

Gift Guide

We're here to help you on your quest to get the perfect gifts. **Inside**



Seminole Beacon

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Holidays

The holiday season has arrived and there's no shortage of family-friendly events around the Tampa Bay area. **12B**

Pinellas County

County commissioners set lofty goals for clean energy. **10A**



Share the Spirit

Every year Pinellas comes together to help those in need have a little extra to make their Christmas bright. Find out how you can help. **9A**

Area Events

Not sure what to do this week? Check out our community calendar for a variety of events. **12A**

Entertainment

Family-friendly films are set to debut just in time to keep kids entertained — or just distracted — during the holiday break. **4B**



Seminole

Neighbors slam project

Some residents say Valor Preserve, an affordable housing complex for veterans, is a poor fit for lakeside site

By **CARL DiORIO**
TBN Correspondent

SEMINOLE — More than a dozen residents tested the mettle of affordable housing proponents at a public hearing on plans for Valor Preserve, a proposed 64-unit development near Lake Seminole that targets military veterans.

At a Nov. 16 City Council meeting that attracted about 50 people, officials heard residents — many with homes on nearby unincorporated county parcels — predict a rise in crime and traffic and a decrease in home values if the housing plans are approved. Plans call for 19 single-story buildings of no more than four apartments each in a rental community to be occupied at least 85% by vet-

erans, roughly half of them expected to be disabled vets.

"It's hard for me to imagine that (this) development is going to fit into a single-family neighborhood," Jim Borth, a nearby homeowner, told council members.

"I've spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to live where I live, which is literally right next door to where you want to put this," said Christine Jones, an owner of Hummel Tire and Auto in Seminole. "I don't think they should be able to put this on what is really prime real estate."

Tampa-based Norstar Development has been trying to win approval for some sort of affordable housing project on the site since 2017, working in



Image courtesy of the CITY OF SEMINOLE

Tampa-based Norstar Development, working in partnership with the Pinellas County Housing Authority, has proposed a 64-unit housing development at 9575 Seminole Blvd. next to Lake Seminole. The project, titled Valor Preserve, intends to be mostly for low-income veterans, but some neighbors say it's not compatible.

See **VALOR**, page 4A

A sand-tastic weekend



Photos by **JERRY STOCKFISCH**

Thousands took to the Treasure Island beach the weekend of Nov. 19-21 to catch Sanding Ovations, the city's signature art and music event. Sculptors from around the world created sand creatures great and small, which can also be viewed during an encore weekend Nov. 27-28. Above, Manuel Campos of Colombia won the People's Choice award with his "Pregnant Mermaid." Below, more whimsical pieces titled "Pilot Fish" and "Tort-A-Potty" entertained beachgoers. More photos, Page 4A.



ALSO ONLINE

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Indian Rocks Beach

More than 200 women packed the Church of the Isles auditorium for the Women of IRB Charity Tea.

E-edition

Want to share the paper with family or friends? Check out an electronic version of this week's paper that you can download.



Madeira Beach

Officials sued over Sunshine Law

Commissioners broke transparency law when replacing city attorney in 2020, resident says

By **LAUREN PEACE**
Tampa Bay Times

MADEIRA BEACH — When 77-year-old Bill Gay bought a condo in Madeira Beach nearly a decade ago, he pictured a relaxing retirement in

the walkable coastal town of about 4,000 residents.

But once Gay began following local commission meetings, he decided to put his free time to work — suing the city.

"I don't golf and my knees are shot, so I can't play tennis anymore," said Gay, a former government consultant. "But I am interested in honest government."

In a lawsuit filed last month against the City of Madeira Beach and four

commission members, Gay alleged that officials violated the Sunshine Law when they decided behind closed doors to fire city attorney Ralf Brookes, replacing him with former city attorney Tom Trask, in a ploy to push development deals.

The stakes in this case are especially high. If a court rules in Gay's favor, a turnover in Madeira's governing ranks would likely follow.

See **SUIT**, page 6A



Clockwise from top left are Commissioners Doug Andrews, Nancy Hodges, Helen Price and Mayor John Hendricks. The four are accused of violating the Sunshine Law.

See **BOWL**, page 4A

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