

KEY NOTES

PEOPLE, PICS AND PLACES



+ Picture perfect

Siesta Key resident **Ellen Michelson** and her eye for detail landed her international recognition this summer for her photographs titled, "Who Needs a Crib?" and "Sharing a Quiet Moment."

Competing against photographers from around the world, Michelson was awarded two Accolades of Excellence, one in the group category and one in the children's category, during the Wedding and Portrait Photographers International Awards of Excellence Print Competition. Pictured is Michelson and her neighbor, **Lisette Anderson**, with Michelson's photograph of Anderson's grandchildren on Siesta Key Beach.



+ Coldwell Banker joins villas

Coldwell Banker residential real estate agents **Kate Tyler** and **Betsy de Manio** are now part of the upcoming Beach Villas luxury condominium project on Siesta Key.

The new complex, housing 22 residences, will offer one- and two-story units ranging from 1,475 to 4,820 square feet of living space.

The condo's outer area is made of freeform pools with waterfalls amidst lush tropical courtyards.

"The location and lifestyle options available to residents of Beach Villas really make this project special," Tyler explained. "You can watch a beautiful sunset over the Gulf and then walk a few blocks to enjoy live music at one of the island's many night clubs."

duplexes by **Tammy Roberts** | Staff Writer

County delays zoning decision

Amid a sea of confusion, the Sarasota County Planning Board delays a decision on nonconforming duplexes on Siesta Key.

A vote long awaited by many Siesta Key residents was postponed by the county July 20, following a two-hour debacle of confusion and conflicting information.

After hearing a plethora of public opinion on the issue, the Sarasota County Planning Board voted unanimously to delay a decision on a proposal that would determine the Key's development rules for duplexes on non-conforming lots.

"I've got to admit, and I'm not embarrassed to tell you," said board Chairman Roland Piccone, "I'm confused."

If approved, the board would change the current zoning ordinance to allow duplexes larger than 7,260 square feet to be built

on lots that are zoned for multi-family use. Information presented in the meeting showed several hundred of these lots throughout the Key.

Last year, the county allowed for some of these duplexes to be built, but stopped construction after being told by the Siesta Key Association that the plans were illegal and would result in an unnecessary surge in density on the Key.

That decision was overruled by the Board of Zoning Appeals, allowing for the county to continue approving construction.

The planning board meeting served as a platform for public opinion on the changes to the ordinance, but only seemed to puzzle the board further.

Residents against the changes claimed it would hurt their property values or increase the number of units on the Key, while those in favor couldn't seem to get their arguments across to the board.

"For the life of me, I can't figure out which way to turn," said the board's vice chairman, John Fellin, turning toward the audience. "Please help."

The Siesta Key Association, which recently announced that it would take legal action against the county over the issue, agreed with the planning board's vote to postpone the proposal until it gets more information and a clarification of figures.

"We think they did the right thing," said SKA President Lourdes Ramirez. "It's prudent to wait until you can get as much information as possible before making such a big decision. It was a smart move on the county's part."

Since its decision to sue the county, SKA has been researching the history behind the construction and has developed its own legal team within the association. SKA board members recently hired someone to help compile stacks of information regarding density counts and numbers from the Siesta Key property appraiser. "There is so much information," Ramirez said. "We've been doing our research, but there is no way we could have gotten everything to the board members in time for Thursday's meeting."

Ramirez said the public presented plenty of conflicting and confusing information, but ironically the board was still faced with a lack of information.

The association hopes to be able to present its continued research in an easy-to-understand format to the board in time for the next meeting Aug. 17.



The Collins family: **Moriah, Grant**, 3, **Michael** and **Summer**, 9 months, tried to keep cool July 25 while enjoying ice cream cones from Big Olaf Creamery in the Village.

EXTENDED BEACHES by **Tammy Roberts** | Staff Writer

Beach-widening begins in November

Sarasota County and the state will spend \$11.8 million to re-build Turtle Beach, the first such project in the unincorporated area of the county.

A two-mile stretch of beaches along southern Siesta Key will be restored and widened beginning this November, after the county approved an \$11.8 million beach-re-nourishment plan.

The project, led by Manson Construction Co., will start 3,000 feet south of Point of Rocks, cover most of Turtle Beach and end just south of the southernmost resi-

dence on Siesta Key.

The design is set to widen beaches to a uniform 150 feet, a huge extension for some eroded areas on the Key.

Beach erosion has been a big issue for the southern part of the Key in the past few years, said Sarasota County Coastal Resources Manager Laird Wreford. In some areas, beaches are only 10 and 20 feet wide.

"Without this project, some structures on the southern end of the Key would eventually be undermined," he said. "In the foreseeable future, these areas would be imminently threatened."

The cause for the ongoing erosion has been a combination of several factors occurring in the past year. The normal tide action

and the passing of average storms mixed with the record-setting hurricane seasons in 2004 and 2005 have increased the erosion problem, Wreford explained.

"Even though we haven't sustained a direct hit in our location," he said, "the wind and wave forces caused by hurricanes passing through the Gulf have caused some significant erosion issues."

This area of southern Siesta Key will be the first beach nourishment project to occur in an unincorporated county. Similar projects have only occurred in municipalities of Sarasota on areas of Lido, Longboat and Venice beaches.

While the state is paying \$3.4 million for the restoration of Turtle Beach, the county agreed to pay \$6.1 million from the 3%

tourist development tax.

Homeowners along the re-nourished beaches will pay for 19% of the cost, paying \$2.3 million.

While they agreed this restoration project was necessary, County Commissioners Nora Patterson and Jon Thaxton did not want the public to see this as the start of endless beach nourishment projects throughout the county.

Plans to restore beaches on Manasota Key are already in the making, but Thaxton said he wants to examine the amount of public money going into future projects compared with the amount of public access each beach has.

Essentially, he believes that less public access should mean more contribution from private, beach-front property owners.