," he said. "I reached out to the council encouraging them to use their influence to encourage the property owners to act on this issue."

"Shephard's use-of-force statistics are completely out of line with any similar entertainment venue on Clearwater Beach, in fact probably throughout the whole city."

The resort's co-owner, William Shephard, though, said his property is not like other venues in the city, and hosts more than 100,000 people a year.

"We're an extremely busy place," he said. "If you were to put numbers to numbers with the amount of people we see every weekend, we're proba-

bly about the same as any other bar in the city" when it comes to police incidents, he said.

Police Chief Dan Slaughter said use-of-force incidents are "any time an officer is in a position where he has to do a take down or any other level of force," such as wrestling a suspect to the ground or using pepper spray.

"That means that our officers are being forced into high-risk situations that really should not exist," Horne

» See SHEPHARD'S, 2



City Manager Bill Horne said he expects better from Shephard's.



Photos by JAY NOLAN | Special to the Times
Parents and students mill about the courtyard during Packer Pride Day last week. The orientation program let students get familiar with the campus, which has four buildings. Still in the works are a baseball, softball and tennis complex.

Largo High unveils extreme makeover

The portables are put away after a two-year, \$65 million renovation.

BY KATHRYN VARN

Times Staff Writer

LARGO David Orwig started as a freshman at Largo High School just two years after the 18 brick buildings that made up the campus were built in 1957.

On Saturday, he stood as the grandfather of a freshman in the courtyard of a sleek school he hardly recognized.

"I thought it was nice then," Orwig, 72, said, trailing off.

"It looks like a college campus," his grandson, 14-year-old Joshua Orwig, chimed in.

After two years and a lot of patience from students and teachers operating in a maze of portable classrooms, they started the 2016-17 school year on their brand-new campus. Including furniture and equipment, the redo came out to about \$65 million for a high school that went from the most outdated school in the county to what principal Bradley Finkbiner believes is one of the finest in the state.

"This is the most fun I've had so far," Finkbiner said Saturday during Packer Pride



International Baccalaureate history teacher Dave Koehler gives directions to Rachael Ward, 14, from far left, Kathy Ward and Rebecca Ward, 16. The Largo High alumnus said the campus makeover is rejuvenating.

Day, an orientation program that allowed students to get familiar with the campus.

The school was bustling with students hugging in the courtyard after a summer apart, lining up to register for parking passes and checking out presentations from student organizations in the 550-person capacity cafeteria. The campus is split

into four buildings: two for classrooms; one with the cafeteria, gym and research center; and another for music, drama and mechanical engineering programs.

There is also a baseball, softball and tennis complex still in the works, plus the football stadium, which is getting a fresh

» See LARGO HIGH, 8

Mystery grocery coming to center

The Woodlands Square construction project is set to begin next year.

BY PIPER CASTILLO

Times Staff Writer

OLDSMAR — Trader Joe's? Safeway? Whole Foods Market?

Although the name has yet to be revealed, hurdles are being cleared to give Oldsmar a new place to load up on groceries. Although the specific store has not been identified, other facts have been disclosed, including the exact location. Its home will be Woodlands Square, right next to Beall's.

The City Council recently approved a development agreement with Woodlands Square Community Reinvestment Partners allowing for the renovation of the shopping center at 3130 Tampa Road. The center, more than 30 years old, is about a half-mile from Canal Park and is most known for AMC Woodlands 20, a popular movie theater last renovated in 2000.

In front of the council, Mark Van Dyke, the director of development for Ram Realty Services, owner of Woodlands Square, reviewed the timeline for the project, with a goal of opening for business by September 2017.

"We are securing the grocery store,"

he said. "We plan to start demolition right after the first of the year. We'll get through the holiday season and will then commence on construction of the grocery store."

Along with the mystery store, new construction of another retail space, totalling 10,500 square feet, is also planned. Brian Maloney, managing director of Ram Reality, said the standalone store will be at the center of the current parking lot and will serve as a connecting point. It will be a store where people will want to enter after leaving Beall's, for example, shop through and exit towards Marshalls

» See STORE, 4

Sharing their creations



JIM DAMASKE | Times
Dale Caldwell sits with his painting *Tiger Talk*, which will be part of the Arc's summer art show and sale on Wednesday. Find out about this artist and the mouse and lion friends he created.

THINGS TO DO, PAGE 6

THOMAS W. REZANKA

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inside Taste.***Neighborhood news****Guest column** | Manuel Koutsourais**Citizens' concerns are
democratic, not divisive**

In the guest column of July 29, submitted by Gregory Brady and entitled "Divisive behavior could slow Dunedin progress," a couple of statements need to be clarified.

There is no doubt that, over the years and along with many others, Mr. Brady has contributed to the success of downtown Dunedin.

For his efforts, he should be applauded, however his claim that he "began working on the CRA committee" is not exactly accurate. For clarification, in order to be a member of the CRA committee one must be an elected member of the City Commission. It's possible that Mr. Brady was on a citizens advisory committee to the CRA, but he has never been a member of the CRA itself. It's also possible that he is or was a member of DTAC (Downtown Technical Advisory Committee), as well as the downtown merchants association.

During this past year, many citizens have expressed concerns regarding several issues that have surfaced; the first being the unexpected dismissal of City Manager Rob DiSpirito. Then it was the need to implement paid parking in the downtown area and recently the issue was the purchase of the church property adjacent to Hammock Park in order to preserve green space, parkland and avoid development.

When these issues surfaced, one at a time, citizens became concerned and involved. It didn't matter whether they are recent or long-established residents. They are residents who are passionate about preserving the charm, the history and the quality of life that Dunedin has to offer.

The only way to express those feelings was to approach their elected officials and ask to be heard and have their thoughts and statements considered. With the exception of the purchase of the Hammock Park property, the City Commission ignored the concerns of the residents when it came to the discussion regarding the resignation of the

city manager and the way it was proposed, as well as the discussion regarding paid parking for the downtown area.

A small segment of the community, including Mr. Brady, have instead attempted to portray the citizens as being divisive, rude, threatening, adversarial and hostile.

Yet, had it not been for the citizens, the reasons for terminating the city manager would have never surfaced and many of the reasons given were fabricated to justify the decision that was agreed to long before the action took place. Unfortunately, the Sheriff's Office could not find proof of wrongdoing. None of the witnesses were sworn in and managed to cover their tracks well.

The commission ignored pleas to investigate alternatives to paid parking downtown but again the City Commission chose to proceed at a cost yet to be determined. Again, after pressure from its citizens, the City Commission managed to find a way to purchase and save the Hammock property from development. After all, it is an election year and if those running feel uncomfortable about the future, they have no one to blame but themselves.

Mr. Brady and others feel that the voices of their citizens should not be heard, and that the citizens should simply accept the results of decisions that are made by staff and the City Commission and not question or ask why.

Thankfully, we still live in a democracy. Peoples' voices, regardless of how soft or loud, should be heard and especially if those voices come from taxpaying citizens who are paying the salaries of the City Commission and their staff. Citizens should never be made to feel uncomfortable or second class citizens because they ask for and demand answers.

So for Mr. Brady and anyone else who might be interested, the "D" word is alive and well.

It's not divisive, it's democracy and thank God we still have it.

Manuel (Manny) Koutsourais

Former Mayor of Dunedin

» SHEPARD'S continued from 1

said.

Police met with Shephard's management last month to discuss how the department and resort can work together to reduce the number of use-of-force incidents.

"We had a very productive and open dialogue about what we can do to reduce those kind of contacts," Slaughter said. "They have been very cordial at the table. They've been willing to listen to our concerns and been willing to work with us."

Shephard's management meets with police regularly to discuss security and safety, especially before large events, Shephard said.

"We're trying to do everything on our end to do everything we

can to keep people safe," he said.

Police and Shephard's management will meet again to solidify a strategy to reduce police incidents there, Slaughter said. In the meantime, Horne said he expects better from Shephard's.

"I think they have an obligation and a responsibility to everyone involved to create a good environment in their club," he said. "And no one has convinced me that they're doing enough to create a better atmosphere for our officers working there."

Shephard's hires police officers to provide security essentially every weekend and at other peak times, Shephard said. These officers are often the ones involved in the use-of-force incidents, Slaughter said.

"It's more of a nightclub atmosphere where people might drink too much alcohol," he said. "There's probably no other place in Clearwater that has that nightlife atmosphere."

The biggest issue Shephard's sees is trespassing, followed by disorderly conduct, co-owner Gerri Shephard said.

"You're going to have some knuckleheads here and there, unfortunately," she said.

William Shephard said the resort hasn't had an incident since management met with police, and they have taken a more proactive approach to prevent police from having to get involved.

"We've tried to handle more issues ourselves before handing it over to police," he said.

Sudoku**To play:** Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3-by-3 framed box contains the numbers 1 through 9 exactly once. The solution is unique.

Solution 8/05/16 Sudoku

3	4	2	7	5	8	9	1	6
9	7	5	2	6	1	8	3	4
6	1	8	9	3	4	5	2	7
5	6	3	4	8	9	2	7	1
8	2	4	1	7	3	6	5	9
7	9	1	5	2	6	3	4	8
4	8	6	3	1	5	7	9	2
1	5	7	8	9	2	4	6	3
2	3	9	6	4	7	1	8	5

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