

W. P. Sun, April 17, 1958

Referendum Inherent Right Of People--Pflug

The Orlando Evening Star of April 10, 1958, published on its front page a lengthy letter addressed to the mayor of Winter Park by William H. Dial, State Road Board member from this district, in which he said that "highways are built on need rather than on the wishes of the people".

Under date of April 15, Mayor Lynn Pflug answered Mr. Dial's letter, and in a few terse paragraphs, said more than the several-columned article from Mr. Dial—who must be taking some notice of the "wishes of the people" despite his statement.

Mayor Pflug's answer follows:

Your letter, addressed to the mayor and members of the city commission reached my desk some two hours after I had read it in the Orlando Evening Star.

Would it not have been more direct to have addressed the tax-paying citizens of Winter Park? The action calling for a referendum is a right inherent in our democratic system of government for any group to express itself.

This is not, I believe, a question of internal affairs of the City of Winter Park—but one of conflicting ideologies between you and your supporters and equally brilliant men of our community.

We, the commissioners of Winter Park, are but the elected representatives of the people and as such are honor bound to recognize and act in accordance with the constitutional rights of our citizens and if we do not, then we are not fit to be in public office.

Current comment in Winter Park is that people are wondering why Mr. Dial thought it necessary to write such a letter. Although the Winter Park Board of Realtors is circulating a petition requesting the city commission to hold a referendum on the route of the proposed expressway, neither the Sentinel nor the Star has to date printed this important news story.

Here are the facts: the vast majority of the people of Winter Park have never approved the proposed expressway route, although, as Mr. Dial says, a few motel owners on Orlando Avenue apparently believe it should be close by—though not as close as originally planned. The Winter Park City Commission formally protested the first plan of the engineers to locate the expressway east of Orlando Avenue, which

would have destroyed an important part of Winter Park's business district.

The State Road Department engineers then proposed a new location several blocks farther west. This change was a move in the right direction, but did not go far enough.

Several years ago Winter Park employed the noted city planner, Maurice Rotival, to prepare a development plan that would permit Winter Park to grow in an orderly manner. Mr. Rotival, who is a far-seeing analyst of urban growth problems, recommended that any proposed limited-access highway be located outside the city limits. In short, Mr. Rotival, who is fully aware of the great value of the Federal Interstate Highway System when properly routed, finds that locating it in the proposed area would be detrimental to Winter Park. It would not only remove

more than \$1 million worth of valuable property from the city tax rolls, but would hinder future expansion.

The Expressway Committee of the Winter Park Chamber of Commerce filed a protest with the state objecting to the proposed route and urging that it be moved to an alignment four and one-half blocks farther west—which would have put it outside Winter Park city limits.

The committee was told by the state's engineers that it could not be moved even that short distance, although a saving of \$1 million would result. They said it would greatly reduce the volume of local traffic that it might be expected to handle.

This prompts the question: "If the expressway is supposed to be such a time-saver for local people, why would shifting it this short distance cause such a drop in traffic?" At normal city speeds, a car could travel this 4½ blocks in less than two minutes. Are we to assume that this "time-saving" expressway would lose most of its potential traffic if Winter Parkers had to spend less than two minutes getting to it?

Mr. Dial may be correct in his statement that the wishes of the people can and will be ignored, but this does not alter the fact that the citizens of any community should have the right to determine for themselves whether the alleged

Winter Park's Realtors, Mrs. Katy Brunstrom president, are joining in the celebration of National Real Estate Week by continuance of their project to seek a referendum to change the proposed route of the expressway four blocks to the west.

The realtors, with the good of the city foremost in their minds, are circulating petitions seeking at least 1,000 or more names required to call a referendum, which will be presented to the city commission for action.

Petitions are available at local realtor offices, at the First National Bank, Anderson's Grill on Highway 17-92, and at the office of The Winter Park Sun.

With approximately 6,000 registered voters in the city, signatures of 15 per cent are needed to meet the legal requirements to call a referendum of the people.

A study by a committee of the Winter Park Chamber of Commerce has shown that if the present expressway route is followed it will take approximately \$1¼ million worth of real estate off the city's tax rolls, as of today's assessed valuation. In addition, the city will be called upon to pay its pro rata share of the expressway through the city, which will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars—which means additional bond issues and increased taxes to meet the obligation.

The city commission has been asked repeatedly to take a stand officially protesting the route as proposed through Winter Park, but to date has taken no action.

When the Board of Realtors presents its petition with the required number of names of registered voters requesting a referendum on the question, the city will be forced to comply, under the present charter.

The Board of Realtors recently had as guest at a realtor luncheon, Richard Eggers, field executive of the National Association of Real Estate Boards for the local area.

Organized in 1940, the realty board now numbers 30 members and associates, and lists 58 brokers in the vicinity.

Chartered June 19, 1940, the

"benefits" from a costly super-highway would offset the damage to the community.

Maybe the state engineers can tell us how much more traffic would be lost to the expressway if the citizens of Orlando and Winter Park, who appear predominantly opposed to the proposed routing, failed to provide the bond funds essential to rebuilding the streets leading to the proposed location.

Winter Park Board of Realtors started out with only eight charter members. As far as can be ascertained, Ray Greene is the only charter member still living of the original group.

The board has grown until it now lists 30 members, who strive to keep real estate transactions on a high, ethical basis.