

**3A** **MILITARY SERVICE**  
■ Collier County moves ahead with plans for veterans nursing home in Golden Gate

**10A** **NEW BUSINESS**  
■ Italian market and restaurant planned for recently vacated space at Bayfront

**8B** **'BOWLING' SCORE**  
■ Healthy, fast-casual local options abound for picking up perfect meals any time of day

## Tim Aten Knows

### MORE ROAD PROJECTS PLANNED IN ESTATES

By Tim Aten  
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**Q:** Have you heard anything about when construction of the 16th Street NE bridge will begin? —

Gary Sefcik, Golden Gate Estates

**A:** Still working its way through Collier County government's design and permitting process, the 16th Street NE bridge project in Golden Gate Estates is targeted to begin construction in about a year and a half.

"Basically, we're in design right now. We're at 60%. We will be finished with design and out of permitting by about a year from now. We'll probably be under construction by December 2024," said Dennis McCoy, senior project manager with Collier County Growth Management Department's Transportation Engineering Division. "We plan like a year and a half of construction. So, we likely will be in construction all of '25 and part of '26. This ties in with the Vanderbilt Beach Road extension that comes right through the project."

In addition to building a two-lane bridge to span the Golden Gate Main Canal that bisects 16th Street NE, the more than \$22 million project will widen each of the two travel lanes on 16th Street to 11 feet. That includes the addition of 6-foot shoulders and a 6-foot sidewalk along its entire length from Golden Gate Boulevard to Randall Boulevard, where a traffic light will be installed at the intersection of Randall, 16th Street and Approach Boulevard, the entrance into Valencia Golf & Country Club.

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## HEALTH CARE

# Life on the line



Denise Horvat, a patient at Florida Cancer Specialists and Research Institute, is facing challenges with her cancer treatment. An ongoing shortage of cisplatin, a chemotherapy drug, continues to place strains on cancer patients, including some in Collier County. Horvat is pictured here June 16 at her home in Everglades City. Photo by **Chris Tilley**

## Chemotherapy drug shortages affect SW Florida cancer patients

By **Therese McDevitt**

Cancer treatment centers around the U.S. are facing a shortage of potentially lifesaving chemotherapy drugs, including carboplatin and cisplatin, which serve as a first-line treatment for various cancers including lung, head and neck, breast, ovarian, gastric, bladder and testicular.

A survey in early June by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network showed that more than 90% of cancer centers around the U.S. have reported experiencing a shortage of carboplatin

and 70% reported a shortage of cisplatin.

In a statement in mid-May, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network listed "expanded demand, supply shortages, limited manufacturing capacity and low-profit margins for generic therapies" among the factors contributing to the nationwide shortage.

Patients at cancer centers and hospitals in Collier County and throughout Southwest Florida are feeling the effects of the shortage, and cancer care providers are anticipating some possible relief due to a recent decision by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to allow imports of the drugs from China.

In a statement provided to media outlets,

NCH System Director of Pharmacy Kimberly Thorp said: "Recently the FDA has granted the pharmaceutical company Apotex emergency product importation of Cisplatin 50mg injection from China. Apotex will coordinate U.S. distribution in the upcoming weeks. This will be a positive impact on the overall national shortage issue and help improve cisplatin distribution and allocation to providers."

The statement from Thorp said that national shortages for medications have continued for the last several years, with cisplatin as one medication shortage that has come into the national

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## EDUCATION

# Collier School Board approves contract for new Superintendent

By **Elizabeth Kellar**

The Collier County School Board voted 3-2 on June 13 to approve a three-year, \$305,000 contract for its new superintendent. Leslie Ricciardelli will be the district's 20th superintendent.

In a statement, Ricciardelli said she is "honored and humbled" to have been chosen to lead the district. She thanked the school board for its confidence, and her family

for their support. She also thanked the district's staff, students and community members for being engaged during the search process.

"Together, we embark on a new chapter in the rich history of our district, celebrating its 100th year of excellence in education," she said. "This milestone reminds us of the enduring legacy we inherit and the immense privilege we have to shape the future of our students."

Ricciardelli has served as the interim superintendent since December, when the school board parted

ways with prior district head Kameela Patton, who was initially set to retire at the end of the 2022-2023 school year. A longtime Naples resident, Ricciardelli has worked in education for almost three decades. Her last role before taking a leadership position with the district was as the principal at Lely High School.

Ricciardelli was one of 45 applicants for the superintendent position. On May 3, the board voted 3-2 to appoint Ricciardelli as the next superintendent, selecting her from four finalists. Board chair Kelly Lichter,

Erick Carter and Stephanie Lucarelli voted in favor of hiring Ricciardelli, and board members Tim Moshier and Jerry Rutherford voted against.

Similarly, the board disagreed over Ricciardelli's contract details.

In discussions that followed, Moshier and Rutherford said they wanted Ricciardelli to have a one-year contract, while Carter and Lucarelli said that would create a sense of instability. The board also disagreed on the amount of Ricciardelli's

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## SHORTAGE

spotlight recently. “Most often, the wholesalers will supply product via a system of allocation, based on product available. With that in mind, NCH continues to work proactively with our clinical pharmacist specialists and prescribers to determine best plan of care for the patients we serve, including determining available therapeutics for treatment.”

Anjan J. Patel, M.D., is a Sarasota-based internist, oncologist and hematologist with Florida Cancer Specialists and Research Institute. In a phone interview, Patel explained that cisplatin and carboplatin are critically important in the early treatment of several cancers.

“These two drugs are in the category of drugs called platinum and are used in several different malignancies, all in the curative setting, so these are patients that have a chance of cure,” Patel said. “These are patients where we have a lot of utilization of cisplatin and carboplatin and it’s really impactful when it’s not available.”

In terms of alternatives, Patel said it depends on the situation that the patient is in, as well as the type of disease being treated. “Sometimes there are reasonable equivalents that we can aim at using,” Patel said. “Other times there are alternatives that are less active but still need to be utilized if there’s no other choice.”

Patel said Florida Cancer Specialists as a company is taking steps to seek help from state and federal legislators to help find both short-and long-term solutions to generic drug shortages.

“I think everybody’s trying their best,” Patel said. “Our company has tried to do this on multiple fronts; we have encouraged our providers to start grassroots efforts with emails and letters to Congressional representatives—our senator and our state representative, as well. We encourage patients to do the same, and we’ve tried to educate patients and our colleagues in our communities as to the situation that we’re dealing with so that everyone understands what we can and cannot do.”

From a clinical standpoint, Patel said that Florida Cancer Specialists has also developed a list of regimens and other contingency plans for providers within its system to have scientific backing in terms of treatment substitutions.



Denise Horvat, of Everglades City, spends much of her time concerned about the availability of her current chemotherapy drug, cisplatin. An ongoing shortage of cisplatin and other cancer-fighting drugs has placed a strain on patients throughout Collier County. Photo by **Chris Tilley**

Asked how long the shortage might continue, Patel said it will probably last a few more months, at least before cisplatin and carboplatin will start to be produced again.

“In terms of the long-term remedy, it’s going to have to be probably from a government-type entity to help companies subsidize the production of these drugs that are otherwise very low-cost,” he said. “These two drugs are making the headlines because they’re so commonly used. This is not a brand-new problem; we have had it with other drugs, but it’s been less of a big deal because they’re not as frequently used. Hopefully—after this kind of debacle with everything that’s gone on and the media exposure—I’m hoping that it will finally get resolved with a more holistic top-to-bottom sort of strategy, because this is going to continue to be a problem unless we deal with the actual driving forces.”

### One Collier County cancer patient’s story

For Denise Horvat of Everglades

City, who is fighting a recurrence of the cancer that was first diagnosed in 2016, the chemotherapy shortage is real, and it is frightening.

When Horvat, 59, arrived at Florida Cancer Specialists and Research Institute in Sierra Meadows for her scheduled bloodwork and chemotherapy treatment for recurrent thymoma the third week of June, she found out there was no cisplatin available.

“I was blindsided and shocked, because I didn’t know the shortage was this bad,” Horvat said in a phone interview. “I did receive an email from Florida Cancer Specialists, but I don’t think I paid close attention to it and just didn’t realize it was this bad.”

Horvat was first diagnosed in 2016 and underwent surgery to remove a 1.25-pound mass in her thymus gland, which is in the chest between the lungs and behind the sternum. The surgery was followed by radiation, but spots were discovered again in her lungs, and she underwent

eight months of chemotherapy. In March of this year, she discovered that the cancer had returned, and she started chemotherapy again to help shrink 13 spots in her lungs. She goes to Florida Cancer Specialists every Wednesday for blood work; every third Wednesday she returns for three days of chemotherapy treatment.

“My recent scans show I’m responding, with about 30% shrinkage on the spots in my lungs,” she said. “My only option now is to keep these spots from growing. My doctors don’t know why it’s become active again after three years, but I feel that with the drug and the treatment, I have a say in what’s going on; otherwise, I’m just sitting here with no hope.”

Asked if she would be comfortable receiving the cisplatin imported from China, Horvat said that she and her husband would discuss it and she would consult with her physician, Dr. Jay Wang at FCS. “I have a whole list of questions for Dr. Wang, but I think if he said he believes I could

take it, I probably would because I trust him wholly,” she said, “but I think he would give me the option. I have two more cycles of three treatments, and I need to stop these spots. I’m already committed and feel like I should continue, so I would say yes.”

She said she plans to write letters and call state and federal legislators and agencies to lend her voice to those asking for government intervention to solve the issues leading to the shortage, or to find safe alternatives.

“I’m going to pursue this and try to lend a hand up until I can no longer do it or until something is done,” she said. “Not just for me, but for everyone else going through this. Something has to be done so that we can finish our treatments.”

Horvat said she has been through too much in the last few years—facing two major hurricanes and two bouts with cancer—to stop now. “I’ve come this far and I’m not going to give up,” she said. “I won’t give up without a fight.” **NM**

Kings Lake returns to the ballot box Tuesday in an effort to restrict rental of its single-family homes for overnight and weekend stays.

Photo by **Harriet Howard Heithaus**



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## KINGS LAKE

than its 338 single-family residences this issue will affect. And the 839 condominiums in Kings Lake generally are under much stronger restrictions from their condo owners’ associations, with 90-day or more rentals often limited to one annually.

Bristol Square Condos has the most lenient policy, and the master homeowner association is proposing to follow its lead. A total of 12 rentals would be allowed per year for single-family homes; the minimum stay will still be 30 days.

The opposition has been more muted this time, although owner Dino Massimi, whose request to have current investment properties grandfathered in was declined, sent a letter to Kings Lake property owners. The board sent out a reply addressing some of his statements. Another critic airs weekly complaints on social media, and is likely to ask for an au-

dit. An audit was requested, and honored, last time.

Single-family homeowners adjacent to rentals have been vocally supportive of the rental limits. They complain about trash, loud parties and the discomfort of seeing different strangers next door from week to week.

However, the upcoming vote, as did the last one, depends on the owners of residences who have no major stake in it: the condo owners. And a good percentage of those are gone for the summer.

“We have mailed ballots to everyone, and we have sent emails to everyone we have emails for,” Miers said. “We have tried to make it easy for everyone.”

Eligible voters in Kings Lake can take their ballots to the subdivision’s property management office, or can even e-mail them in before 5 p.m. June 27.

“Lakewood, Queens Park—all of them have rental regulations,” Miers pointed out. “We’re the only one that doesn’t.” **NM**

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## PICKLEBALL

be for public use. The initial proposal, which would involve a 30-year land-lease, also asked for half the tennis courts to be reserved for Pelican Bay residents, but that’s being reconsidered.

“We came up to Option 10, but listening to you all tonight saying that you don’t want to take away the tennis courts, we’re listening,” Parks Director Olema Edwards told a crowd of about 60 pickleball and tennis players at the May 10 NIM. “We’re going to have to go back to the drawing board.”

Pelican Bay Foundation Director Mike Ruffolo said the message by Naples Park residents and other tennis players was “loud and clear”—they don’t want to lose any tennis courts. “That’s why we are looking at the concrete structure that people currently play pickleball on,” Ruffolo said, adding that they’ll work with the county to determine if they can demolish and add two tennis courts there.

Due to having to set games by player levels, the foundation said it would find a way to provide equal playing time for its residents and the public.

Tennis players had pointed out that those are the only Har-Tru clay courts owned by the county; demand for tennis is huge, especially during season; and the parking lot is often filled during tennis round robins at 8-9:30 a.m. and 9:30-11 a.m. Ruffolo said most Pelican Bay residents would walk or

bicycle to the park, at 764 Vanderbilt Beach Road, while anyone who drives would park at the Pelican Bay Community Center across the street from the park.

Under the proposal, the county would maintain the playground and green space, while the foundation would be in charge of the rest, including nets, lights and resurfacing courts, as well as managing tennis and pickleball courts. They’re currently overseen by another concessionaire who doesn’t want to continue.

In addition, the foundation would make fencing and other repairs, pave sidewalks and add more parking, an ADA-accessible playground, a pro shop, multi-use fields, baseball/softball fields, bleachers, sound-blocking fencing to minimize pickleball noise to neighbors and a maintenance barn with space for the foundation. Only 22% of the green space at the 14.88-acre park would be used.

The park was originally deeded to the county in 1994 as a community park by Pelican Bay developers as part of an agreement to build more densely in Pelican Bay.

The county Parks & Recreation Advisory Board voted 4-1 on April 19 to recommend moving forward with the proposal, which is still being revised. Once a plan is chosen and approved by County Manager Amy Paterson, it will go before the Board of County Commissioners for a hearing and approval. The foundation is hoping to build it next year. Information on the meeting and a Zoom link to participate remotely will be posted here: [bit.ly/CCPickleballNIM](https://bit.ly/CCPickleballNIM) **NM**