APRIL

CASA COASTER

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INSIDE

PIECING TOGETHER A NEW BOYNTON
Thousands of units approved at five projects nearby could transform downtown and beyond. **A4**

OPINION
Aquatics ease the pressure. **A2**

BACK PAGE
Migrants from five countries come ashore at local beach; foodie shows stop by three favorite eateries. **A8**

High winds push organizers to relocate movie night



J.T. HARRINGTON

***ELVIS* HAS LEFT THE POOL DECK: When 18 mph winds showed no signs of sparing the inflatable screen, the Social & Welcoming Committee moved indoors the popcorn and its screening of the Oscar-nominated film starring Tom Hanks. Two dozen residents packed the club room Mar. 8.**

Runoff and repeat: Hay leads by four

Four votes separated incumbent District 2 city commissioner Woodrow Hay from second-place candidate Mack McCray, according to Palm Beach county election officials after last Tuesday's runoff.

None of four candidates won a majority of the 825 votes cast on election day.

Mr. Hay is a 78-year-old ordained minister and Mr. McCray, 73, is a funeral director. One of the two has held the seat on and off since 2001. Controversy swirled in January when Mr. McCray accused newcomer candidate Joe Josemond of being ineligible to run because he didn't live in the district. Mr. Josemond, 33, denied the accusation, saying "I've lived here all my life."

Officials were recounting votes as the *Casa Coaster* went to press. Turnout was 7.26 percent. Despite the familiar choices, the tight race shows that your vote counts.

Resident plans church dinner

A Grand Knight is planning a huge dinner party next month for Cinco de Mayo, and everyone's invited.

Ed Corripio and the Knights of Columbus, the Catholic fraternal service group, plan a night of Mexican food, dancing and raffle prizes next door at St. Mark's Parish Center.

The menu includes roasted pork, fajitas and plantains, while profits from the $35 tickets benefit the charities the group supports. The event kicks off at 6 p.m.



A Knight to remember

Will the seaweed blob spare us?

Scientists are tracking a blob of seaweed that is thousands of miles long and weighs over 6 million tons. Clumps from The Great Atlantic Sargassum Belt have plagued the Caribbean Sea since 2011, and recent reports from Key West and Ft. Lauderdale show brown clumps of it washing ashore.

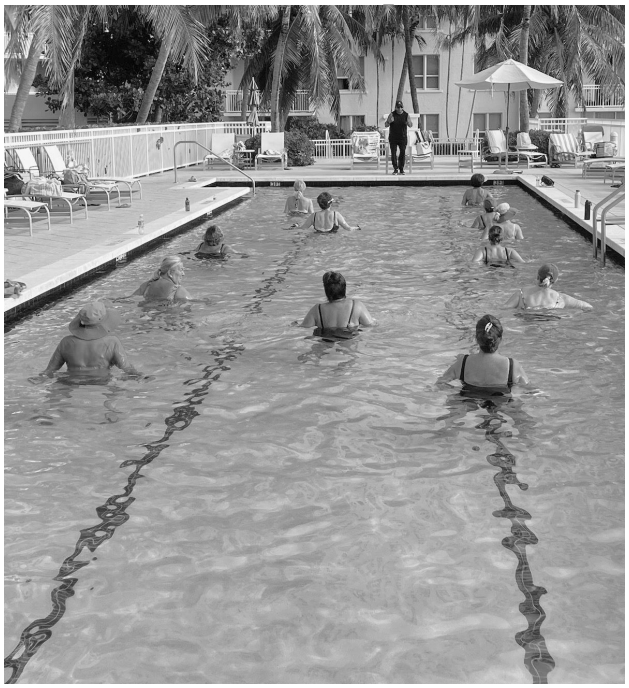
Aside from a bad odor like rotten eggs, tiny creatures living in the sargassum can produce rashes and blisters.

Dr. Brian Barnes, a marine science professor at the University of South Florida thinks that a local surge from April to July should mostly stay offshore but windy currents may push it ashore here and there.

OPINION

Aquatics ease the pressure

By Gayle Brousseau


RAFFI CIVAN

At the beginning of the pandemic, fellow resident and group fitness instructor Bobby Hall inquired if there was an interest in a water aerobics class.

At first we were scared and antsy about spreading the virus. But we all agreed: we needed a little normalcy and human connection. It was worth the risk.

Bobby became a certified specialist in aquatics, and he bought a headset and speakers. That's how the class was formed, and the rest is a wonderful story of friendship, fitness and fun.

Whether you are 30 or 80 years old, it is a great form of exercise and way to build cardiovascular strength – which comes in handy for climbing those stairs! Water aerobics reduces your chances of getting injured and helps to build strength and mobility.

As many of us know, water movement is also great for physical therapy because there is no weight bearing on your joints. The classes have helped more than one of us to recover from serious injuries. Bobby always emphasizes safety with clear instructions and modifications if there are certain moves that are too taxing. He says if you aren't comfortable at any time, just do what feels best for your body. The music is always motivating, and Bobby is the best!

Whether you're among the 15 or 20 in the water with us or not, thanks to the Casa Costa community for allowing us to take over a pool for three hours a week to enjoy this fun and healthy activity with friends. Join us Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 till 10 a.m. unless it's too chilly.

Ms. Brousseau always follows the Casa Costa pool rules.

LETTERS TO THE PUBLISHER

Newspaper keeps leveling up

The *Casa Coaster* gets better and better with each issue. The article on fines ("Violations, consequences a hot topic," Mar. 2023) was very helpful, as we are subtenants and do not attend Board meetings. I also appreciated the in-depth article about the Kaada family and their plans for the restaurant spaces ("Mister B's Neighborhood," Mar. 2023). I wish them nothing but the best of luck! If they are successful, it will dramatically improve the quality of the building.

It's also nice to know there are not really any alligators in the pond ("*Casa Coaster* Investigates," Mar. 2023).

Elizabeth Pearce

Now add these fines to the list

I am not sure if you ran out of space, but there are a few missing fines that I would like to see added.

- ❏ Bad dogs and bad babies crying on your balcony: $50.
- ❏ Using speakerphone on your balcony so we all hear your depressing news when we come here to relax: $500.
- ❏ Smoking pot on your balcony, which interferes with shared space and endangers our health: $5,000.

Wolfgang Nitsch

Email submissions to casacoasternews@gmail.com. All content is subject to editing.

CALL FOR ENTRIES

Wouldn't this space look better with a cartoon?

Impress your neighbors by showcasing your skills.

Visit casacoaster.com and submit!

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WIND DOWN WEDNESDAY

Apr 12 @ 4 - 7pm
Marina Café

Food and drink specials just down the block

MARINA CAFE



INTERNATIONAL POTLUCK

Sun Apr 23 @ 5 - 8pm
Pool Deck

Bring a dish and recipe from your heritage

Piecing together a new Boynton

The city has approved 2,200 apartments to be built within three blocks of Casa Costa

In late 2015, a Family Dollar store opened ½ mile away at Seacrest Blvd. and MLK Jr. Blvd. It was the neighborhood's first new commercial building in 40 years, and former mayor Woodrow Hay said it signaled a "springboard of more development comin' down the pipe." The store closed four years later.

Such fits and starts have defined East Boynton Beach ever since. In the shadows of vibrant downtowns in West Palm Beach, Delray Beach and Boca Raton, Boynton is the county's third largest city.

In the spring of 2018, longtime city manager Lori LaVerriere said that a $500 million makeover – a building boom she called a "renaissance" – would transform the city. Developers had completed 341 rental apartments at 500 Ocean a year earlier with $4.4 million of incentives from the city's Community Redevelopment Agency. Also that summer, the city council outvoted the mayor and CRA chairman 3-2 to terminate discussions for a $350 million project by Hyperion Development Group on both sides of N. Federal Hwy. that included a hotel, vast office space and retail including a supermarket. They later awarded a scaled-down plan for apartments west of the street to Affiliated Development. A selling point of the firm's pitch was to relocate the restaurant Hurricane Alley.

Meanwhile the "Town Square" hub that city officials promised to complete three years ago remains half-built. The project's 16 ½ acres includes both a public portion – city hall, library, fire station amphitheater – plus apartments, parking garages and a hotel. The public buildings are open for business, but after the city transferred three parcels and $2 million to Boca Raton-based JKM Developers for the rest, the builder refused to continue. The agreement signed had no protections for the city and JKM looked to sell the land. After three years of lawsuits and city commissioners saying JKM held the land "hostage," last month they announced a settlement and a new developer to finish the job.

Ms. LaVerriere, the city manager, was abruptly fired at a city council meeting last April. Vice Mayor Angela Cruz said at the time that she was "concerned" about city officials being "a little too friendly with certain developers who literally backstabbed our city." The former manager denied the accusation.

At a marathon meeting that wrapped up at 1:40 a.m. on Feb. 23, the city approved New York-based Time Equities to complete a revised master plan. City commissioner Thomas Turkin said: "Tonight is a big deal because it is essentially the next step in fixing what is a rat's nest that was created by a previous commission."

Robert Singer, a director at Time Equities, rearranged the site layout where one building "was highly exposed and hulking over a street, jammed in between several other buildings," he said. Now "the parking garages are basically obscured. They kind of disappear."

Following the land sale, site plans and detailed construction plans, Mr. Singer expects to break ground within two to three years.

Amanda Radigan, the city's planning and zoning director, told the *Casa Coaster* that such timelines are largely in the hands of developers to obtain permits after the city issues permission to build. Ms. Radigan confirmed that roughly 2,200 units nearby have the green light, and wrote "the city approves 'units' and not ownership structure (apartment vs. condo)." Current plans are all for rentals.

PROJECTS AROUND CASA COSTA



GOLDBERG COMPANIES

Ohio-based Goldberg Companies overcame neighborhood congestion concerns two years ago and has the green light to build 274 apartments at **Legacy at Boynton Beach**.

In 2002, the CRA paid $900,000 for a portion of the 3 ½ acre site, which it sold to an investor in 2018 for $10 if his firm built **Ocean One** – apartments plus 120 hotel rooms and 12,000 sq. ft. of retail. He never did. The current owner missed out on what will be The Pierce across the street, but still plans to build 371 apartments and retail just south of Casa Costa, breaking ground as soon as October.



AFFILIATED DEVELOPMENT

PARKING GARAGE AND APARTMENTS ON NE FIRST AVE., FACING EAST FROM THE TRAIN TRACKS



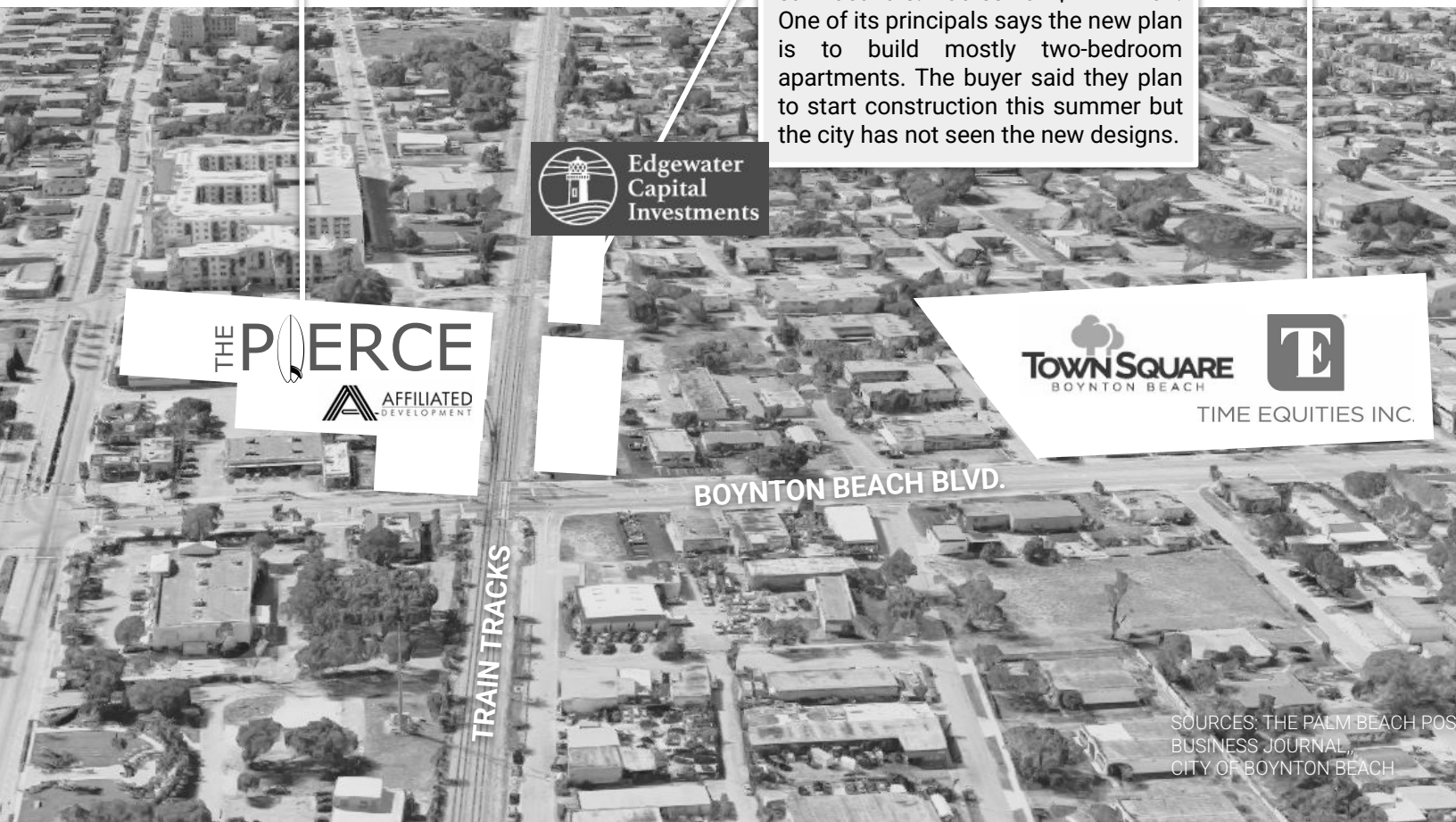
TIME EQUITIES

HOTEL ON NE FIRST ST. AND OCEAN AVE.

Last year the city asked for proposals to redevelop a collection of land owned by the CRA, including three historic buildings on Ocean Ave. it purchased from longtime owners the Oyer family. The Ft. Lauderdale-based developer obtained an option to acquire a corner lot with Ocean Food Mart, agreed in advance to relocate Hurricane Alley and beat out four other firms to build **The Pierce**, named after South Florida's legendary "barefoot mailman." Last month, the city agreed to several code exceptions, allowing 27% more units than originally planned. The project is now 300 apartments with 150 public parking spaces.

City officials hope to complete the long-stalled downtown hub, planned since the 1990s, with a new development partner and reconfigured site plan for 898 apartments in two residential buildings with parking garages, an eight-story hotel and 23,000 sq. ft. of retail space along Boynton Beach Blvd.

In 2017, city commissioners approved 371 apartments and townhomes and 15,000 sq. ft. of commercial space for **The Villages at East Ocean Avenue**. The owner said at the time "the shovel is in the car" but groundbreaking never began. Last May, a Miami-based private equity firm acquired the still-vacant 5.1 acres for $12 million. One of its principals says the new plan is to build mostly two-bedroom apartments. The buyer said they plan to start construction this summer but the city has not seen the new designs.



SOURCES: THE PALM BEACH POST, BUSINESS JOURNAL, CITY OF BOYNTON BEACH

One full-time smile, two part-time Irish lads

As I was waiting to talk with Alex, I got a chance to watch him in action. On this day, there was a private party in the club room and he greeted each of the 20 guests as they came into the building, checked their names and escorted them to the elevator.

I watched him do this with kindness, humor and professionalism. Each guest came in at a different time and, although he was interrupted again and again, he never lost his smile and continued to make warm, inviting comments while seeing that each guest was happy and getting upstairs quickly.

Watching **Alejandro Bernal**, Casa Costa's day concierge, allowed me to understand how he has been so successful in the role. He has been working at the concierge desk for the past nine months. First, as a part-time weekend job, and now full-time during the week.

Alex was born in Spain and has also lived in Colombia with his family. In 2014, when he was in fifth grade, his family moved to West Palm Beach, where he still lives today. When he was ready to graduate from high school, a friend told him about a job here: "You are such a people person, this position is perfect." In his first few weeks, Alex was not so sure. There was a lot going on and some people were not as patient as he expected, but once getting into "his groove" he learned what was needed to be successful and enjoy the work.



Mister B's Neighborhood



JOHN BATTISTA

When not running the operations up front, Alex's passion is soccer. He grew up playing as a child and on his high school team. He continues to play rec soccer and jog as often as he can.

Alex is working to earn money to pursue his career goal in the field of real estate. He plans on attending college to move him closer to that goal. He is excited to be working here learning from property managers and see firsthand how a large real estate operation functions.

Alex says that he hopes everyone feels comfortable talking to him. He enjoys the interaction and likes getting to know the people in the building.

As the "answer man" to countless owners, renters and short-term guests, he sees the crux of his job as getting the right information to the right person, right away. He does it with tact, humor, and a smile on his face.

"I was so happy when Alex became our full-time concierge," said Candace Ayers, a resident who relies on the package room frequently for deliveries. "He is so friendly and helpful."

Meet **Oscar and Aiden**, Casa Costa's own Soft-coated Wheaten Terriers. What are Soft-coated Wheaten Terriers? Simply put, "wheaten" is the color yellow and the purebred terriers originated from Ireland where they helped farmers herd and protect livestock 200 years ago.

This duo were born in Ontario, Canada and live up north half of the year. These two beautiful dogs are often mistaken as twins, but Oscar is 12 years old and Aiden is 10. The trips back and forth are long, but O & A are accustomed to the drive with their beds in the back of the car and enjoy their own hotel bed on the road with their humans Louise and Wolfgang Nitsch.



JOHN BATTISTA

In Canada, they enjoy a large property with lots of freedom, including daily walks in a nearby forest where they run around off leash. It's a big change when they come to Casa Costa, but when you see this friendly pair enjoying Florida's winter weather, don't be a stranger.

John Battista, member of the Social & Welcoming Committee, reminds you to always pick up after your dog. Not doing so is unsociable and most unwelcome.

DINE DOWNSTAIRS AT

La Promenade

Now open



Opening in April



If you love fresh food at a fair price, we speak your language. It would be our privilege for you to join us downstairs as we build a collection of eateries that will make you proud.

Mohamed Kaada

Opening soon



Migrant boat comes ashore nearby

Ten migrants from Brazil, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guyana and Jamaica landed 1 ½ miles north at Ocean Inlet Park in Boynton Beach at 2:30 a.m. on Mar. 10.

Border patrol officials took the passengers into custody, calling it a "suspected maritime smuggling event."

Customs and Border Patrol reports a 661 percent uptick in such encounters in the county.



CBS12

"As a whole, and specifically South Florida, we have seen a dramatic increase in smuggling activity," said a CBP agent. "The narcotics flow has always been steady, but the migrant flow has significantly increased."

Foodie shows spotlight local spots

Guy Fieri made headlines last year when he bought a 7,400-sq. ft. home in Lake Worth Beach for $3.9 million. Since then, the television host's travelogue of beloved restaurants includes two local joints.

The nearby restaurants showcased last month on Mr. Fieri's *Diners, Drive-ins & Dives* belie the show's title: Butcher & The Bar, located across the street at 500 Ocean and Rose's Daughter in Delray Beach's Pineapple Grove neighborhood.

Meanwhile Dave Portnoy, who has reviewed over 1,400 cheese pizzas since 2013 on his "One Bite" website, visited Ah-Beetz New Haven Pizza, which opened ten months ago. The pizzeria's name refers to the "apizza" style of thin, chewy, charred crust popular in the Connecticut town. Mr. Portnoy scored the "spectacular" pizza 8.4 out of 10, ranking it in his top two percent of all time.

- **The Butcher & The Bar**, Boynton Beach (aired Mar. 17)
- **Rose's Daughter**, Delray Beach (aired Mar. 3)
- **Ah-Beetz New Haven Pizza**, Delray Beach (aired Mar. 9)





FROM LEFT: BARSTOOL SPORTS, SUN SENTINEL

Dave Portnoy passes pizza judgment while Guy Fieri poses with local restaurateurs.

Local events

FIRST FRIDAY @ 5 CONCERT
Fri., Apr. 7 | 5 - 8 p.m.
Amphitheater
Whisky Six Band, a local act performing modern country music

HAPPY HOUR
Wed., Apr. 12 | 4 - 7 p.m.
Marina Café
Food and drink specials at the harbor

INTERNATIONAL POTLUCK DINNER
Sun., Apr. 23 | 5 - 8 p.m.
Pool Deck
Bring a dish from your heritage and copies of the recipe

Coaster classifieds

DOOR LOCKS
Standard or keyless. Steve: **casacostalocks@gmail.com**

HANDYMAN
Matt Hirsch is your secret weapon: Text: **561-444-6315**

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Holly sits, walks & trains. Your "resident" go-to: **www.purr-fect.biz**

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