

Observer

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Stepping away from the keys. **PAGE 1B**

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YOUR TOWN



Courtesy photo

Egg-citing time

The waiting game for cygnets on Longboat Key has begun again.

Swans Clark and Greta, who have been on the island for several years without a successful nesting season, have four eggs in their 2021 nest.

The Gracie Swan Foundation, led by David Novak, looks after the Longboat Key swans.

There are three pairs: Clark and Greta, Nik and Lacy, and newcomers Chuck and Margie. Gracie Swan Foundation employee Renee Odell has looked for the nests of the latter two pairs but hasn't found them yet. As for the already-laid nest, Greta should sit on it until late April or early May. Although Greta and Clark hatched one chick last year, Longboat Key hasn't seen a cygnet through to adulthood in several years.



Courtesy photo

Clean getaway

Maybe Greer Island's new nickname should be Hard Seltzer Can Island, not Beer Can Island.

Surfrider Foundation and Keep Manatee Beautiful volunteers had their monthly cleanup March 13 with the help of town residents and found beach litterbugs have a fondness for the trendy drinks.

Empty cans of White Claw, Truly and Vizzy seltzers were among the top items picked up, along with the usual suspects of soda cans and discarded flip-flops. The next cleanup will be 9 a.m. April 18 at the beach access at 100 N. Shore Road.

By the way, alcohol is forbidden on town beaches.

Higher and drier

Town project plans to raise the level of Lyons Lane. **PAGE 5A**



FIRED UP TO FINISH

Rebuilding of Station 92 enters its final stages. **PAGE 3A**

Mark Bergin

Jon F. Swift Construction superintendent Shane Hamm is running the project to build a new Fire Station 92.

More than just golf

Two women's groups tee it up to raise \$58,000. **SEE PAGE 20A**



Nat Kaemmerer

Lynne Koy and Carolyn Kief, decked out in pink, joined the Go For the Cure golf outing at Harbourside.



Courtesy photo

'Dream job'

Trusted mail carrier did more than deliver. **SEE PAGE 12A**



ALMOST HOME

Town's new fire station is expected to be ready for crews to live and work in by late May.

MARK BERGIN
STAFF WRITER

The town's new fire station is nearing completion with features and facilities never before offered to first responders on the island.

During a tour of the site, at 2162 Gulf of Mexico Drive, Fire Chief Paul Dezzi said the plan is to open around the third week of May.

"Seeing what we forecasted or what we wanted coming to what it is today, here it is," Dezzi said. "A thing on a piece of paper is now becoming a reality."

Since the demolition of the old fire station in June 2020, south-side firefighters have operated out of a trailer on the property.

"It's very tight quarters. You have up to five guys in there at one time," Dezzi said. "However, knowing that this has come to fruition and that there's an endpoint to it, and they walk through [the construction site], and they see it, they know that they're getting a good station."

Dezzi said all 38 members of the Longboat Key Fire Rescue Department have had to adapt because renovations are also going on at Station 91 while firefighters continue to operate there.

The total cost of the project is \$5.06 million, Town Projects Manager Charlie Mopps said.

Jon F. Swift Construction Superintendent Shane Hamm oversees the Fire Station 92 project. The Sarasota-based company has worked on a variety of projects in the area, including several Sarasota County schools.

"Shane has been interacting with these firefighters on a daily basis, and they've been getting updates from him, and they're



Photos by Mark Bergin

Above: Jon F. Swift Construction Superintendent Shane Hamm and Fire Chief Paul Dezzi discuss what the new kitchen area will look like.

Top: Fire trucks, ambulances and vehicles will be able to pull into one of three garages.

\$807,000

Station 91 renovation (north side)

\$4.25 million

Station 92 demolition and renovation (south side)

very excited about just having a new, fresh place to stay," said Jon F. Swift Construction's marketing and operations director, Emmalee Legler.

Legler also complimented Sweet Sparkman Architecture and Interiors for the project's functionality and architecture.

"You can see the front is not a traditional fire department or firehouse," Legler said. "It's got this really cool elongated wall, and the entrance is not even on the front of the building. It's on the side."

Hamm called it an honor to work on the project, his first fire station with the company.

"[There are] hundreds of people that pass every day, and they stop and talk," Hamm said. "And

everybody is tickled how the progress is, how fast it's going, and they can see the end result, and they see what's coming.

"I haven't received one negative statement from anybody in passing, and they all talk every day."

In addition to the entrance on the south side of the building, the new fire station has many distinct features. It includes a decontamination area, so firefighters returning from a call can clean and shower to do their best to remove possible carcinogens.

The new fire station is going to be about 3,100 square feet larger than the previous 7,300-square-foot building, which was built in 1986.

"We'll have a treatment center where people can physically go into a building, come into the building and be treated for their injuries or what have you," Dezzi said. Dezzi said the town looked at the possibility of a different site for the new fire station but said the current location is best.

Data shows it takes the town's first responders an average of five minutes or less to arrive on an

emergency scene.

Fire trucks, ambulances and other vehicles will be able to pull forward, around the back of the building and into one of the station's three new garages instead of backing in.

The building will also feature living facilities for both men and women, which the old south-side station didn't have.

Both the south- and north-side stations will be built to withstand 160 mph winds.

The new building sits a little higher than the one it replaces, in keeping with FEMA codes.

The new building will also have an indoor gym for firefighters.

"The residents of Longboat Key and the commissions can rest assured that they are going to have a world-class facility here," Legler said. "Their tax dollars are spent very wisely."

Dezzi, Legler and Hamm also thanked the Longboat Key Club for allowing them to use part of the Harbourside Golf Course to ensure the Station 92 project gets done properly.

Hamm said he was thankful for the relationships the town has formed with the Jon F. Swift Construction workers.

"Everybody at Swift is treated like family," Hamm said. "We've become part of the fire department family, and they've become part of ours."

Dezzi's twin sons work at the city of North Port's Fire Station 85.

"Station 85 is very similar to [Station 92], and the architect, Todd Sweet, who designed this fire station [also] designed that fire station," Dezzi said. "The station down there currently is the newest one, and they call it The Resort. This is a better one, so it's a resort in my eyes as well."

Perhaps there are some bragging rights between the municipalities' fire stations, at least in the Dezzi family.

"You can share that with the chief down there," Dezzi said with a smile.

TIMELINE

MARCH 20, 2018

Voters approved funding for replacement of Station 92 and renovation of Station 91

MARCH 26, 2019

Sweet Sparkman engaged as architect of both fire station projects

FEBRUARY TO MARCH 2020

Plans finalized for temporary housing on site of Station 92

MARCH TO APRIL 2020

Bids and guaranteed maximum prices finalized

Contracts amended to construction phases from previous design/development phases

JUNE 2020

Demolition started and south-side firefighters began living in a temporary trailer

JULY 2020

Construction began

MAY 2021

Projects expected to be completed