



**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE LANDOWNERS OF THE
LAKE WORTH DRAINAGE DISTRICT
HELD ON JANUARY 4, 2023 AT 9:00 A.M.**

Attendees:

James M. Alderman	John I. Whitworth, III	Rosemary Rayman
Reagan Walker	Brian Tilles	Karen Hoyt
Melissa Skora	Sandra Acosta	Harry Raucher
Jeffrey P. Phipps, Sr.	Carrie Hill	Diana Acosta
Anthony LasCasas	Mark Perry	Robert Hayes
Tommy Strowd	Shawn Mitchell	Megan Hoffman
Ibrahin Nuñez	Annika Emery	Dolores Lewis
Doug Gunther	Juan Tobar	

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. John I. Whitworth, III nominated Harry Raucher. Stephen Bedner seconded the nomination. There being non further nominations, a unanimous vote was cast for Harry Raucher.

Chairman Raucher confirmed that Executive Director & District Secretary Tommy Strowd would serve as Secretary of the landowners meeting.

5. Call for Ballots and Proxies for Board of Supervisors Election Sub-Districts 2 & 4 and Announcement of Election Results

Chairman Raucher stated that the Sub-District 2 & 4 seats were up for election. He stated that the incumbents were the only qualified candidates that submitted

their notice of their intent to run – Stephen Bedner for Sub-District 2 and Carrie Parker Hill for Sub-District 4.

Chairman Raucher stated in according to the published meeting procedures, given there is only one qualified candidate for each of these sub-districts, the election shall be concluded by a verbal affirmation of the landowners present.

Chairman Raucher asked for a motion to accept election of Stephen Bedner as Board Supervisor for Sub-District 2.

James Alderman made a motion to accept the election of Stephen Bedner as Board Supervisor for Sub-District 2. John I. Whitworth, III seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Raucher asked for a motion to accept election of Carrie Parker Hill as Board Supervisor for Sub-District 4.

James Alderman made a motion to accept the election of Carrie Parker Hill as Board Supervisor for Sub-District 4. John I. Whitworth, III seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

6. Approval of Minutes - January 5, 2022 Landowners' Meeting

Landowners were provided time to review the minutes of the 2022 Landowners' Meeting. Chairman Raucher asked for comments. With no comments, Chairman Raucher called for a motion to approve the 2022 meeting minutes. Stephen Bedner made a motion to approve the minutes, Carrie Hill 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.

After a normal dry season, the first part of the wet season experienced significantly below-average rainfall which lead to Lake Okeechobee stages to fall into the Water Shortage Management Zone during the wet season. However, hurricanes and tropical systems that impacted south Florida late in the wet season returned Lake Okeechobee to normal beneficial levels.

The District experienced three (3) major storm events in 2022. Tropical Storm Alex traversed Florida in early June; however, not much rainfall was experienced from this storm. Hurricane Ian landed on the west coast near Fort Myers Beach in September and traveled northeast over the state. Ian dropped a bulk of the rainfall north of Lake Okeechobee. Hurricane Nicole landed on the east coast near Ft. Pierce and headed northwest over the state. The District did not experience much rain from this storm; however, rainfall from Hurricane Nicole added to the deficit and helped bring Lake Okeechobee back to normal water levels.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) completed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Lake Okeechobee Systems Operations Manual

(LOSOM). The EIS documented a number of issues which could impact LWDD water supply and environmental conditions in Water Conservation Area 1. LWDD provided detailed comments on the document including: a 16-page report with economic impact analysis to USACE Col. Booth; public comment to SFWMD Governing Board; and public comment at the annual Water Forum sponsored by Associated Industries of Florida. The EIS is expected to be finalized in Summer 2023. Water supply reliability was not returned to pre-LORS08 levels and was not improved over the current operating plan (LORS08). The lack of excess flow from Lake Okeechobee will increase LWDD's reliance on Water Conservation Area 1 to meet supplemental water demands. Changes in regional water sources and the potential deauthorization of CERP storage projects increase uncertainty of water availability to meet current demands in future years. This may result in serious implications for future regional water supply.

Aquifer Storage & Recovery (ASR) systems may offer an alternative to the overall reductions in the availability of regional water supplies. The District initiated an ASR Feasibility Study to determine the applicability of ASR in improving regional water availability to meet current needs. The Feasibility Study is expected to be completed in Spring 2023. The District entered into an interlocal agreement with SFWMD to assume maintenance and operations of the ASR well on the Hillsboro Canal. FDEP issued a 'no flow' permit to LWDD. As part of the Feasibility Study, the District is evaluating the possibility of re-activating the well in the future.

Refurbishment of Control Structure #9 is moving forward. Completed refurbishment activities in 2022 include: purchase of key components including submersible pumps and motor starters; awarded contract for refurbishment work; and completed installation of curb cuts, monitoring piers, and rough electric. Installation of the new equipment has started. Remaining improvements are expected to be completed in 2023 including: demolition of existing pump houses; installation of pumps and control systems; installation of new radial gates; and installation of variable frequency drives for pumps and needle racks which will significantly improve operation and performance.

The District is moving forward with development of a District-Wide Surface Water Model. Phase I was completed in 2022 and included sub-basin delineation and conveyance features. Phase II is underway including: collecting of culvert info; collecting of bathymetry data; and developing centerline alignment, canal sections and canal specific hydraulic parameters. A final model and report (to supersede the prior 'Interbasin Study 1996 rev' is on schedule to be completed by the end of 2024.

Since the Canal Rehabilitation Program (CRP) began in October 2015, the District has cleared more than 162.3 miles of vegetation on its canal rights-of-way: LWDD – 82.5 miles; contractor – 74.1 miles; developer – 5.8 miles. There were 10.2 miles cleared in 2022. The remaining 12.4 miles are expected to be cleared in 2023. Mr. Strowd presented before and after photos of completed projects in 2022.

Coordination of CRP projects is a District-wide effort requiring participation by all staff. In support of the program, staff completed the following activities in 2022: researched and mapped right-of-way ownership for approximately 41 miles of canal; field staked approximately 11 miles of canal right-of-way; prepared and distributed approximately 800 notification letters via hand and mail delivery; captured GoPro 360-degree video segments of all project areas for advance

inspection of the canals; addressed approximately 155 project-specific public inquiries; hosted 5 project-specific public outreach meetings with residents and neighborhood associations; and continually updated information and project statuses on the District's website.

District staff have restored approximately 38% of the canal banks cleared by former CRP projects to allow for routine mowing and are actively working to convert the balance into maintainable rights-of-way. Mr. Strowd presented before and after photos of completed maintenance restoration projects. The District has established a three-man low maintenance mowing crew with a routine maintenance schedule. The team completed 19.5 miles in 2022. The team and work will continue to increase as low maintenance banks are recovered for routine maintenance.

The District mowed over 3,000 miles of rights-of-way – 1800 total miles of flat mowing and 1530 total miles of slope mowing. The District contracted an additional 175 miles of flat mowing and 180 miles of slope mowing for \$275,000.

The District has treated approximately 6,425 acres of aquatic vegetation – 925 acres of floating vegetation, 1900 acres of submerged vegetation, 950 acres of littoral vegetation, and 2650 acres of littoral/floating combined treatment. The District continued use of contracted aquatic services for treatment of 60.5 miles of canal north of the C-51 Canal and 19.5 miles in the Boca Basin for \$93,000. To help manage aquatic weeds and trash, staff are maintaining a total of 181 boom sites throughout District canals. In 2022, 36 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 24 new access gates at arterial and local roads where warranted. Approximately 22 miles of routine canal dredging was completed to maintain conveyance and remedy shoaling, and approximately 27 miles of canal were vertical side-trimmed to remedy encroaching vegetation.

District staff continued to perform regular maintenance services on 10 major water control structures; 120 routine preventative maintenance tasks were completed.

District staff continues to maintain a fleet of 64 vehicles, 34 machines/heavy equipment, 9 tractor mowers, and 7 boats. Equipment usage is tracked and reported quarterly. Utilization averaged 63% for 2022. Mower usage averaged 71%.

District campus improvements included replacement of fuel pumps and updated signage of the main building.

In 2022, the District processed 431 right-of-way applications and issued 266 permits. Staff tracked 2,160 permit compliance deliverables for 1,115 individual permits and realized an 88% compliance rate; 16% of the deliverables are reoccurring annual deliverables. Staff also researched and responded to 5,231 Chancery Case 407 review requests and completed 612 plat and development (DRO) reviews for county and municipality projects.

Mapping was completed for an additional 72 miles of canal right-of-way ownership. To date, 477 miles have been mapped. The remaining 16 miles are expected to be completed in 2023.

The District opened 553 new compliance cases with a majority of new cases related to legacy encroachments following CRP vegetation removal projects; 219 cases were resolved or closed. Mr. Strowd presented before and after photos of several resolved encroachment issues in 2022.

The District's outreach team responded to 581+ public records inquiries and continues 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 7th annual flood control workshop for HOAs and property managers.

The District adopted a Fiscal Year 2023 budget totaling \$18.5 million. The non-ad valorem assessment rate remained unchanged at \$49.50 with \$4 designated for accelerated canal rehabilitation and \$3.50 for other capital improvements. District auditors issued an unqualified opinion for FY2021 and confirmed that the financial records and statements were fairly and appropriately stated in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. In December 2022, the District approved an investment strategy for available committed funds totaling approximately \$46 million.

In FY2021, the District received nearly \$886,000 in revenues for permit fees, \$2,000 in quit claim deeds, \$99,000 in interest earnings, \$123,000 in tower lease payments, \$166,000 for sale of surplus equipment.

The District also closed on the sale of transfer of development rights in the Agricultural Reserve for total of \$18,439,000. The funds are dedicated to future capital projects for the sole purposes of advancing the District's flood control, water supply protection (including ASR) and hazard mitigation mission.

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 13 years; the district is budgeted for 87 positions, with 4 current vacancies. Current employees average 11 years of service; 17 employees were hired 2022 (2 of which are returning employees); 27 employees retired in the past 5 years; and 6 employees are enrolled in DROP and will be retiring within the next 5 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 Control Structure 9 and secondary control structure remediation and enhancements, the District-wide hydrologic modeling effort, and the ASR feasibility study.

Mr. Strowd stated that the 2022 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 John I. Whitworth, III to approve the report, seconded by Jeffrey P. Phipps, Sr. and approved unanimously.

Mr. Strowd also recognized the retirement of former board Harry Raucher in October 2022 after 11 years of service with the District. He also stated Carrie Hill was appointed as interim supervisor follow Mr. Raucher's retirement.

Staff recognized the service anniversaries for board members including:

- 5 Years – Jeffrey P. Phipps, Sr (August 2014-2019) and Steve Bedner (October 2015-2020)
- 20 Years – James Alderman (February 2003-2023)
- 30 Years – John I. Whitworth III (October 1990-2020)

Board members were presented engraved survey markers in appreciation of their service.

8. Financial Report

Copies of the Balance Sheet and Budget Report for Year-End September 30, 2022 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 good financial position.

A motion was made by Stephen Bedner to approve the financial report, seconded by James Alderman and approved unanimously.

John I. Whitworth, III inquired about purchase of the adjacent Farm Bureau property. Mr. Strowd stated the District submitted an offer and was open to negotiations.

9. New Business

There was no new business.

10. Adjourn

There being no further business, a motion was made by Stephen Bedner to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Carrie Parker Hill and approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:42 A.M.

District Secretary – Tommy Strowd