

Largo doctor finally goes to trial

By Nola Cancel
SAND KEY SUN

LARGO - The trial of Largo doctor Kayode Sotonwa, accused of molesting nine female patients, began on May 5. Sotonwa was arrested over a year ago, after a patient alleged he had touched her inappropriately during a physical exam.

After the arrest, several other women, including a couple of juveniles, also filed complaints, saying Sotonwa had given them unnecessary breast examinations and made "off-color" sexual comments.

According to a former female patient, who wished to remain anonymous, "He always wanted to see me without my husband and tried to rub his groin on me a couple of different times."

As previously reported, one patient went to Sotonwa's office complaining of back pain and when the doctor asked her to show him how she got in and out of bed, he told her she was doing it incorrectly and touched her inappropriately and touched her the correct method.

Another woman, complaining of headaches, was told to take off her shirt and bra, after which Sotonwa allegedly began to fondle her breasts.

"Most of our witnesses have been extremely cooperative and we're hoping for a conviction," said Kendall Davidson, one of the prosecutors on the case.

In June 2008, five of the nine original charges were dropped. Sotonwa, who has pleaded not guilty, is officially charged with one count of sexual battery and

three counts of battery. According to the prosecutor's office, if convicted, Sotonwa can face a maximum of 18 years in prison.

Sotonwa is being represented by the Law Offices of Sartes and Tragos, who have also represented former boxing champion Hector "Macho" Camacho and the parents of Terri Schiavo.

One of Sotonwa's attorneys, Peter Sartes, has said the doctor "vehemently denies the allegations" and is a "reputable member of this community." His attorneys also claim Sotonwa only examined



Kayode Sotonwa

patients of the opposite gender in the presence of another witness, usually his nurse.

"I couldn't believe it," said a former patient who wished to be identified as Mike C. "He was always very professional with me. I never saw anything funny when I was there."

Sotonwa was born in Nigeria, but is now a United States citizen. He is married with children and has practiced internal medicine for 19 years. Sotonwa graduated from the University of Lagos College of Medicine in Nigeria and did his internship at a hospital in Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

According to the Florida Department of Health, Sotonwa's license to practice medicine was suspended on May 8, 2008. Sotonwa's office was located at 2700 East Bay Dr. in Largo.

Busted!

Suspect faints on the spot when detectives produce warrant

By Mark Spaulding
SAND KEY SUN

REDINGTON BEACH - Last month, narcotics detectives from the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office obtained a warrant to search the home at 16108 5th St. E. in Redington Beach and discovered 141 marijuana plants.

Detectives reported that Gaelan Clark, 38, fainted when he was told why detectives were there. Fire rescue treated him on scene and then Clark was taken to the Pinellas County Jail on one count of cultivation of marijuana. Detectives said he admitted to growing and selling the marijuana and was cooperative with them.

Largo to demolish West Bay eyesores

Commissioners agree it makes more sense to raze two city-owned properties than to dump any more money into them

By Nola Cancel
SAND KEY SUN

LARGO - At the Largo City Commission work session last month, commissioners decided to demolish two city-owned properties located at 500 and 508 West Bay Dr.

The buildings, a former drive-thru coffee shop and a former print shop, were originally bought for \$800,000 in October 2006 as part

A prospective developer would determine any future developments on those sites. However, because the city owns those properties, any developer would have to comply with the building parameters established by the city.

"One of the reasons the city originally purchased those lots was to have more say in future developments," said Brown. "We are hopeful that whatever is built will meet the city's vision of the down-

town Largo area."

A Largo resident since 1986 said, "It can be so pretty down here and it's such a shame when all we see is boarded-up buildings. I hope whatever is built is useful to the neighborhood and fits in down here."

Along with these properties, there are a number of other "closed-up" buildings in the vicinity that add to the overall unsightliness of the area.

When asked about the possibility of building at the old Eckerd Pharmacy location at the corner of West Bay and Clearwater-Largo Road, Brown said, "Unfortunately, the city does not own that property and has no say, at all, in what gets built there. However, there are incentives the city can offer prospective developers to keep their ideas consistent with that of Largo's."

Initially reluctant to demolish the properties and leave a vacant piece of land, Mayor Pat Gerard was finally convinced after a 20-minute discussion. Gerard is reported as saying, "Fine, go for it."



of a Largo redevelopment plan.

At the meeting, commissioners discussed the possibility of renting the properties rather than destroying them. "It would cost approximately \$60,000 to bring the old print shop up to renting standards, and that's just for one property," said Commissioner Woody Brown. "To demolish them both would cost \$23,875, which makes much more sense, economically."

Besides the unappealing nature of boarded-up buildings in downtown Largo, the former print shop, vacant since the city purchased it, has been vandalized on numerous occasions and has been home to different types of unwelcome visitors, human and vermin alike. The city also spent between \$5,000 and \$6,000 to rid it of termites.



End in sight for beach construction projects

By Nola Cancel
SAND KEY SUN

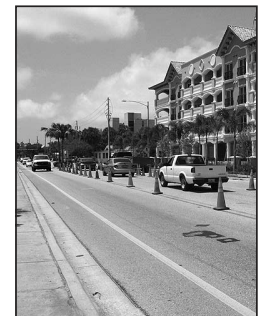
No one actually believes that the Gulf Boulevard construction will ever end but they tell us it will. In all fairness, much of the construction work has been done on or ahead of schedule. There's just been a lot of it.

The current project is a three mile section between Park Boulevard and 5th Avenue/Walsingham Road (Hwy 688). This includes sections in the Town of Indian Shores and the City of Indian Rocks Beach. It takes a two-lane road with now and then pedestrian facilities and open drainage to a two-lane road with bike lanes, pedestrian walkways, reclaimed water mains and distribution lines as well as water and sewage upgrades. The drainage will be dramatically improved. The contract end date is August 12, 2009.

The project is now reported to be 90 percent complete and ahead of schedule, one of the few benefits of being in a drought. The area south of 200th Avenue only needs finish work consisting of coloring of the pedestrian walkway and final striping of the surface. All of the new sewer lines have been installed and the existing lines have new liners. The potable and reclaimed water lines and connections have been finished. Most of the 31 new PSTA bus stops have been done and the majority of the road signs installed.

Work still continues on the shoulders between 200th Avenue and 1st Street North. Paving remains to be done from 200th Avenue to Walsingham. Guard rails will be installed in the next few weeks. 28 parking places are allocated for the seawall area along Gulf Boulevard. Note that it is illegal to pass traffic on the right side of the road. Most of the area still in progress has signs stating this and orange cones placed to discourage it.

The Belleair Causeway Bridge construction is ongoing and access across the water is available most days. Single lane traffic and delays happen now and then. The road is totally closed when work on the new bridge work requires the current road for moving equipment and concrete pouring work. This has happened infrequently so far and with plenty of notice. The boat



ramp facility is closed and will remain closed until the new facility is completed. Pedestrian access is closed for the duration of the construction. Bicyclists are requested to not ride on the causeway during construction due to the narrowness of the roadway and the construction activities taking place at the roadway edge. The project is scheduled to be completed in the spring of 2010.

The John's Pass Bridge is a Florida Department of Transportation project that's scheduled for completion in early 2011. It will be four lanes rather than the old bridge's two lanes. Two lanes are being done at a time so traffic can still use the bridge with rare delays other than congestion. The new bridge will have wide sidewalks, a new bridge tender station and four observation decks. There will also be a wider navigational channel. Work under the bridge will cause occasional limiting of boat traffic to specific areas under the bridge.