



**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING  
OF THE LANDOWNERS OF THE  
LAKE WORTH DRAINAGE DISTRICT  
HELD ON JANUARY 8, 2025 AT 9:00 A.M.**

**Attendees:**

James M. Alderman  
Jeffrey P. Phipps, Sr.  
Reagan Walker  
Karen Hoyt  
Nicole Smith  
Juan Tobar  
Theodore Winsberg

Stephen Bedner  
John I. Whitworth, III  
Tommy Strowd  
Anthony LasCasas  
Shawn Mitchell  
Kevin Costello

Carrie Hill  
Mark Perry  
Megan Hoffman  
Brian Tilles  
Sandra Acosta  
Steve Horowitz

**1. Call to Order**

Tommy Strowd called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

John I. Whitworth, III led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. Presentation of Advertised Meeting Notice**

Mr. Strowd confirmed that the legal advertisement for the Landowners' Meeting was published according to noticing requirements.

**4. Nomination and Election of Meeting Chairman and Secretary**

Mr. Strowd opened nominations for Chairman of the meeting. Stephen Bedner nominated Kevin Costello. Carrie Hill seconded the nomination. There being no further nominations, a unanimous vote was cast for Kevin Costello.

Chairman Costello opened nominations for Secretary of the meeting. Stephen Bedner nominated Theodore Winsberg. Carrie Hill seconded the nomination. There being no further nominations, a unanimous vote was cast for Theodore Winsberg to serve as Secretary of the landowners meeting.

## **5. Call for Ballots and Proxies for Board of Supervisors Election Sub-District 1**

Mr. Strowd stated that the Sub-District 1 seat was up for election. He stated that the incumbent was the only qualified candidate that submitted their notice of their intent to run – James M. Alderman for Sub-District 1.

Mr. Strowd stated in accordance with the published meeting procedures, given there is only one qualified candidate for Sub-District 1, the election shall be concluded by a verbal affirmation of the landowners present.

Mr. Strowd asked for a motion to accept election of James M. Alderman as Board Supervisor for Sub-District 1.

Carrie Hill made a motion to accept the election of as Board Supervisor for Sub-District 1. John I. Whitworth, III seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **6. Approval of Minutes - January 10, 2024 Landowners' Meeting**

Landowners were provided with time to review the minutes of the 2024 Landowners' Meeting. Chairman Costello asked for comments. With no comments, Chairman Costello called for a motion to approve the 2024 meeting minutes. Jeffrey Phipps made a motion to approve the minutes, Stephen Bender seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **7. Annual Report to Landowners**

Executive Director & District Engineer Tommy Strowd presented a report reflecting on the District's annual activities, accomplishments, and progress. A report summary is provided herein. A copy of the presentation is provided as part of the meeting record.

In 2024, the Lake Worth Drainage District (LWDD) experienced near-average rainfall overall, with no significant flood events and normal water supply operations. However, the fall and winter months experienced significantly below average rainfall attributable to the current La Nina event. Projections indicate this trend will continue through Spring 2025. A new Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule was finalized and is in place. The current water stage for Lake Okeechobee stands at 14.93 ft. NGVD, which is above the 'ecological envelope.' The water supply potential remains 'moderate.'

LWDD experienced impacts from Hurricane Milton in October 2024. Early forecasts predicted significant, historic rainfall. LWDD initiated pre-storm canal drawdown on October 3, and subsequently authorized community structure openings. Canal elevations were maintained at or below design stage in the 16-Basin throughout the storm. LWDD maintained canal elevations to avoid submergence impacts to community discharge structures in the E-1W Basin. Emergency operations were taken to address potential flooding in two residential communities – Boca Chase and Lake Charleston. LWDD authorized post-storm community structure openings on October 10 and returned to normal operations on October 11.

Over the years, LWDD has enhanced its water management capabilities by automating real-time monitoring systems, including SCADA, SmartCover stage monitors, real-time rain gauges, and SFWMD data. Last year, LWDD partnered with eRIS to develop an integrated dashboard that compiles and displays information from multiple platforms into one dashboard, streamlining operational decision-making. In 2024, staff continued to make enhancements to the eRIS Water Management Dashboard and realized benefits during rainfall events.

In 2024, LWDD received its first request from SFWMD to pass-through water from the C-51 Reservoir. In June 2024, 184-acre feet of water was pumped at Control Structure 9 and discharged at Control Structure 17. In addition to annual fees, LWDD is reimbursed for pumping costs.

The District continues to make progress on the development of a District-Wide Surface Water Model. Phase 1 was completed in 2022 and included sub-basin delineation and conveyance features. In 2023, Phase 2 was completed with the collection of canal geometry and culvert information. Phase 3a was also completed which included compiling hydrologic and hydraulic components and development of a functional model. Phase 3b - testing and calibration of the model v. historic rainfall events - is underway. A final report (to supersede the prior 'Interbasin Study 1996 rev' is on schedule to be completed in 2025.

Refurbishment of Control Structure #9 is completed with radial gates replaced in January 2024.

The Canal Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Phase I was completed in 2024. The program began in October 2015. The District met 100% of its goal, clearing 173.1 miles of vegetation on its canal rights-of-way: LWDD - 85.4 miles; contractor – 81.7 miles; 3<sup>rd</sup> party – 6.0 miles. Mr. Strowd presented before and after photos of completed projects in 2024.

CRP Phase II (Maintenance Restoration Program - MRP) is underway. The goal of CRP Phase II is to reconstruct, realign and rehabilitate canals for future sustainable maintenance. The inventory includes 500 projects over 250 miles for completion within 20 years. Projects were categorized by complexity, from minor repairs to major structural improvements. In 2024, LWDD completed restoration of the L-48 Canal east of Boca Del Mar Drive, constructing the restricted south bank based on LWDD's new typical design for a restricted maintenance bank.

To maintain the cleared rights-of-way, the Low Maintenance Team continued to expand in 2024 and is currently maintaining ~153 miles of low-maintenance canal bank with plans to add more in 2025.

Routine maintenance included mowing over 3,000 miles of rights-of-way – 1,575 miles of flat mowing (283 miles, 4-6x per year) and 1,207 miles of slope mowing (399 miles, 2-3x per year). This District contracted an additional 500 miles of flat mowing (125 miles, 4x per year) and 560 miles of slope mowing (140 miles, 4x per year) for \$277,000. Staff also treated 5,922 acres of aquatic vegetation – 1080 acres of floating vegetation, 640 acres of submerged vegetation, 1,161 acres of littoral vegetation, and 3,041 acres of littoral/floating combined treatment. Staff also treated approximately 442 acres of terrestrial treatments on restricted low-maintenance banks. The District continued use of contracted aquatic services for

treatment north of the C-51 Canal and in the Boca Basin for \$93,000. To help manage aquatic weeds and trash, staff are maintaining a total of 136 boom sites throughout District canals. In 2024, 28 booms were replaced due to wear and tear. Staff continued mechanical removal of aquatic vegetation at boom sites to supplement chemical treatments.

The District installed 16 new access gates at arterial and local roads where warranted. Approximately 24 miles of routine canal dredging was completed to maintain conveyance and remedy shoaling, and approximately 39 miles of canal were vertical side-trimmed to remedy encroaching vegetation.

LWDD initiated a pilot project for iguana control. In 2024, over 1300 iguanas eradicated.

District staff continued to perform regular maintenance services on 14 major water control structures; 140 routine preventative maintenance tasks were completed.

District staff continues to maintain a fleet of 61 vehicles, 37 machines/heavy equipment, 11 tractor mowers, and 8 boats. Equipment usage is tracked and reported annually. Heavy equipment utilization averaged 52% for 2024. Mower usage averaged 67%.

Major campus improvements included installation of hurricane proof windows in the office buildings and replacement of the dilapidated Miner Building with a new pole barn for covered storage.

In 2024, the District processed 305 right-of-way applications and issued 307 permits. Staff tracked 3,211 permit compliance deliverables for 1,577 individual permits and realized a 92% compliance rate; 16% of the deliverables are recurring annual deliverables.

The District continued to update its mapped canal right-of-way ownership. Staff also researched and responded to 1,471 Chancery Case 407 review requests and conducted 632 plat and development reviews for county and municipal projects.

The District opened 233 new compliance cases and resolved or closed 239 cases. The District estimates ~1,000 legacy compliance issues that staff are working to resolve. Over 100 cases were acted upon. If cases are not resolved through current compliance processes, a Notice of Encroachment is recorded in the public record to notify current/future owners. Future removal of encroachments is prioritized based on canal bank restoration schedules. Mr. Strowd presented before and after photos of several resolved encroachment issues in 2024.

District IT staff continue to make GIS enhancements to support field and regulatory staff. In 2024, the ArcGIS Server was upgraded, providing additional functionality for mapping and information display. They also installed a new Image Server and made historic imagery available from 1940 to 2024.

The District's outreach team responded to 1,000+ public inquiries and continued to maintain the agency's presence on social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, and Linked In. The District's monthly "Reflections" newsletter is distributed

to 4,000+ subscribers. The District also hosted its 10<sup>th</sup> annual flood control workshop for HOAs.

The District adopted a Fiscal Year 2025 budget totaling \$17.3 million. The non-ad valorem assessment rate was decreased by \$1.00 – from \$49.50-\$48.50. The reduction reflects the District's ongoing commitment to maintaining and improving infrastructure while responsibly considering the financial implications to landowners. District auditors issued an unqualified opinion for FY2023 and confirmed that the financial records and statements were fairly and appropriately stated in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

In FY2024, the District received \$1,182,000 in revenues for permit fees, \$2,000 in quit claim deeds, \$1.4 million in interest earnings, \$131,000 in tower lease payments, and \$64,000 for sale of surplus equipment.

The District's Hazard Mitigation Fund is fully funded at \$18.8 million. The District's capital projects funding totals approximately \$30 million for future infrastructure and water supply improvements.

Over the past 10-15 years, the District has maintained costs for salaries, healthcare, and property/casualty insurance costs. The total number of staff has not increased in the past 15 years; the District budgeted for 93 positions, with 4 current vacancies. Current employees average 10.5 years of service; 23 employees were hired 2024. Two employees retired in 2024, and 10 employees are enrolled in DROP and will be retiring within the next 8 years.

Looking ahead, the District will continue Phase II of the Canal Rehabilitation Program which includes restoration of low-maintenance canal banks and management of existing structural encroachments on rights-of-way remaining following the Phase I vegetation removal projects. The District will also continue ongoing capital projects including secondary control structure remediation and enhancements and completion of the District-wide hydrologic modeling effort. The District continues to address regional water supply challenges, collaborate on the Lake Okechobee Operating Schedule and Lower East Coast Water Supply Plan, and coordinate with Turnpike widening projects to preserve canal integrity.

Mr. Strowd stated that the 2024 Report to Landowners provides an overview of the District's annual activities, including District activities undertaken in furtherance of the adopted water control plan. He recommended acceptance of the report pursuant to Florida Statutes, Ch. 298.26.

A motion was made by Stephen Bedner to approve the report, seconded by John I. Whitworth, III, and approved unanimously.

Steve Horowitz, Valencia Falls resident, inquired regarding maintenance of private canals, iguana control, and drought conditions. Mr. Strowd addressed the inquiries.

Jeffrey Phipps was recognized for 10 years of service as an LWDD Board Supervisor and presented with a memento in recognition of his service.



## **8. Financial Report**

Copies of the Balance Sheet and Budget Report for Year-End September 30, 2024, were furnished, and Ms. Hoyt stated the year-end audit report is still on-going. The final audit report will be posted on the District's website once completed. Ms. Hoyt indicated the District is in a good financial position.

A motion was made by John I. Whitworth, III to approve the financial report, seconded by Jeffrey Phipps and approved unanimously.

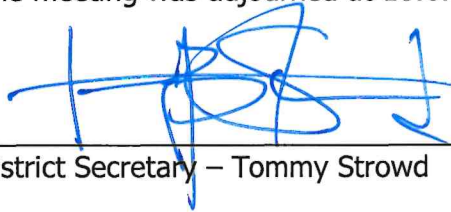
## **9. New Business**

There was no new business.

John I. Whitworth, III commented regarding the SCADA system and gave kudos to staff for its successful implementation and use to improve water management services.

## **10. Adjourn**

There being no further business, a motion was made by Stephen Bedner to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Jeffrey Phipps Sr., and approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 10:07 A.M.



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District Secretary – Tommy Strowd