



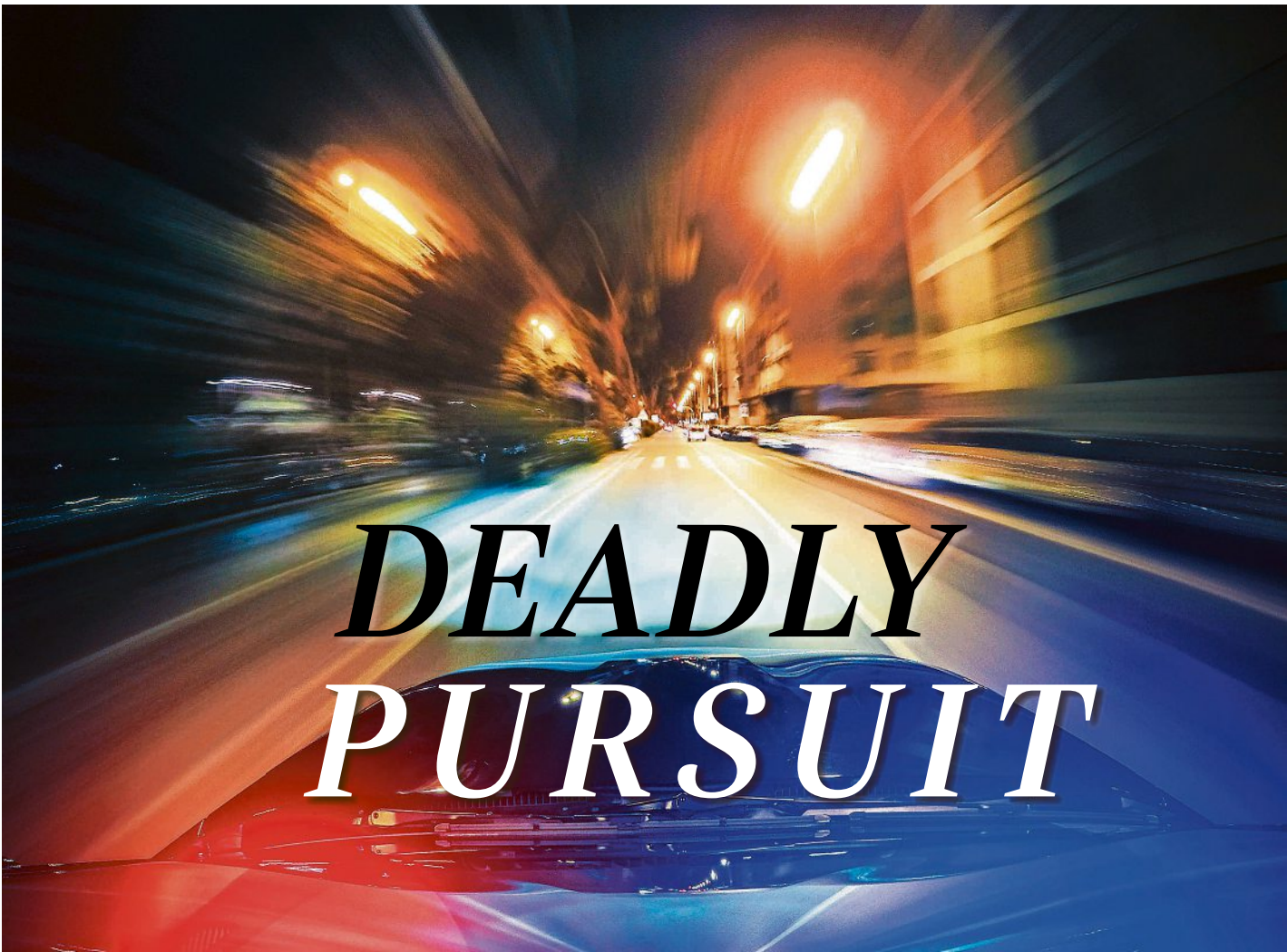
Pell Grant fund facing depletion

NEWS, 6A

NEWS CHIEF

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2025 | NEWSCHIEF.COM

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LIQUOR LAWS

Sunday sales are among proposed changes

Paul Nutcher
Lakeland Ledger
USA TODAY NETWORK

Sunday liquor sales in Polk County could be allowed as early as January – just in time for Super Bowl Sunday. The County Commission has started the process to modify its regulations regarding the opening times for bars and liquor stores as well as the required distances the establishments must be from churches and schools. The current pro-business panel of commissioners sees the move as driven by market forces, according to discussions by the commissioners at a September agenda review. At that session, commissioners were told Polk’s alcohol-sales laws were the strictest in Central Florida.

In recent years, bar and liquor store owners in unincorporated areas have asked cities for annexation to gain a set of more business-friendly regulations. And the process of seeking variances to serve liquor is seen as a cumbersome hurdle for businesses trying to locate in Polk County. Nearly all the variances have been approved by the county in recent years.

What the process will entail?

A preliminary agenda released this week shows the commission is expected to set public hearings on changes to liquor sales in unincorporated Polk County during its regularly scheduled meeting on Dec. 16 at the County Administration Building in Bartow. Eventually, the move would require changes to Polk’s Land Development Code. As long as the commission decides on Tuesday to move the changes forward, the changes will get two hearings: at 9:15 a.m. Jan. 6 and an adoption hearing on Jan. 20. The changes to the land code include changes to the separation requirements between alcohol-selling businesses and various institutions frequented by minors. The separation distance could be amended so it is measured by the shortest legal pedestrian route – using sidewalks and crosswalks – rather than by property line, which would

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Fatalities triple, PIT maneuvers double after FHP loosens its car-chase policy

Jack Lemnus
Treasure Coast Newspapers
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

“I’m furious with the agency. I believe this could have been avoided. To capture one criminal killed two people. They should know when it’s safe to do a pursuit and when not to.”

Yeisel Más Domínguez,
whose father was fatally struck while caught in the middle of a high-speed chase

TOP: GETTY IMAGES
RIGHT: After an FHP trooper conducted a PIT maneuver against a stolen SUV at speeds exceeding 100 mph, the four teenagers inside — Taleak Roberts, 16; Philemon Moore, 16; Jabril Chevers, 14; and Lawrence McClendon Jr., 17 — were killed on April 21, 2024. PROVIDED BY ALACHUA COUNTY FIRE RESCUE

Each morning before Yeisel Más Domínguez gets out of bed, she kisses a photo of her father. ● Arsenio Más was a truck driver by trade, but to his three adult children, he was a cache of wisdom and good humor. ● The Homestead resident was only two hours from the end of his cross-country journey hauling freight from California to Miami in February 2024 when he was caught in the middle of a Florida Highway Patrol high-speed chase that ended in his death and that of 26-year-old Trooper Zachary Fink.

“At first I couldn’t believe it,” said his 34-year-old daughter, who lives in Cuba. “I went days without being able to sleep, only thinking of my dad and the kind of death he had.” The collision on Interstate 95 in Port St. Lucie happened just six weeks after FHP loosened its stan-

dards for when it’s safe to chase, allowing for some riskier maneuvers that are discouraged by national law enforcement agencies, such as driving on the wrong side of the road as Fink was doing.

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Commander alleges boat was tied to cartel

Says people on vessel were legitimate targets

Cybele Mayes-Osterman
USA TODAY

The U.S. military knew the identities of the 11 men killed in a Sept. 2 boat strike in the Caribbean Sea and approved the hit because the crew members apparently had loose ties to a drug

cartel, the military commander who led the operation told lawmakers in early December, according to two people with knowledge of the briefing. In a Dec. 4 classified briefing with a select group of lawmakers, Adm. Frank “Mitch” Bradley, who has been on the hot seat for weeks due to his role in the attack, said the military deemed the people on board legitimate targets because some had contact with members of drug cartels the Trump administra-

tion has declared foreign terrorist organizations, the two people said. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter. Bradley did not provide lawmakers with documentation that the boat carried drugs. He also stated that follow-up strikes sank the wreckage of the bombed boat, destroying possible evidence of drug trafficking, the people said.

NBC previously reported the 11 men were on an internal list of “narco-terrorists” who were cleared to be targeted. Bradley, the commander of Special Operations Command, has come under scrutiny in recent weeks after the Trump administration confirmed that he ordered a second strike on the wreckage of the boat roughly 40 minutes later, killing two people who had survived the

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