March 16, 1959

The regular meeting of the WEST COAST INLAND NAVIGATION DISTRICT was held in the meeting room of the Court House at Sarasota, Florida, on Monday, March 16, 1959, at 2:06 p.m.

Present were:

Ellsworth Simmons, Chairman	Hillsborough County
Charles Fischer, V-Chairman	Pinellas County
James D. Neville	Sarasota County
James E. Miller	Charlotte County

J. K. Merrin	Engineer
Dewey Dye,Jr.	Attorney
J. Hardin Peterson	Spec. Attorney
Bruce M. Cox	Accountant

Absent were:

H. C. Slaughter	Manatee County
Wilson Pigott	Lee County

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Simmons.

Mr. Simmons welcomed Sen. Ed. Price, Rep. George Edmondson, Rep. William Boylston, and Rep. John Hathaway.

Mr. John Blair, Attorney from Venice, presented and read a Petition to the Board on behalf of a group of land owners and tax payers in Sarasota County, represented at this meeting by Mr. Ed. Price, Sr. (Petition attached)

Mr. Simmons thanked Mr. Blair for appearing before the Board and advised the petitioners that it was not the Board's desire when requesting to extend the District's life for ten years to attempt to get additional funds to have at its disposal or to get additional authority over and above that which

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it now has, but rather that it was the desire of the Board to bring into realization a project that has been under study for many years. He stated that the Engineers, both in Jacksonville and Washington, and Senators and Congressmen have advised the Board that this would be necessary in order to receive federal help for the project. Not that the Board expects to be in existence for any such length of time, or that the funds authorized would necessarily be used, but rather that this would be an expression of the entire District's interest in the project. It is only for that reason that the District was asking for the extension of time. The Board sitting as a body strived to manage the funds in such a manner as to accumulate a surplus to be used when the project is under actual construction. The District tries to accumulate funds so that there would not have to be the necessity of asking for authorization to increase the contributions at the time construction on the canal begins. The District was aware that Sarasota County had gone into a re-valuation of real estate last year. Pinellas County as the largest contributer of the six counties is willing to relinquish any claim to refund. Mr. Simmons felt that as this area continues to grow and prosper, the amount of money needed to accomplish this fact must also grow. The completion of this project will benefit the entire area. The commissioners on this Board while working together with a single project in mind, the building of the canal, also feel that their

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individual counties will benefit and are making a good investment.

Mr. Neville made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller that the Petition presented by Mr. Blair be accepted as part of the WCIND records. APPROVED.

Sen. Price took this opportunity to make his position clear, stating that he thinks differently from that which was outlined in the Petition and is very favorably' inclined toward the project and is not in agreement with the petitioners represented by Mr. Ed. Price, Sr. Sen. Price stated that he was attending this meeting to learn as much as possible about the District andhow people felt about it.

Mr. Simmons read a telegram from Rep. James Haley, advising the Board that he was in favor of a ten-year extension for WCIND and that he felt that the project was vital to the economic interest of the West Coast of Florida. Rep. Haley stated in the telegram his desire that Florida Legislature extend its authority and that local support of this District be continued.

Mr. Price, Sr., took this opportunity to say that he would be in agreement with everything Sen. Price said.

Rep. Edmondson addressed the Board and stated that he has heard comment both favorable and adverse concerning the proposal he was about to present. Mr. Edmondson informed the Board that according to the figures he had Sarasota County would contribute more than Pinellas County in the next ten year period; about 40% over Hillsborough County and 20% more than Pinellas

County and that Sarasota County should be permitted to determine by referendum whether or not the people of that County wanted to continue in the project.

Mr. Simmons stated that the extension of the life of the project would not automatically mean that taxes would be levied during its full life, nor would it automatically mean that the extension would be for ten years, in fact, the Board hopes to the contrary.

Mr. Edmondson said he could not find in his copy of the District Budget where a provision was made to handle extra expenses, such as relocation of water and sewer lines, etc., once the project was under construction, and he felt that the District would, therefore, require even a greater sum than the present amount of contributions.

Mr. Simmons advised that the projected budget of expenditures Mr. Edmondson referred to was basically an estimate and not compiled on professional advise.

Mr. Fischer stated that Hillsborough County should be commended as it stands to receive small benefit from the project compared to the contribution which it has made.

Mr. Simmons read a telegram from Sen. Spessard Holland in which the Senator stated that he was in favor of the ten year extension and that he would continue to try to obtain funds for the project. He urged the people to continue to back the District, stating that any sign of disunity would make his task more difficult.

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Rep. Wm. Boylston addressed the Board stating he would appreciate any available information concerning WCIND. Mr. Simmons stated that the board was trying at this meeting to bring to the people all the information possible and answer any questions. Rep. Boylston felt it would be helpful if people were informed of progress being made by the District, particularily with respect to procuring Federal appropriations for the project.

Mr. Simmons noted that since 1957 Congress passed and approved the alternate route C1, not too much time has lapsed since Congressional approval. The fact that Congress has insisted that the canal be routed in a manner that would be acceptable throughout the area has caused the District to spend a great deal of money that otherwise would have been unnecessary.

Mr. J. Hardin Peterson advised that routes have been considered since 1948, each route and alternate route being given due consideration. That in 1958 the District appeared before the Congressional Appropriations Committee and received an appropriation of $135,000.00 for advance planning and engineering. Mr. Peterson stated that if the District had its life extended only for a two year term, that there would be a feeling that the District would not be able to fulfill its commitments, and that the Corps of Engineers and Congress would prefer a longer extension.

Mr. Simmons said that the District has always had the full cooperation of both Sen. Holland and Sen. Smathers

and all Legislative representatives.

Rep. Boylston stated that in the estimated expenses a great bulk of that estimate is destined for bridges on Rt. 41, and in the city of Venice, and if the project goes through, there will be some other bridges that will have to be repaired in order that they meet the specifications of the District. Rep. Boylston asked what was contemplated in the way of financing the construction of these bridges.

Mr. Neville stated that this Board may not be too familiar with the bridges in Sarasota County; that Manasota Key Bridge is a wooden fixed span bridge and presumably if the canal were going through, it would have to be replaced. Albee Road Bridge is another that would have to be replaced.

Rep. John Hathaway addressed the Board asking for a compromise on the ten year extension. He suggested that a four or six year extension might be enough. Rep. Hathaway stated that he and his County were very interested in the completion of the project. Rep. Hathaway asked if commercial establishments of any kind would be permitted on the right of way owned by the District along the route of the canal; such as gas stations, motels, etc.

Mr. Simmons stated that the Board wouldn't go into business unless it was absolutely necessary and at this time no such enterprises were anticipated. If the question should arise in the future, he felt there would be ample time then to request the proper authority.

Rep. Hathaway asked if the District would object

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to inserting a specific statement prohibiting commercial establishments in the Bill. Mr. Peterson and Mr. Dye advised that when the Bill was admitted the last time, that particular part was taken out of the approved Bill. Upon discussion, the Board stated they had no objection if that particular part were inserted again. Rep. Hathaway stated there was no intent to limit the authority of the District, but that it would be advisable to keep all necessary establishments on a high standard.

Rep. Hathaway asked if the Washington viewpoint favored the ten year extension. Mr. Peterson stated that while they did not specify ten years,that it would give them confidence in the District and that if the project was completed before that time, the Commission would be dissolved.

Rep. Hathaway stated that in general Charlotte County was in favor of the waterway and his only question was concerned with the ten year extension and suggested that there be more publicity about the progress of the District.

Mr. Simmons suggested that the people make their views known to their Legislative Representatives because the people themselves would decide whether the project is a success or not.

Mr. Tod Swalm, Secretary Chamber of Commerce in Sarasota County, stated that while the Board of Directors are in favor of the project as having a great potential value

in this area, they are concerned with equitable support of the costs involved, and suggested basing contributions on population, if this were legal, that the District make a complete departure from its normal method of obtaining contributions. Mr. Swalm felt that all people involved should be taxed equally.

Mr. Miller advised that there would be many things to consider with such a method. That some counties have more industry that others, would benefit more, and be able to pay more per capita than others.

Mr. Fischer stated that Mr. Swalm has a good suggestion, but the real answer lies in millage assessment.

Mr. Neville said the assessment has caused much comment in Sarasota County and felt that the District should have a more open line of information to the people.

Mr. E. D. Lemay commended the Board for their efforts, but felt that the value to Sarasota County would be overcome by the cost ~~by the cost~~ of the canal. He is opposed to the canal and stated that he did not feel that it would be a success.

Col. Wm. H. Kendall, President of Siesta Key Association, said that the comments he was about to make were not in critism of Rep. Edmondson or Mr. Swalm, but that he was representing over 700 residents in Siesta Key and wished to inform the Board that they were strongly opposed

to withdrawing from the District. That the canal would be a definite asset to this area and would encourage the increasin pleasure-boat sport. It was Col. Kendall's feeling that the proposal made by Mr. Edmondson is very badly timed and puts Sarasota County in the position of welching on her neighbor counties.

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Mr. J. W. Landis, representing Galleons Reach Property Association in Manasota Key, commended the Board for the good work they were doing and also wanted to assure the District that they were whole-heartedly in favor of the project and would do anything they could to further the work. They felt that this protected waterway would mean a great deal to people with small boats. Mr. Landis suggested that the people should be kept better informed as to the progress of the canal.

Mr. Simmons stated that the entire Board would be glad to comply with all suggestions that would help keep the public informed of the projects progress and again stressed the importance of keeping the Legislative Representives advised of their thinking on the canal so that they can be represented properly.

Mrs. H. D. K. Stanford appeared before the Board to ask if the Board had heard from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers concerning the using of spoils to fill areas of beach erosion. Mr. Peterson advised that the Engineers have no objection and that if it didn't interfere with navigation

they would be glad to cooperate, but that any erosion program would have to be approved by them. Upon question by Mr. Fischer as to whether Federal funds would be available for this work, Mr. Peterson advised that public funds would be available only where public property was being protected. They would not spend money where private property is involved. Mrs. Stanford hoped for some definite word from the District at this time. Mrs. Stanford stated that she had appeared before the II Board and that they were in full support of the idea in principal, but did not have enough money at this time to help out financially, but she stated that Mr. Ferguson would bring up the matter at a later date. Mrs. Stanford also stated that the Attorney General offered to help get the Bill before the Legislators if the District would approve it. After general discussion, Mr. Neville advised Mrs. Stanford that her request could not be acted on by this Board at this time, and that Mrs. Stanford should have a bill prepared and submit it to the County Commissioners, giving them something substantial to approve or disapprove.

Mr. Don Wederbouck, Long Boat Key Chamber of Commerce came before the Board and advised that they would like to cooperate in every way to help WCIND get this canal completed as quickly as possible. They would also like to know the exact location and route, also depth of water in the proposed canal. Mr. Wederbrouck stated that Sarasota County should be very interested in the completion of the canal.

Mr. Wederbrouck stated that he has seen many pleasure boats get stuck in the present channel as well as barges carrying materials. He stated that there is a great deal of money being spent for pleasure boats in this area and that this should be encouraged. Mr. Wederbrouck stated he would not like to see any more islands created, that those already in existence should be enough, any additional ones would simply interfere with what would otherwise be a beautiful view.

James Taylor, Commander of Sarasota Yacht Club, stated before the Board that in his opinion the canal on this coast would be of utmost value and was in complete favor of it.

Henry J. Jehan, Englewood Civic Counsel, went on record as being in favor of continuing work on the canal and would like to see its completion as soon as possible.

Sen. Price advised the Board at this time that he was reqested by the Englewood Chamber of Commerce to put them on record as being in favor of the project.

Mr. W. T. Edwards appeared before the Board advising of his enthusiastic support of the project and suggested that Mr. Dye prepare a Legislative Memorial asking for appropriation immediately.

George Myers, Lt. Commander of Sarasota Power Sqadron appeared before the Board to advise of their interest in the project and go on record as being in favor of the canal.

Col. Steimer, Sarasota Outboard Club, comprising mostly of small boats went on record for the Club as being

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in accord with the District and hoped for a speedy completion of the canal.

Mr. A. B. Edwards advised that he was in favor of the project and hoped it would go on to completion without delay or interference.

Sen. Ed. Price, informed the Board that he and the people appreciated the opportunity to attend the meeting and examine problems and get the thinking of the people, and he was favorably inclined. He felt that the project should be kept uppermost in mind and not allow any side issues to interfere. Sen. Price compared the project to the Sunshine Skyway Bridge, in that it too was a dream and now a reality and is the most important thing that has happened to this Coast, up to now. Sen. Price stated that he was in complete favor of the project and would back it all the way.

Mr. Simmons thanked Sen. Price for expressing his opinion and advised the Legislative Delegation that if they needed any further information or wanted any questions answered, to please contact any member of the Board.

Rep. Edmondson stated that he hoped Mr. Edward's suggestion for a Memorial would be taken and felt that people might be more in favor of the project if they weren't left with a feeling that nothing was being accomplished.

Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Neville that the minutes of the previous meeting be accepted as presented. APPROVED.

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Mr. Dye reported that some copies of "Brief in Support of an Appropriation" should be ordered and that the quoted price was $1,100.00 for 200 copies and $1.00 for each additional copy.

Mr. Fischer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Neville that the District purchase 500 copies of the briefs at a base price of $1,400.00. Mr. Simmons suggested that when Mr. Dye received the dummy copy of the brief, he contact the Board members and as many members as possible review the brief before it was ordered. APPROVED.

After discussion, it was agreed by the members that Mr. Peterson should try to set up a meeting with the Corps of Engineers in Jacksonville for the Board, bor April 1 or 2, 1959.

Mr. Merrin reported that there was no field work during this period and office work consisted of routine checks of applications. An inspection trip of the route through Manatee, Sarasota and Charlotte Counties was made. Conferences were held with the Corps of Engineers, Bulkhead Committee of Pinellas County.

Mr. Simmons suggested that right of way in Pinellas County should be worked out as soon as possible.

Mr. Fischer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Neville that Mr. Dye and Mr. Merrin go to Pinellas County to work with the Board and bring the necessary right of way in that County to a satisfactory conclusion. APPROVED.

Mr. Cox read the Treasurer's Report in the absence of Mr. Slaughter, Treasurer. The Report was accepted as presented.

Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by Mr. Neville to approve the current bills for payment. APPROVED.

Mr. Simmons appointed Mr. Miller, Mr. Fischer, and Mr. Neville as committee to review applications received for the position of Executive Secretary and make a recommendation to the Board at the next meeting.

Mr. Fischer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Miller for the meeting to be adjourned. APPROVED.

Wilson Cugatt

Chairman

E. H. PRICE
PROMOTIONAL ENGINEER

ROUTE 1, BOX C-500
VENICE, FLORIDA
PHONE 3-2111

March 13, 1959

A LANDOWNERS' AND TAXPAYERS' PETITION URGING THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE WEST COAST INLAND NAVIGATION DISTRICT TO TAKE CERTAIN PRESCRIBED ACTION AND TO ABSTAIN FROM ANY EFFORT CALCULATED TO EXTEND ITS TAXING AUTHORITY BEYOND TWO YEARS FROM A LEGISLATIVELY PRESCRIBED DATE OF JULY 1, 1959

WHEREAS the petitioners herein named collectively represent ownership, free and clear to approximately 41,000 acres of land situate in Sarasota County, and running North and South from Venice, and for an approximate distance of nineteen miles bordering on the Gulf of Mexico, Roberts Bay, Dona Bay, Little Sarasota Bay, Lemon Bay, Manasota Key, Casey Key and the Myakka River, and for an approximate distance of twenty-seven miles bordering on State Highways #41, #777 and #775, and

WHEREAS the petitioners herein named have contributed a substantial portion of funds through taxation for the operation of the government of Sarasota County in its thirty-eight years of existance, and

WHEREAS the Legislature through Chapter 23770, Acts of 1947, included the taxable property of the petitioners herein named, together with other taxable property situate in the Counties of Lee, Charlotte, Sarasota, Manatee, Hillsborough and Pinellas within a Special Taxing District and thereby subjecting

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said taxable property to the imposition of an additional annual assessment and levy of a tax amounting to one-fifth (1/5) mill on the dollar of assessed valuation, and

WHEREAS it was the avowed purpose of said legislative act to utilize such additionally obtained tax funds for the purpose of encouraging and assisting the Federal Government through the "local interest" aspect of the "Rivers and Harbors Act" of 1945 to construct an inland waterway situate in the six counties enumerated in said act, and

WHEREAS although many thousands of dollars of tax funds have been obtained by virtue of the taxing authority of this Act during the intervening twelve years, and although a large amount of such funds have been thus far expended there has yet been no manifest benefit to the taxpaying petitioners nor has there been a substantial commencement of the proposed project of an inland waterway, nor has the Congress of the U. S. appropriated any funds for the construction of this project, and

WHEREAS within the past year the tax burden of the petitioners has been in some instances more than doubled with no appreciable benefit resulting therefrom, and

WHEREAS more urgently required public facilities, such as the public roads and bridges within and surrounding the property of the petitioners are either non-existant or in a critical need of repair allegedly as a result of the lack of necessary funds, and

WHEREAS, although the petitioners are possessed of meager knowledge of the disposition of the funds thus far realized as a result of the tax

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liability established by the aforesaid Act of the Legislature, petitioners never-the-less are informed that an amount in excess of $700,000 of such funds is presently on deposit in banks in Manatee County, and

WHEREAS the phenominal growth of Sarasota County within the last decade with the attendant urgent need for improved and properly maintained public roads and facilities militates most strongly against the unnecessary expenditure of tax funds and the dissipation of tax source and potential and occasions emphasis on the conservation thereof, and

WHEREAS the Legislature in recognizing this principal of tax source conservation ordained in Chapter 30074, Acts of 1955 and reaffirmed in Chapter 57-467, Acts of 1957 that the taxing authority created by the 1947 Legislature shall not extend beyond July 1, 1959, and

WHEREAS the petitioners are likewise vitally concerned that every means should be employed in order to conserve and direct the expenditure of available and future obtainable tax funds to existing essential requirements and that a recognizable substantial return in the form of public improvements should be realized from such expenditures, and

WHEREAS taxable property situate in Sarasota County within the past year has been subject to an inordinate increase in assessable valuation, with an attendant greatly increased liability for contribution to the support of the West Coast Inland Navigation District , and

WHEREAS through Chapter 30074, Acts of 1955 the Legislature authorized in Section 4 thereof the West Coast Inland Navigation District "to adjust inequalities and inequities as between the amount of taxes to be collected from the

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respective counties within the District," and

WHEREAS the petitioners consider themselves fortunate to be represented on the local, and state levels by the existing incumbents of the Board of County Commissioners, Commissioners of the West Coast Inland Navigation District, the 36th State Senatorial District, and the State Representatives from Sarasota County, all of whom possess integrity and ability.

NOW THEREFORE in the light of the foregoing and inasmuch as the Congress of the United States has failed to appropriate funds for the construction of an inland waterway nor otherwise reflected any particular interest in said project other than normal routine appropriations for study purposes, and inasmuch as the petitioners have been informed through the Press and other reliable media that efforts will be exerted by interested parties to prompt and encourage the 1959 Legislature to acquiesce in the extension of the taxing authority created by the 1947 Legislature for an additional ten years notwithstanding the manifest intent and wisdom of the 1955 Legislature and 1957 Legislature that such authority shall cease on July 1, 1959, these petitioners respectfully urge the Honorable Chairman and members of the Commission of the West Coast Inland Navigation Distract that:

1. Said Commission by virtue of the authority contained in Section 4, Chapter 30074, Acts of 1955 to adjust inequalities and inequities as between the amount of taxes to be collected from the respective counties shall limit its assessment of Sarasota County's contribution to the Special Taxing District to the proportionate contribution previously made by said

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County notwithstanding said County's subsequently increased assessable valuation of taxable property, and

2. Said Commission shall prepare and promulgate a budget of the expenditures of the tax and other funds inuring to the benefit of the West Coast Inland Navigation District so as to reflect a two year projection of the expenditures and exhaustion of said funds together with any accumulated funds for the purposes for which they were derived, and

3. Said Commission by resolution, or other appropriate means, shall go on record as not desiring further extension of its taxing authority beyond July 1, 1961 unless the Federal Government has during said two years appropriated and budgeted funds for expenditure in the construction of an inland water way within said District.

The foregoing request to limit the extension of the taxing authority of the Commission to a maximum of two years, and the request for the preparation and promulgation of a budget reflecting proposed expenditures for the ensuing two years so as to exhaust accumulated and future obtainable funds, together with the request that the increased assessable valuation of taxable property in Sarasota County shall not effect its previous proportionate contribution to the West Coast Inland Navigation District is urged by the petitioners in order to prompt a more business-like and efficient management of the District and to conserve applicable tax funds pending the decision of the Federal Government to appropriate necessary funds for the construction of an inland waterway situate in the six counties concerned for which failure

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to appropriate sufficient and necessary funds will prohibit the construction of said canal.

Respectfully urged,

Eagle Point, Inc.
Venetia, Inc.
Manasota Waterfront Corp.
Albert E. Blackburn
BY:

E. H. Price

E. H. Price, Sr.
Authorized Representative

EHP:ba

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