**June 2025 SEERD Update Report**

**Compliance with Notice of Violation and Order to Correct.** As we reported last month, there still has been no sign that The Classical Academy (TCA) has taken any meaningful steps toward compliance with the County order to remove the 30 modular classrooms on its campus as required by June 13th. This being the summer school holiday, there is minimal traffic created by the site on Bee Ridge Road. The school year however, begins again in August when the impacts created by the school and its temporary classrooms that accommodate some of its students will again be evident. The school and the County are going to be faced with the same public safety, aesthetic, noise and other problems that the neighborhood has experienced ever since the school moved most of its students to the new campus but failed to properly mitigate these impacts, interfering with the peaceful enjoyment of the neighborhood. SEERDs position from the start was to question the compatibility of this intense land use on the 8000 Bee Ridge Road site with the medium density residential and recreational nature of the neighborhood. We were and still are committed to do whatever it takes to ensure that the school honors its commitments to abide by the special exception applied for and granted by the County and to comply with county, state and federal requirements that ensure the health, safety and welfare of our county residents.

**Clark Road Improvements**. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has jurisdiction over Clark Road (SR72) as it is a state road, unlike the other major roads that cross the Bee Ridge neighborhood which fall under county auspices. The FDOTs team have been conducting a series of traffic, engineering and impact (Planning, Design and Engineering-PD&E) studies. They have drafted a preliminary project design proposal, estimated to cost about $120 million, for widening the road to accommodate increased traffic resulting from Skye Ranch, the magnet school to open this fall, as well as two new large mixed land use developments approved by the County but still on the drawing board including Hi Hat Ranch to the east and north and 3H Ranch to the south. Both are expected to contribute significant east-west traffic to Clark Road beginning as soon as 2027. The scope of the project has been expanded from what was planned originally from I-75 to the traffic circle at Palmer Road, now all the way east to the traffic circle at Loraine Road. FDOT held an open house and public hearing on June 26th to take public comments before moving to the design phase in 2026 to finalize the project for state and federal approvals, secure funding, purchase the small amount of private property needed to expand the right of way, and contract for the road work to begin. Currently, there are no funds earmarked and no start date for land acquisition and construction. To learn more about this infrastructure project see the project web site [swflroads.com/project/444634-1](https://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Furldefense.proofpoint.com%2Fv2%2Furl%3Fu%3Dhttp-3A__swflroads.com_project_444634-2D1%26d%3DDwMFJg%26c%3DeuGZstcaTDllvimEN8b7jXrwqOf-v5A_CdpgnVfiiMM%26r%3DEkQDyQR8Xnf4oSyapTlSDP54YPXerFzBaG1FZC_hC50%26m%3DpzFDCMVxQK_Jblfvj6XRtQcMYyhVX3hvOpPlwYAGWSB7l9yVhxqc7PXCPeGc4bM-%26s%3Dsyhco3ziY8FJ3YY5MbmFDabEcEIDhQRlBgLkxLSuflM%26e%3D&data=05%7C02%7C%7C61aa8fce04184d565b3008ddc866f52f%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638887066749435470%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=IBWZZkfjZ5%2BU7X7R1KYO3iFnyQY6OmunlANJCK1Ymkw%3D&reserved=0). or visit Gulf Gate Public Library, 7112 Curtiss Avenue in Sarasota or the UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County at 6700 Clark Road, Sarasota.

**Revised Capital Improvement Plan**. Sarasota County makes periodic changes in its Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) which lists the infrastructure projects that have been approved, at least in principle by the County Commission, estimated costs, funding already obligated, new funds made available and approximate start and completion dates. The latest revisions from June 2025 for road improvements indicates funding to complete the right of way (land acquisition, clearing and grading) for extension of Lorraine Road from Palmer north to Fruitville, but no funding for the road construction yet. The new one-lane traffic circles at Loraine and Palmer as well as Palmer and Apex are funded, and construction of the latter appears to be underway. The widening of the two- lane segment of Bee Ridge Road from Laurel Oak to the Publix traffic circle is under negotiation between the County and the developers of Hi Hat Ranch as to the cost sharing and so is the widening of the traffic circle and right of way access through the County Park and its facilities to Hi Hat's first village of 3000 homes. While there is adequate right of way on both sides of the road, there is no project listed nor funding for widening and improving Lorraine Road from Palmer to Bee Ridge nor for the segment between Bee Ridge and Clark. And even though its listed as a future road improvement project, the widening of Palmer from Lorraine to Apex is some time off with no planning, design and engineering, right of way acquisition nor construction planned in the foreseeable future. Timing is said to be everything.  It will be especially important to make sure that our roadways are expanded and improved in a timely fashion to avoid costly and dangerous gridlock on our narrow country roads across the Bee Ridge neighborhood.

**Florida Senate Bill 180 titled "Emergencies" Signed into Law.** Local governments in parts of the state impacted by last year's storms have effectively had their current land use policies and regulations frozen for the next three years by the State of Florida. The law which was conceived as an emergency response to the frequency and ferocity of last year's storms by providing necessary resources and flexibility to respond and rebuild, was widely welcomed, with the exception of the provision that local building, land development and urban planning policies and regulations that most of us agree need to be updated to reflect more adverse weather related events, are being prevented from being reconsidered by state fiat. The record of public meetings in Sarasota County is replete with citizen comments and Commissioner discussions of the need to up our design standards to reflect the increased amount of storm water that needs to be managed due to growth, less wetlands to absorb the storm runoff and unprecedented amounts of precipitation that must be managed. The fact that this option is effectively off the table for the foreseeable future means that we are relegated to dealing with flooding with one hand tied behind our back.

**Our Stormwater Management Saga**. During almost a year of storm clean up, Sarasota County is on the cusp of creating a separate department to focus on stormwater management intended to prevent flooding and protect our coastal waters on which we depend for recreation and tourism. None of us can complain that the issues have not gained enough attention, but the fact that it took so long to make necessary changes in the county's administration suggests acute weaknesses in our experiment with local self-governance.

**FLUEDRA in Free Florida**. Florida has a mechanism available to property owners who have been denied rezoning or special exceptions to appeal such land use and environmental decisions because of the restrictions they place on their private property. This mechanism provides for a hearing before a county appointed magistrate to decide if the resulting denial for a particular land use application is unreasonable. One such case involved a Quick Oil Change business by the name of Take Five that purchased a property along US 41 in Nakomis near the entrance to a long-standing residential community and adjacent to Oscar Sherer State Park. The County Commission based on staff analysis, Planning Commission recommendation, convincing testimony from community residents and a professional traffic engineer, and arguments from their attorney turned down the application once, and upon rehearing, a second time. And yet the application is going back to the County Commission again because another special magistrate this time made a recommendation in favor of the property owner and his developer. Its commendable that we have such safeguards in place to protect the institution of private property. But who and how do we protect the public interest when the appeals are endless and those property owners who are well funded can receive multiple rehearings?