



**HOWARD TROXLER**  
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*Stayed;  
delayed;  
displayed;  
well paid*

**F**our topics:  
(1) Drop that floor plan and put your hands up! In December I wrote about a law that makes it illegal in Florida to call yourself an "interior designer," or to act as one, without a state license.

The state has stepped up enforcement in recent years, such as citing office-furniture stores for helping customers decide how many desks and chairs they might need.

Critics call the law silly and unnecessary. Designers say that it protects the public, for instance by avoiding fire hazards and ensuring the use of proper materials.

Naturally, somebody filed a lawsuit. On Aug. 7, a federal judge signed a preliminary injunction — agreed to by both sides — that stops enforcement for now, at least against people who call themselves residential designers.

The order found a First Amendment right "to advertise those services using terms that accurately describe themselves and the services they lawfully provide."

The injunction is preliminary; the lawsuit plugs along.

(2) Charlie says yes, yes, yes — but his guy says no, no, no. Remember that Gov. Charlie Crist signed Senate Bill 360, which rolls back some of Florida's controls on growth.

Yet Crist's own secretary of the Department of Community Affairs disagrees with the Legislature over exactly what the bill does. This resulted in a recent exchange of letters with some veiled testiness.

The secretary, Tom Pelham, says that the law only repealed the state's requirements for building new roads and such to handle growth — but it did not automatically repeal the local rules still on the books.

Two leaders of the Legislature wrote a letter to Pelham on June 24 that said, more or less: No, honest, we repealed those local rules. We should know; we wrote the law.

A month later, Pelham got around to a reply that said: No, you're wrong. I went to all your meetings, and I never heard y'all say any such thing.

I still think it's too bad Pelham didn't squawk loud enough to get Crist to veto the bill in the first place. I dislike the law, but am not sure how much department secretaries ought to get to thumb their nose at the Legislature.

(3) How about "pd. pol. adv.?" Our law rightly requires political ads to be fully labeled as such. But the strict requirement was written by folks who, at the time, had never heard of Google.

One of the candidates for mayor of St. Petersburg, Scott Wagman, is the subject of a complaint for buying a sponsored link on Google that didn't have room for the full disclaimer.

No blood, no foul, says me. The law is intended to prevent candidates from deceiving voters. A "sponsored link" on Google is clearly an ad; the link took users to a Wagman site with the full disclaimer.

I'd drag out the case until the Legislature fixes the law and then excuse him, as the lawyers like to say, *ex post facto*.

(4) Make 'em say if they want others to pay. Progress Energy Florida, like Florida Power & Light, is fighting an effort at the Public Service Commission to make public the salaries of its top-paid employees.

Fork it over. Progress is a regulated monopoly trying to use government to stick the customers for an extra \$500 million a year. I imagine these salaries will be (a) big and (b) embarrassing. But you know, if they don't want the privilege of having the state set their allowed profit, they should go work in the real private sector.

# TAMPA BAY

» LOCAL  
» STATE  
» BUSINESS

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★ ★ Thursday, August 13, 2009 | 1B

## Plug pulled on shuttle rides

Yellow Cab opposed a cart service that ran with no permits.

BY JANET ZINK  
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — County transportation officials on Wednesday slammed the brakes on electric cart operators providing shuttle services downtown.

The Public Transportation Commission ruled that the companies run vehicles for hire, which means they need permits to stay in business.

The company owners have argued that they aren't subject to regulation

by the commission because they don't charge fares. Their drivers accept only tips, and the companies make money by selling ads on the carts.

The board made the decision after hearing from an attorney for Yellow Cab.

"After a year and half of operating a profitable business, I have to close my doors because of the fact that more than anything the taxi cab industry wanted us out of there," said Todd Per-

sico, owner of Hop Tampa, which provided trips around Harbour Island, downtown and the Channel District. "They were seeing us as competition."

Persico didn't attend Wednesday's meeting, saying he didn't want to try to fight the cab company's attorney.

"There wasn't anything I could say. The board had to make a decision," he said.

He said he is likely to move his business. See SHUTTLE, 8B



WILLIE J. ALLEN JR. | Times  
Tourists Ken Ruth, 71, and his wife, Gail, 64, photograph Harbour Island during a tour by Hop Tampa electric shuttle in March.

## Kids practice the art of diplomacy



KATHLEEN FLYNN | Times



KATHLEEN FLYNN | Times  
Jade Llanes, 8, left, and Lily Regalado, 7, get a close view of the mural from Jordan on Wednesday.

Above, kids with the Tampa Police Athletic League on Wednesday check out *My Place*, a mural made by children in Amman, Jordan, as a part of an exchange. The artwork, depicting scenes from daily life, is at the Children's Board of Hillsborough County. Tampa children and disabled adult artists sent their "It's Not Easy Being Green" mural to the Children's Museum of Amman. Both will be shown until Oct. 15. Most of the children present Wednesday did not have a hand in the mural sent to Jordan but were encouraged to stay connected with kids there. They also heard a Jordanian who lives in Tampa speak and answer questions about his home country. Jonathan Tirado, 11, who participated in making the mural, was happy to see the answering art from Jordan. "We were trying to open the doors to friendship and they did the same for us," he said.

## Owner to fight building condemnation

Seminole Heights' Praise Cathedral, the former Seminole Theater, is in bad shape after 86 years.

BY ILEANA MORALES  
Times Staff Writer

SEMINOLE HEIGHTS — A man working on wooden boards atop the Praise Cathedral tugged at a tool stuck in the roof and fell through. He landed on his back 20 feet beneath a gaping hole just as many feet wide.

City code enforcement inspectors condemned the building on July 30.

For the Old Seminole Heights Neighborhood Association, it shows that the building could be put to a better community use. But owner Patricia Hall doesn't

plan on moving from the property she bought for \$10 in 1985.

Hall said a storm damaged the roof a few years ago and her church is seeking funding for repairs at 5103 N Florida Ave.

Repairs cost more than \$500,000, the city's condemnation report estimates.

"That's our life there," said Hall, also pastor of the independent church. "You don't just do things overnight."

A demolition order, commonly issued after a condemnation, should go to Hall next week. She See CATHEDRAL, 8B



ATOYIA DEANS | Times

A demolition order should to out next week to Patricia Hall, owner of the Praise Cathedral at 5103 N Florida Ave.

### »» Talk of the Bay

#### BRITTON PLAZA THEATER OFFERS MOVIES, POPCORN FOR A BUCK OR TWO

The movie theater in South Tampa's Britton Plaza has risen from the dead again. Built in 1956, the eight-screen site, which has seen a revolving door of owners, was shut down twice this decade. But its new owners hope to keep it open by luring customers with recession-friendly pricing. Starting Friday, second-run movies will play for \$2 each day and \$1 on Tuesdays. A small popcorn will cost a buck. The theater also will show first-run Indian movies, which will cost a little more. It's at 3938 S Dale Mabry Highway. For information, call (813) 839-1600.

#### Correction

Rich Engwall is asking witnesses to come forward with information about a shooting Saturday on Hillsborough Avenue. His last name was misspelled in a story Wednesday.

#### No charges for carrier of gun-shaped lighter

The woman whose gun-shaped lighter prompted an evacuation at the George E. Edgecomb Courthouse in Tampa last week didn't break the law. Col. Jim Previtera said the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office won't press charges against Howronda Overstreet, 31, of Brandon because the scare was accidental and the woman did not plan to use the device illegally. It's not certain whether the screener who missed the Aug. 5 security breach will fare as well. County spokesman Willie Pluz said disciplinary action is still being considered.

#### Old charges, new defense

A former Tampa police officer begins a new trial on molestation charges with a new lawyer and a new strategy. 3B

#### Drug czar visits Tampa facility

While at the DACCO Center, he discusses prescription drug abuse and monitoring, and drug treatment programs. 3B

## Filling a need — and teeth

A new program offers free dental care at sites around Hillsborough for poor children.

BY CHANDRA BROADWATER  
Times Staff Writer

DOVER — She sees rotten teeth all the time.

But Nora McClendon is no dentist. She's a school nurse.

"We're usually the first stop," said McClendon, who works for Hillsborough county schools. "And sometimes there's not a whole lot we can do."

She hopes that a push in the county to expand dental care access to children will help bring change.

McClendon and other school officials, along with county and state leaders, gathered Wednesday in Dover at the Tom Lee Community Health Center to launch a program that will offer free mobile dental services for children who live below the federal poverty line.

Set to begin this fall at locations yet to be determined, the program includes screenings, oral exams, cleanings, fluoride treatments and sealants for second- and seventh-graders who live in southern and eastern Hillsborough. With the help of school See DENTAL, 3B

## AARP tries to clarify its position

Its health care forum becomes heated but doesn't boil over.

BY JANET ZINK  
Times Staff Writer

LAKELAND — An overflow crowd forced the AARP to move its forum on health care reform from a meeting room to the sanctuary at Faith Lutheran Church in Lakeland on Wednesday.

The 150 or so people who attended were rowdy and opinionated, but the forum was free from the disruptions and scuffling that catapulted a similar gathering in Tampa last week to the national spotlight.

Crowd members, though, did accuse the AARP of helping President Barack Obama advance health care reform proposals, even though the organization has not officially endorsed any bills now on the table.

"Somehow, I don't feel good about AARP right now," 69-year-old Jennings Byrd of Lakeland said to a loud round of applause. "I don't feel like you're going to See HEALTH CARE, 8B