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WEATHER



Idi Wiggins, fifth grade, Gerald Adams School

See forecast on Page 2A

FLORIDA

Session will end: No deal, no budget

The Republican leaders of the Florida Legislature said Wednesday it appears they will end their annual session on May 1 without reaching a deal on health care and a new state budget. **Page 3A**

NATION

Low-wage workers expand protests

The Fight for \$15 campaign to win higher pay and a union for fast-food workers is expanding to represent a variety of low-wage workers and become more of a social justice movement.

In New York City on Wednesday, more than 100 chanting protesters gathered outside a McDonald's around noon, prompting the store to lock its doors to prevent the crowd from streaming in. **Page 7A**

WORLD

Militants seize three villages

The Islamic State extremist group launched an offensive Wednesday in Iraq's western Anbar province, capturing three villages near the provincial capital of Ramadi in what was the most significant threat to the city by the Sunni militants to date. **Page 7A**

ON THE RADIO



Karen Sharp talks about the Lower Keys Relay for Life taking place at the HOB track Friday night.

Also on today's show:

- Teresa Konrath — Marathon HS
- Harry Powell — wastewater watchdog
- Holly Raschein — state representative
- Donie Lee — KWPD
- Virginia Panico — KW Chamber
- Kirk Zuelch — FKA
- Naja Girard — KWTN

NEWS: 7:30, 8:30 a.m., noon, 5 & 6 p.m.
Evening Edition 5-5:30 p.m.

FLORIDA KEYS
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City Hall gets board funds

Bight hands over \$1.3M for building project

BY GWEN FILOSA
Citizen Staff

The Bight Management District Board has agreed to hand over \$1.3 million from its reserves to the growing construction budget for the new City Hall in Key West — now pegged at \$18.8 million.

The vote Wednesday evening was 4-2 in favor. A tie vote would have meant the motion failed. The seven-member board is short one member,

since Dan Probert retired earlier this year.

The six-member Bight board oversees the management of the city-owned Key West Historic Seaport, a collection of shops, restaurants, boats and watersports off Caroline Street.

From the start, Port Director Doug Bradshaw made clear to the board that staff's request for the \$1.3 million was not a loan.

"This is the City of Key West's taxpayers' money," said Claude Gardner, the Bight board's

newest member. "There's enough revenue coming in, enough in reserves. I make a motion to approve."

The new City Hall, a reconstruction of the Glynn Archer School on White Street, is scheduled to open next spring. For the moment, the city is renting offices at Habana Plaza off Flagler Avenue.

Whatever the decision Wednesday, the \$1.3 million was almost certainly going to shift from the Bight's savings, which top \$6 million, to the

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MONROE COUNTY



Constance Miller uses her own "green" bag Wednesday at Fausto's Food Palace in Key West. J.B. Veliz helps bag Miller's groceries as Veronica Tinker works the register.

Photos by MIKE HENTZ/The Citizen

Commission approves bag ban resolution

BY TIMOTHY O'HARA
Citizen Staff

The Winn-Dixie grocery store on Big Pine Key alone went through 2.5 million single-use plastic bags in one year, according to local environmentalists pushing a campaign called "Got Your Bags?"

The Winn-Dixie is one of six grocery stores in the Lower Keys and multiple corner stores that give plastic bags to their customers every day. In an effort to reduce the use of these plastic bags, the Monroe County Commission approved a resolution supporting two state bills, H.B. 661 and S.B. 966, that setup a pilot program that would allow local municipalities to ban the use of disposable plastic bags. Local governments are currently prohibited from banning the use of single-use bags.

The two-year pilot program would regulate or ban disposable plastic bags for cities with popu-



Patti Shanafelt works at Higgs Beach and often finds plastic bags along the waterfront.

lations below 100,000. County Carruthers, who sponsored the resolution. "We need to take this as far as we can," County Commissioner Sylvia Murphy added. "This has to stop."

Last month, the Key West City Commission passed a similar

"This allows us to act," said County Commissioner Heather

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Officials OK \$7M for deep well

BY TIMOTHY O'HARA
Citizen Staff

The Monroe County Commission agreed Wednesday to spend an additional \$7 million to fund a deep injection well for the last and largest central sewer project in the Florida Keys — the roughly \$165 million Cudjoe Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The commission had been holding off on funding the deep well at the plant on Blimp Road on Cudjoe Key — despite requests of many residents and environmental groups — because there was no scientific proof that the deep well was needed, the commissioners said prior to Wednesday. The proof came last month from a study by Florida International University, which concluded the deep well is needed.

As much public outcry that the deep well debate has generated in recent months, Wednesday's vote came with no bickering, actually, absolutely no discussion at all.

County commissioners quickly called for a vote and chose unanimously in favor of funding the construction of the deep well. A small crowd of Lower Keys residents who will be served by the Cudjoe Regional System erupted in cheers and yelled out "thanks" after the vote.

The Aqueduct Authority board and the county commissioned the FIU study after residents raised concerns that the shallow wells that were initially proposed and dug will not pump the water deep enough into the ground. They also said the treated effluent could creep back up to the surface in areas that may be contaminated from years of serving as a dump. The treatment plant and wells have been placed in an area that

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Former city commissioner's son resolves careless driving charge

BY GWEN FILOSA
Citizen Staff

The son of a former city commissioner who police said ran a red light and almost hit a marked patrol car in February has resolved the case without having to go to court.

Robert Bethel, 33, an employee of the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority, completed traffic school after he was charged with careless driving for a Feb. 25 incident, court records show.



Bethel

Bethel's case was disposed of April

7, according to a docket report at the Monroe County Clerk of Court. The case was presided over by Judge Joseph Albury.

"Defendant elected traffic school and almost hit a marked patrol car in option," the last docket entry reads.

Police officers reported Bethel was impaired, possibly drunk, when he ran a red light at Flagler Avenue and Kennedy Drive that day, and that he refused to get out of his silver SUV.

But Bethel's family said he was suffering a diabetic episode at the time.

While police arrested Bethel on suspicion of resisting arrest, State

Attorney Catherine Vogel's office took no action on that allegation.

Instead, Bethel was accused March 11 of careless driving and the case was sent to pretrial diversion.

"There was nothing to indicate it was alcohol and we weren't able to establish if there was any other drug [involved]," Vogel said. "We are aware he has some health issues."

Police had probable cause to make the arrest, Vogel said, but her office's investigation found insufficient evidence to make charges other than careless driving.

"That's all we had evidence for," Vogel said.

Harry Bethel, the former city com-

missioner who remains active in Key West politics, said his son was having a diabetic episode at the time.

There was no alcohol involved, he said, admitting his son ran the red light but only because of a medical condition.

"I swerved to the right as the vehicle ran the light and entered the intersection, almost crashing into me," wrote Officer Kathyann Wanciak in her incident report, which was labeled "alcohol/liquor related offense."

Bethel had slurred speech, police said, and "fumbled" through his car's interior but couldn't find his

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