



City of Tarpon Springs, Florida

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OFFICE OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS

July 14, 2020

Chairman Pat Gerard and Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners
315 Court St.
Clearwater, FL 33756

Dear Chairman Gerard and the Board of County Commissioners:

Planning for the Anclote River Dredge project began more than five years ago, and to date the City has secured the required funding. The Federal Channel is on track to be dredged starting later this year by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) as a Federal maintenance dredge. Permits are likely to be issued by mid-August. We thank the BOCC for your early funding assistance that helped get the project off the ground, and for your overall support.

We are now faced with another challenge. Once design and permitting began, it became clear that an area outside the Federal Channel, called the Extended Turning Basin (XTB) is also a critical area that requires dredging. This area is in the Anclote River Turning Basin just west of the Alt-19 bridge but outside the Federal Channel. Because of its location outside the Channel, the USACE will not fund the XTB.

Working with State Reps. Chris Sprowls and Chris Latvala, together with State Sen. Ed Hooper, the City secured a budget line item of \$812,000 to fund the XTB dredge through the State budget; however, the funding was vetoed, along with many other important projects statewide.

Since the time of that application for the State budget allocation, the City has been working on permitting the project with the FDEP which includes a process of refining the boundaries of the XTB dredge area. That coordination effort with FDEP is ongoing and nearing completion, and appears to indicate a smaller dredge area than originally contemplated resulting in an estimated cost of between \$575,000-\$725,000 for the XTB dredge.

Therefore, we are asking for your support as we work toward funding the XTB project. The City intends to dredge the XTB concurrently with the Federal Channel. As the County is currently in budget talks, Tarpon Springs would appreciate any consideration of funding to help offset the cost of the XTB dredge.

As the City previously shared with the Board of County Commissioners as we continue working together on this dredge project, the Anclote River is of regional importance as a safe passage for commercial vessels including sponge, shrimp, fishing, and charter boats. A 2016 economic impact study found the marine commerce and tourism industries have a \$252 million impact to the region, and employ more than 2,400 people, representing 21% of the workforce in Tarpon Springs. It also found the value of all commercial fish landed in Tarpon Springs represents 56% of the total value of commercial fish landed in Pinellas County.

Keeping the river navigable for the commercial marine industries, including more than 50 boat builders, marinas, boat repair and services, is essential to the economic health of the entire Tampa Bay region.

Again, we appreciate your continued support of the City of Tarpon Springs.

Respectfully,

Chris Alahouzos, Mayor

Jacob Karr, Vice Mayor

Townsend Tarapani, Commissioner

Connor Donovan, Commissioner

Costa Vatikiotis, Commissioner

C: County Administrator Barry Burton