



Photos by CHRIS URSO | Times

**Rob Asay, 53, and Amy Fetherston, 50, both of The Villages, walk past dozens of dead fish scattered along the Honeymoon Island State Park beach Wednesday. A bloom concentration of Red Tide has continued to plague Pinellas County beaches.**

## Voting law irks election officials

Supervisors criticize its lack of clarity and question the legislation's intent.

BY JAKE SHERIDAN  
*Times Staff Writer*

Florida's new elections reform law is causing headaches and confusion for the state's 67 county elections supervisors, with several venting their frustrations to Secretary of State Laurel Lee and other state officials during a conference Wednesday.

"We're all still struggling with how vague some of the new things put into law are," Okaloosa County election supervisor Paul Lux told the *Times* following a sometimes-heated discussion on the controversial new law during the Florida Supervisors of Elections' summer conference. "We need answers."

Recognizing that tensions over the law, SB 90, might be high, the state had asked that questions for Wednesday's session with Florida Division of Elections Director Maria Matthews be submitted ahead of time.

But several election supervisors took to the microphone in the grand ballroom of Tampa's Water Street Marriott anyway, raising concerns about a lack of clarity on what the law requires them to do.

"Would you agree with me that these questions are the classic example why the legislators should have checked with the election experts before they started tinkering with things?" Alan Hays, Lake County's elections supervisor, pointedly asked attorneys with the state, drawing applause from election supervisors and staff.

Hays credited his fellow elections supervisors for improving the bill before passage, saying it previously had parts that were "absolutely so hideous." Earlier in the day, a lobbyist for the statewide bipartisan elections association told attendees that, at one point, the elections bill was a whopping 400 pages and said behind-the-scenes negotiations over the bill included a legislator wanting all state voting machines to be made in Florida, even though he said no machines currently sold are.

See **ELECTIONS, 5A**

# Red Tide carnage travels up coast

The latest bloom has left tons of dead fish on Pinellas beaches.

BY IAN HODGSON  
*Times Staff Writer*

**HONEYMOON ISLAND** — Contractors removed two construction dumpsters' worth of dead fish from the Pinellas beaches on Wednesday while concentrations of the Red Tide outbreak that killed them continued moving north up the coast.

Thousands of dead fish have washed ashore in recent days as Red Tide blooms drift north along the coastline, according to the county's monitoring. Bloom concentrations of *Karenia brevis* — the scientific name of the bacteria that causes Red Tide — have turned up north around Clearwater Beach and Honeymoon Island.

DRC Emergency Services regional

manager Jay Gunter, whose firm was hired by the county to clean-up the beaches, said more than 150 cubic feet of fish parts were removed on Wednesday, or enough to fill two construction-grade dumpsters.

County officials expect the bloom to keep moving north for another week. State data shows high levels of Red Tide off Madeira Beach and in the Intra-coastal Waterway near War Veterans' Memorial Park.

A dozen beachgoers visiting Honeymoon Island Park on Wednesday had to find their way through hundreds of rotting fish that had washed up onshore.

One of them was St. Petersburg's Pat Fuller. She indulged her two visiting

See **BEACHES, 4A**



**A dead fish rolls in the water near the feet of Jason Crescentini Jr., 7, on the beach at Honeymoon Island State Park.**

## St. Petersburg mayoral race

# Small business owner promises empathy, communication



JOHN PENDYGRAFT | Times

**Marcile Powers, 35, who runs Kenwood Organic Produce, and her son Mercury McAlavy, 3.**

BY ROMY ELLENBOGEN  
*Times Staff Writer*

Toted along by her political consultant dad, Marcile Powers was surrounded by campaigns before she finished elementary school. Her first paid job was collecting petitions for Adam Putnam. Former Florida Sen. Bill Galvano wrote her a letter of recommendation for college.

But growing up, Powers, 35, said she never wanted to be a politician. At the University of Central Florida, she studied film and worked toward directing. She moved to Los Angeles, came back, and about a year later worked at Manatee County Rural Health doing market-

## Mayoral debate

The *Tampa Bay Times* and Spectrum Bay News 9 are hosting a mayoral debate Tuesday at noon. Watch it live at [tampabay.com/politics](http://tampabay.com/politics) and [baynews9.com/watch](http://baynews9.com/watch). It will replay on Bay News 9 at 7 p.m. This is the second in a series of occasional profiles on the candidates.

ing and communications.

At 35, she's switching gears. But even as she launches a run for St. Petersburg mayor, she's campaigning in a style that lines up with her core beliefs in openness

and spirituality.

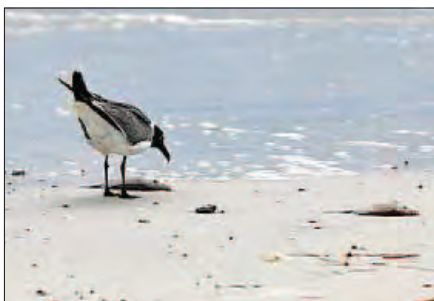
Powers, who said she fell in love with St. Petersburg when she moved from her native Bradenton in 2013, said she began thinking about running for office when she considered the current divided climate. Her campaign is built on tenets Powers uses in her parenthood, business and day-to-day life: empathy and non-violent communication.

"I have recently learned what boundaries were and that a lot of boundaries have been crossed and I just wanted to reestablish some boundaries," Powers said. "With the whole political system."

See **POWERS, 4A**



**A bird inspects a fish killed by the Red Tide bloom on the beach at Honeymoon Island State Park on Wednesday.**



**BEACHES continued from 3A**

grandchildren, Jason and Stella, with one last beach day before they returned home to Virginia.

“I wouldn’t have come out if it was like 2018,” Fuller said, warily kicking away dead fish whenever they drifted too close, “but today isn’t so bad.”

The devastating Red Tide bloom of 2017-19 is what the tourism business fears the most. Pinellas spent more than \$7 million removing more than 1,800 tons of dead marine life. The industry, which is trying to bounce back from the pan-

dem, doesn’t want to see a repeat.

Gunter said the fish kills crews are seeing on the beaches this year are nowhere near what they picked up years ago. But the crews will continue working until the fish kills end.

“We took care of it in 2018 and we’re going to take care of it this year,” he said.

It is still too soon for experts to project whether the Red Tide bloom will dissipate or worsen in the coming days. Nor can experts definitively say that the Red Tide bloom is being fueled by the April release of 215 million gallons of polluted wastewater into the bay



**Beachgoers waded in the water along Madeira Beach on Wednesday. A Red Tide bloom in 2017-19 cost Pinellas County more than \$7 million to remove dead marine life from its beaches. Officials worry about a repeat incident.**

Photos by CHRIS URSO | Times

from the old Piney Point fertilizer plant in Manatee County. But such a link is possible.

Health warnings issued by both Hillsborough and Pinellas officials remain in effect. Anyone visiting

either coast is warned to avoid touching or swimming close to dead fish. Shellfish should not be har-

vested and any fish harvested from infected areas should be rinsed thoroughly with water.

**POWERS continued from 3A**

Powers said that, as a small business owner, and one who struggled financially in the past year, she can relate to potential voters throughout the city.

She co-owns and runs

Kenwood Organic Produce with her husband, Keevy McAlavy. The two opened the company in 2018 after Powers noticed the jump in her grocery bill as she fed her two boys, Orion, 6, and Mercury, 3.

She describes herself as a “Renaissance woman,” saying she’s been involved in

politics, marketing, communications, film, agriculture, art and astronomy and more. She said her campaign builds on her ability to listen, adapt and change.

Some of her campaign ideas have been inspired by conversations she’s had around town.

Powers said she’d like to see something written into the city plan where real estate agents have to give small businesses the right of first refusal to buy if the owner of their building chooses to sell, an idea a small business owner brought up with her. She’d like to see more people own land instead of rent, which she believes will help with equity and will lead to them taking better environmental care of their property.

When it comes to city council meetings, Powers said she doesn’t think it’s fair that elected officials can talk as long as they want

while residents are limited to three minutes.

Instead, she envisions a more open style of communication, like a nonviolent communication dance floor, a specific format where people can say whether they want empathy or engaged communication.

“In those forums where the people are engaging city council, it’s for them to listen empathetically, it’s not for the city council to restate their opinions,” she said.

High school friend Ashley Hooker, 34, said her friend’s familial insight into politics and her heart would make her a strong candidate. Even when she was young, Powers always cared about equity, Hooker said.

Hooker said her friend’s spirituality and kindness is the change needed to take the political system from something stodgy to something for all.

“I think that Marcie will

bring a level of new and fresh insight,” Hooker said. “I think a lot of the older politicians are sort of emotionally stepped out, and they see vulnerability as a weakness, they see a lot of emotions as a weakness.”

Powers said she is also driven by the idea of racial equity, especially in light of the summer’s Black Lives Matter protests. She said she thought mayoral candidate and former City Council member Robert Blackmon’s ideas around housing were good, like helping people buy properties with affordable housing dollars instead of building rental units. Though, Powers said, she doesn’t like the phrase “affordable housing.”

As mayor, Powers said she’d have open dialogues and listen to the people.

“I’m really good at delegating,” Powers said. “Finding the right people to do the right thing instead

of trying to take it on for myself, and recognizing talents in people. I also know I don’t have all the answers to every single question.”

Other candidates Powers will face in the mayoral race include former Pinellas County Commissioner Ken Welch and former City Council member and state representative Wengay Newton, as well as current City Council members Blackmon and Darden Rice and restaurateur Pete Boland.

The primary election is Aug. 24. If no candidate earns more than 50 percent of the votes, the top two candidates will face off in the Nov. 2 general election.

The new mayor will be sworn in Thursday, Jan. 6, 2022, and will serve a four-year term.

Contact Romy Ellenbogen at [rellenbogen@tampabay.com](mailto:rellenbogen@tampabay.com). Follow @romyellenbogen.

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