

NewsWorthy Hockey Plans Put on Ice



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Developers Talk Roads

The North County Partnership, a group of developers, told Manatee County commissioners at their weekly meeting on Tuesday, that it could finish four proposed road projects more quickly than already proposed.

The group presented a plan that would finish four major road projects — the Fort Hamer Bridge, a new north-south route in Ellenton and widening parts of U.S. 301 and Moccasin Wallow Road could begin within five years with a mixture of payments from tolls, county and state funding.

There are 22 landowners and developers in the partnership that has tried to work with commissioners in recent weeks to settle the long-debated issue on road building. The partnership told the commissioners that their plan would cost almost \$310 million, nearly half of the present proposed cost.

USF Hopes to Expand

The University of South Florida is taking steps to connect its large, spread-out Sarasota-Manatee campus along the Tamiami Trail.

Currently, the USF faculty and students work in a 28-acre campus on Sarasota Bay, but there are also three parcels of land in other places.

The University agreed to seek state funding to purchase three properties near the campus. An area businessman who owns the Airport Inn and Joyland Club adjoining the campus has agreed to hold the property as USF tries to come up with additional funding. More than 3,500 students use the facility.

Former Deputy Appeals

Barrett Biggs, a 10-year veteran of the Manatee County Sheriff's Office, plans to appeal his firing after he was involved in a scandal involving a local strip club. Fellow deputy **Brian Hall** was also fired, but has yet to appeal.

Both were fired for allegedly accepting related free drinks as well as engaging in improper conduct at the **Cleopatra's Gentleman's Club**. Deputy **Daniel Martin** was suspended for 30 days for similar actions at the club, located on U.S. 41 north of Palmetto. All three officers were punished for unbecoming conduct and insubordination/disobeying orders.

All three deputies admitted to getting free drinks and free admission to the club, but denied it was in exchange for failing to report criminal activity at the club.

Doggie Dining

If Manatee County restaurateurs get their way, "doggie dining" will be legal at some county restaurants. A three-year pilot law, signed into law by **Gov. Jeb Bush**, allowed local governments to grant outdoor dining permits for dogs.

Dining doggies has actually been common at some area restaurants, and most restaurant managers look the other way as long as the dogs remain outside and on a leash. Some restaurants even offer dog menus.

There are rules that will be required for dog owners and restaurants to follow. They will be required to get permits and, once gotten, the dogs will not be allowed to access the restaurant through the inside. They must remain on patios or outdoor decks. Servers may not pet or handle the dogs and the canines will not be allowed to touch plates or utensils. Hand sanitizers must be available at all tables, dogs will not be allowed on tables or chairs, and, of course, messes must be cleared immediately.

The future may look bleak, but the on-again-off-again fight to build an environmentally sound hockey arena in Lakewood Ranch isn't quite dead, yet.

Lakewood Ranch hoped to have plans finalized for a hockey team in the East Coast Hockey League, but the league temporarily pulled the plug on the team, to be called the Gulf Coast Swords, on Sept. 28.

Roman Ruins

The Swords had actually been a league entity for the past two years, but funding for the proposed eco-friendly "green" arena never came to fruition. What there is of an arena is a jumble of concrete north of State Road 70 at Lakewood Ranch Boulevard. The site looks like ancient Roman ruins, with one wall of the arena going up and even a set of concrete bleachers underway, but with construction halted, even the road leading to the site is marked with No Trespassing signs.

The situation has been as jumbled as the current state of the arena ever since plans were announced to turn the land into an arena that would host not only ice hockey, but also potentially the rodeo, arena football and other events. There were also plans to build shops and residences on the site. The ECHL would have been its main draw. In Estero, just 90 minutes south of Lakewood Ranch, the Florida Everblades averaged an attendance of 6,239 in 36 games last season and potential owner Susan Jamieson said she was hoping to equal that amount.

Jamieson, 46, is a Canadian businesswoman who was finalizing a buyout of DVA holdings said she was looking at several loan proposals to raise the \$50

Caricature, from Page 1

my pen just knows where to go."

Aggie has been drawing for most of her life and now runs "Aggie's Originals" out of her house in Ellenton. She has been drawing caricatures professionally for more than 15 years and just moved to Ellenton from Tennessee. She has traveled throughout the country with her husband, Frank, drawing caricatures of just about everyone in her path.

Her pace has slowed down and she doesn't do every craft show in town any more, but she still takes appointments, makes appearances, and spends a lot of time at college events letting her pencils make magic out of the normal and the abnormal.

She got her start in Opryland, the famous Nashville, Tenn., amusement park, drawing pictures of guests on one side and meeting musicians for whom she drew album covers. She never had lessons; she just started drawing and never stopped.

"I got 50 cents per drawing at Opryland, but I loved it and started to expand. It took off from there."

Aggie said she really started doing caricatures of "old dead country singers," but now does a lot of everything. She especially enjoys doing college events where "when you go to work, everybody is partying."

Her approach is easy enough, she said. She asks her customers what their hobbies are, picks out a particular trait, then

Movies at Lakewood Ranch

The movies are coming to Lakewood Ranch. After repeated delays, the six-screen Lakewood Ranch Cinemas are scheduled to be ready in November. Four of the six theaters will seat between 64 and 80 customers with the two largest

million needed to finalize the deal. DVA ran out of money in 2005 and stopped production on the arena, and Jamieson has said she would assume up to \$20 million of the DVA debt.

The land consists of 65 acres of prime real estate and Jamieson seemed to be perfect to take over the project. She has been passionate about being eco-friendly throughout her career, especially after almost losing her daughter, Tarin, 11 years ago to a rare cancer linked to pesticides. Tarin, now 24, survived, but Jamieson has been on a crusade ever since and that, along with her passion for ice hockey, led her to Lakewood Ranch.

Lack of Faith

The ECHL, however, has been hearing empty promises from the potential franchise for more than two years, and has said it is hesitant to expand into an area with some much economic uncertainty.

ECHL Commissioner has not returned repeated phone calls by the MRN, but Jamieson confirmed that the team was on hold for now. Even though an expansion team isn't an option right now, Jamieson has vowed to fight for the arena, which she said would be the only self-supporting arena in all of sports. She said that if the league won't give Lakewood Ranch an expansion team, there was also the possibility of luring one that already exists. Besides the Everblades, there is also a franchise in Pensacola that ranked



This was supposed to be the home of the Gulf Coast Swords of the East Coast Hockey League, which was scheduled to begin play this season.

second-to-last in ECHL attendance last season.

Jamieson said that she plans to go forward with the arena project even if there is no hockey team. She said she is mostly concerned with her vision of a "green" facility surrounded by a "green" community.

DVA's director of hockey relations, Larry Kish, is considering hockey deals while Jamieson goes about trying to find funding.

Sarasota-Manatee Ranch officials are pursuing foreclosure efforts against the arena's first mortgage, but that process might not be completed by the end of the year.

For her part, Jamieson has her skeptics. She has no college degree and her main business interest is in running a small organic fertilizer company, Ceres Environmental Solutions, in Canada, which struggled before being taken over by another company.

Jamieson has said that her belief in herself will carry the project to fruition and that she knows she can get the necessary financing.

JROTC Team Aims for Top

The Braden River High School JROTC drill team own several major events at DeSoto High recently including First Place Male Team Overall; First Place Female Team Overall; First Place Female Color Guard; First Place Female Unarmed Squad; First Place Female Unarmed Platoon; and First Place Male/Mixed Unarmed Platoon.



goes to work and has fun. One of her favorite subjects is former President Bill Clinton whom she enjoys drawing with an exceedingly long nose. She also knows there is a fine line between exaggerating and hurting feelings. She said she has learned to walk that line well.

She has also learned to be able to put it all together quickly. Ten minutes tops, in most cases. Her pencil flows freely and her mind wanders into a world of happiness, knowing she is providing happiness. She can do black and white art in less than five minutes, she said. The challenge is to always come up with something different, something special that no one has ever seen before. Anything to bring smiles

to the faces of her subjects.

"You can't just cheat and do the same cute drawing over and over again," Aggie said. "People do it that way and, after awhile, they all look exactly alike. I like to give them something completely different."

It's that approach that makes her stand apart from the rest, but, for Aggie, that is a compliment.

"I don't just march to a different drummer," Aggie said. "I march to an entirely different orchestra."

It's an orchestra that has a distinct groove, just like the one Aggie Derocher finds every time she sits at her easel and starts creating memories.

theatres holding around 160. The cost of construction is approximately \$4 million, and the cinema will open when movie critics **Frank and Kathie Tucciarone** show five films from the 2006 Cine-World Film Festival in a class offered by Manatee Community College.

The classes will be offered Nov. 3, Nov. 6., and Nov. 13 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at a cost of \$56.

The shell of the building is complete as well as most of the infrastructure, and still must apply to the county for its certification of occupancy.