

Tampa Bay Times

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Ballpark plan gets boost

The governor and MLB commissioner support the Rays' Tampa proposal — with a tiny word of caution.

BY NINA MOSKE, NICOLAS VILLAMIL,
LUCY MARQUES AND MARC TOPKIN
Times Staff Writers

Gov. Ron DeSantis, Major League Baseball commissioner Rob Manfred and others reiterated their support for the Tampa Bay Rays' quest to build a ballpark at the Dale Mabry campus of Hillsborough College at a news conference Tuesday.

"Baseball belongs in Tampa Bay," DeSantis said. "Baseball can succeed in Tampa Bay."

But few questions were answered about the team's plans to forge what Rays CEO Ken Babby called a "fair public-private partnership."

The team's owners are seeking a large chunk of public funding for the stadium, which report-

edly could cost as much as \$2.3 billion. Some local leaders are sour on the idea of spending additional tax dollars on another stadium and question whether Tampa has the money to support a third major pro sports franchise.

See RAYS, 9A



(DIRK SHADD / Times)

Gov. Ron DeSantis says "baseball can succeed in Tampa Bay" during a news conference Tuesday at the Hillsborough College campus in Tampa.



Roosevelt Badger, right, a licensed clinical social worker, leads Bobby Bias, left, Vincent Delgado and Chris Davies, CEO of Faith Youth Services, in a brainstorming session about podcast ideas in the living room of their home, a center for those who have aged out of foster care, Wednesday in St. Petersburg. (DIRK SHADD / Times)

After foster care, a place to live, thrive

A new state law will allow nonprofits to build affordable housing on church-owned land.

BY REBECCA LIEBSON
Times Staff Writer

For young adults aging out of the foster system, turning 18 presents an immediate problem.

Where to live?

A St. Petersburg nonprofit leader is raising money to build supportive housing that eases the transition.

The project will be among the first to

take advantage of Florida's new Yes In God's Backyard law, which relaxes zoning restrictions to make it possible to build affordable housing on land owned by religious institutions.

St. Petersburg adopted the measure in December, becoming the first city in the state to opt in.

Up to 40 young adults in the St. Petersburg area will be able to move into

two-bedroom retrofitted shipping containers, rented far below market rate. Chris Warren, the driving force behind the Ujima Transitional Housing Initiative, said the goal is to bridge the gap for those who have aged out of the foster system but don't yet have the resources to support themselves.

About 20% of foster youth become homeless as soon as they turn 18. An

See HOUSING, 14A

Trop site draws interest from 9 groups

As the window shuts, the city counts bids for reimagining the Gas Plant area without baseball.

BY COLLEEN WRIGHT
AND REBECCA LIEBSON
Times Staff Writers

St. Petersburg received nine proposals by a Tuesday deadline as part of a renewed effort to find a developer for the Historic Gas Plant District, home to Tropicana Field.

The city's 30-day window to submit bids for the project closed at 10 a.m. It is the third attempt in six years to devise a plan for the city's most talked-about 86 acres.

No specific guidelines were issued as Mayor Ken Welch said the priorities from a 2022 request for proposals remained the same, with the exception of no longer considering a stadium for the Tampa Bay Rays. Competitors were invited to present alternatives to an unsolicited bid that one group, Ark Ellison Horus, made in October.

A wide swath of developers expressed interest. Several had asked the city for additional time. Welch obliged, pushing the window for submissions from November to January.

Welch said after he filed paperwork to seek a second term as mayor this week that the process to get a deal in place with a chosen developer could take months. He said his staff will look at strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. There will also be a public forum where developers will present to the community.

Any deal will ultimately be decided by the City Council. **See PROPOSALS, 9A**

Another front

8 a.m. Noon 4 p.m. 8 p.m.



49° 64° 68° 60°

0% chance of rain

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At USF Sarasota-Manatee, a mood of disquiet

Gov. Ron DeSantis wants New College to take over the nearby campus. Many oppose the idea.

BY LUCY MARQUES
Times Staff Writer

SARASOTA — Life hummed

quietly on the first day of the

semester at the University of

South Florida's Sarasota-Manatee

campus.

In Atala Hall's second-floor student lounge, three girls huddled around a ping-pong table helping one another fill out financial aid forms. Afternoon sun streamed through the windows, glinting off watches and wallets left behind by

people leave their stuff all the time, sophomore Victoria Simard said, pointing to the backpacks hanging lopsided off the chairs at her table. Everyone knows each other, she said.

But the roughly 2,000 under-

graduates could become the last

few classes to graduate from the

campus. Caught in bureaucratic

limbo, some, including Simard,

aren't sure what will happen to their tuition or scholarships.

Hundreds of faculty may soon

need to move elsewhere, and the

community could lose a pathway to

filling key local jobs in insurance

and nursing.

In December, Gov. Ron DeSantis

See USF, 12A

Glenton Gilzean, a favorite of the governor, is among three contenders for the CEO position.

BY ALEXA COULTOFF
Times Staff Writer

A former Pinellas school board

member who recently came under

fire amid an investigation accus-

ing him of misspending mil-

lions as an Orlando-area elections

supervisor is a finalist to run Pinel-

las County's taxpayer-funded Juve-

nile Welfare Board.

Glenton "Glen" Gilzean Jr. has

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around the state. The South Flori-

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Gilzean is among three final-

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officer of the welfare board. He

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as elections supervisor.

The board serves Pinellas

County children and families with a

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The CEO "establishes accountabil-

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County tax dollars," the job applica-

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See GILZEAN, 14A

Alexa Coulter

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