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Report on Proposed Parking Plans at Fort Myers, Florida

George W. Simons Jr.

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GEORGE W. SIMONS, JR.

MEM. AM. SOC. C. E.
MEM. AM. INST. OF PLANNERS
MEM. INST. OF TRAFFIC ENGINEERS

PLANNING AND ZONING
CONSULTANT

HILDEBRANDT BUILDING
JACKSONVILLE 2, FLORIDA

April 2, 1955. 8

Honorable Heard M. Edwards, Mayor,
Fort Myers, Florida.

Dear Mayor Edwards:

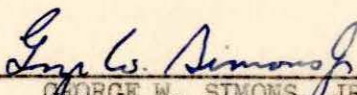
Pursuant to instructions from Mr. Parker Holt, City Attorney, I have visited Fort Myers to inspect the present system of curbside and off street parking and to evaluate the features of the proposed expansion program to be included under the provisions of the \$300,000.00 bond issue.

During my inspection I had the opportunity to confer with Mr. Holt, Councilmen Kelley and Stevens and you. I was further enabled to cover the territory to be serviced with Chief of Police Underhill and to observe development thruout the city and its environs. I have also had access to the financial records of the city and other pertinent information from the Chamber of Commerce and other sources.

As a result of my investigation I am pleased to submit herewith my report of findings and conclusions. From my studies I am convinced that the city will experience no difficulties in conforming to the debt service provisions proposed.

Thanking you and each of the others for the fine cooperation extended, I am,

Sincerely yours,



GEORGE W. SIMONS, JR.

GWS:EBB

REPORT ON 1
PROPOSED PARKING PLANS 22
AT 2

FORT MYERS, FLORIDA 17

BY 2

GEORGE W. SIMONS, JR. 21

PLANNING, ZONING AND MUNICIPAL CONSULTANT 41
MEMBER, AMERICAN SOCIETY CIVIL ENGINEERS
MEMBER, INSTITUTE OF TRAFFIC ENGINEERS

PROBLEM

To provide additional parking facilities in the central business district and areas adjacent thereto and to utilize more effectively existing curbside spaces, the City Commission proposes the issuance of revenue bonds in the sum of \$300,000.00 to be serviced over a period of twenty-four years solely from parking meter revenues.

To determine whether parking meter revenues will be adequate to meet the debt service charges is the object of this study. The conclusions are predicated on the city's past experience with parking meters and the probabilities of growth and development in the city and its tributary area.

PREFACE

Fort Myers, the county seat of Lee County, located on the Caloosahatchie River about 15 miles from the Gulf of Mexico is one of the older pioneer communities of southwest Florida. It is now the principal trading, financial and distribution center of a large area extending northward into Charlotte County (Punta Gorda), eastward into Hendry (LaBelle and Clewiston) and Glades (Moore Haven) Counties and southward into Collier County (Everglades and Naples), an area with an aggregate population in 1950 approximating 43,000. In addition

to its importance as a commercial center, Fort Myers has been for years a most popular and attractive site for winter residents and tourists; in 1885 the late Thomas A Edison established his winter residence here.

ECONOMY

The productivity and development of the Fort Myers area has improved greatly in the past three decades. Whereas lumbering, fishing and a limited citrus production and truck farming were the principal economic activities of an earlier day, today it has a diversified economy established on a broad base. Cattle raising, the cultivation and marketing of truck, gladiolas and other bulbs, sugar cane, citrus and other fruits and the prospecting for oil now characterize the activities of the area. Lee County is the principal source of gladiolas in the southeast. The continued growth, development and improvement of the resources of the area will be increasingly reflected in the economy of Fort Myers, its growth and development.

The growth in economic activity of Fort Myers since 1950 is readily discernible from the following data supplied by the Chamber of Commerce.

	<u>POSTAL RECEIPTS</u>	<u>ELECTRIC CUSTOMERS</u>	<u>TELEPHONES</u>	<u>TOTAL BANK DEPOSITS</u>	<u>BUILDING PERMITS</u>
1950	\$180,048.00	8,550	3,947	\$14,877,645.00	\$1,846,361.00
1951	213,915.60	9,656	4,646	18,423,230.00	2,114,550.00
1952	241,479.14	10,842	5,260	21,291,199.00	3,461,250.00
1953	270,608.66	11,880	7,089	23,220,000.00	3,414,500.00
1954	288,343.00	12,890	8,388	24,890,000.00	5,136,500.00

TRANSPORTATION

Improved and new state and federal highways have been significant factors in the growth and development of Fort Myers and its tributary area; they have made the city easily accessible to all points. The city is located on U. S. 41 from the north via Tampa to Miami, 123 miles south of Tampa and 141 miles northwest of Miami. U. S. 17 from the northeastern states via Jacksonville and central Florida intersects U. S. 41 at Punta Gorda, about 25 miles north of Fort Myers. State Road 80 extends easterly from Fort Myers to LaBelle connecting with U. S. 27 south of Moore Haven and thence to Miami or easterly to West Palm Beach, 121 miles distant. These highways leading into Fort Myers make it possible to utilize the marketing facilities of the city (Farmers Market) and further, enable travellers easy access to it from the various sections of the state and nation.

Supplementing the highways are the services provided the city by the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and the National Air Lines.

POPULATION GROWTH

Fort Myers first appeared in the federal census of 1900 with a population of 943. At that time Lee County had a population of only 3,071; West Palm Beach, 564 and Lakeland, 1,180. Since 1900 both Lee County and Fort Myers have experienced substantial population increases as reflected in the following tabulation.

POPULATION GROWTH - LEE COUNTY AND FORT MYERS ⁴⁵

	LEE COUNTY			FORT MYERS		
	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>INCREASE</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>INCREASE</u>	<u>%</u>
1900	3,071			943		
1910	6,294	3,223	105.0	2,463	1,520	161.0
1920	9,540	3,246	51.5	3,678	1,215	49.3
1930	14,900	5,360	56.0	9,082	5,404	148.0
1940	17,488	2,588	17.4	10,604	1,522	16.8
1950	23,404	5,916	33.8	13,195	2,591	24.3

GROWTH IN LEE COUNTY, EXCLUSIVE OF FORT MYERS ⁴⁵

	<u>POPULATION COUNTY OUTSIDE FORT MYERS</u>	<u>INCREASE</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>% COUNTY POPULATION OUTSIDE FORT MYERS</u>
1900	2,128			69.5
1910	3,831	1,703	80.00	61.0
1920	5,862	2,031	53.00	61.5
1930	5,818	- 44	-0.75	39.0
1940	6,884	1,066	18.30	39.5
1950	10,209	3,325	48.30	44.0

The above tabulation shows the population growth of Lee County and Fort Myers from 1900 to 1950, also, the population growth of the County exclusive of the city, and finally, the percentage of county population living outside the city for each decade.

In the decades 1900-1910 and 1920-1930 Fort Myers experienced rates of population growth in excess of 100%. Between 1940 and 1950 the population of the city increased 24.3%. Prior to 1930 more people lived in the County outside Fort Myers than within the city but since 1930, the reverse is true, which reflects the more intensive and rapid growth of the city.

On the basis of past experience in population growth and regional economic enhancement, a steady substantial growth is assured. The city should continue to show a healthy annual increment of growth which by 1960 should approach 21,000 and by 1970, a population of 30,000 is probable. There is nothing however in the historical record to indicate other than a steady consistent growth.

The normal population of the city is augmented annually by seasonal residents and visitors who remain for varying periods and also, by a large transient population remaining for brief periods or stops en route. Obviously with great numbers of people moving into and thru the city by automobile at all times and particularly during the seasonal months, the question of providing parking facilities to accomodate them is an important one.

INCREASE IN AUTOMOBILE VOLUME

A factor of concern in studying community growth and traffic volumes resulting therefrom, is the annual increase in automobile registration. Whereas in 1930, the Lee County registration of 4,296 represented 3.5 persons per registered automobile, the 1950 registration of 9,521 (more than twice that of 1930) represented 2.5 persons per registered automobile. In other words as the number of people in the area increases, the automobile population also increases. Currently for every two and a fraction people added to the population another automobile is thrown into the traffic stream to circulate and ultimately park. A population of 20,000 people will contribute approximately 10,000 automobiles in the city. Add to this volume the cars introduced seasonally by the winter resident and transient and by those who come into the city from the tributary area to seek services, transact business and shop the magnitude of the volume that will require parking facilities at one time or another, can be sensed. At the

rate the traffic volume is increasing, at present it is reasonable to believe that the number of cars using the streets of Fort Myers and seeking parking facilities in the central business district will double within the next decade or less. This will be the potential market for parking facilities.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

The central business district is the critical spot to and thru which traffic volumes flow and in which the demand for parking is most acute. This district in Fort Myers is located on the river about equidistant from the most southerly and most easterly corporate limit lines (see accompanying diagram). It occupies an area roughly encompassed by West Anderson Avenue, Carson Street, Fowler Street and the river. The area of intensive commercial usage extends from Lee to Carson Streets and from Main Street to the river. First, Hendry and Jackson Streets are the principal shopping thorofares.

The area adjacent to the central business district, lying between Bay Street and the river is occupied almost wholly by the Civic Center, Public Library, Yacht Basin, Auditorium, Municipal Parking Lot and Park. During the winter season particularly this is one of the most intensively used areas in the city. Because of the nature of the facilities and its close proximity to the central business district this area will be used henceforth more extensively thruout the year. It is ideally situated for off-street parking facilities.

Because of the comparatively small central business district and the intensification of uses therein, the flow of traffic thru its streets and parking have posed problems which the city commission is now striving to solve by providing more adequate parking facilities.

EXISTING PARKING FACILITIES IN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Parking spaces within the Central Business District are located along curbsides, metered and unmetered, and on the municipal parking lot adjacent to Hendry and Bay Streets. Under the proposed bond issue the Commission plans to extend the metered curbside spaces and add to the supply of off street metered spaces. An area of ground adjoining the municipal parking lot on the west is to be improved and metered and, by ordinance of the City Commission adopted March 7, 1955, the streets colored red on the attached diagram have been established as parking meter zones. Curbside on these various streets meters will be established as required. The extension of the metered curbside spaces will increase the usage of these spaces and thereby enable more motorists to park during the day.

Currently there are 949 parking meters located within and adjacent to the Central Business District, divided according to time interval as follows:

542	10 hour meters
75	2 hour meters
303	1 hour meters
12	24 minute meters
17	12 minute meters

The 10 hour meters are all located between Bay Street and the river, as follows: Lee Street, 83; Jackson Street, 26; Hendry Street, 67; Edwards Drive in front of the Civic Center, 73 and in the City Park lot, 293. Altho these meters are designated as 10 hour meters they are virtually 2 hour meters designed to receive coins sufficient to provide for 10 hours of parking. Meters of this type were installed here to serve primarily the many winter visitors who use the adjacent recreation facilities, the fishing boats that depart from

here or to shop in the nearby Central Business District. The improved municipal parking lot was placed in operation in February of 1955. The 75 2-hour meters are located on Hendry Street, 53 between Main and Anderson Streets; on Second Street, 21 between Broadway and Jackson Streets and on Lee Street, 1 between Bay and Richmond Streets. The 303 1-hour meters are located on Bay Street, 49; First Street, 47 between Heitman Street and Royal Palm Avenue; Main Street, 56 between Anderson and Jackson Streets; Second Street, 7; Anderson Street, 5; Heitman Street, 13; Broadway, 23 between First Street and Main Street; Hendry Street, 39 between First and Main Streets; Jackson Street, 43 between First and Second Streets; Dean Street, 8 between First and Bay Streets and Lee Street, 13 between Bay and Richmond Streets.

During the year April 1, 1951, to March 31, 1952, there were 389 meters in service; from April 1, 1952, to March 31, 1954, 619 meters were in service and at the end of March 31, 1955, there were 949 meters in service. Of this total number, 390 were not installed until February, 1955, and of these 293 were installed in the municipal parking lot.

PARKING METER EXPERIENCE

According to information supplied, Fort Myers has been using parking meters since 1940, and the record of gross income, expenditures for repairs and operation to April, 1954, is shown in the following table.

PARKING METERS¹⁴

<u>FISCAL YEAR</u>	<u>GROSS RECEIPTS</u>		<u>TOTAL RECEIPTS</u>	<u>METER REPAIRS & OPERATING COSTS*</u>	<u>NET RECEIPTS</u>
	<u>METERS</u>	<u>FINES</u>			
1941-1942	\$6,488.09		\$6,488.09	\$ 734.60	\$5,753.49
1942-1943	5,753.96		5,753.96	970.87	4,783.09
1943-1944	8,028.36		8,028.36	616.40	7,411.96
1944-1945	7,222.33		7,222.33	682.08	6,540.25
1945-1946	9,556.83		9,556.83	3,242.48	6,314.35
1946-1947	12,893.82		12,893.82	2,977.18	9,916.64
1947-1948	15,568.84		15,568.84	3,082.93	12,485.91
1948-1949	13,810.73		13,810.73	3,136.36	10,674.37
1949-1950	11,591.48		11,591.48	2,527.92	9,063.56
1950-1951	14,479.86		14,479.86	4,179.17	10,300.69
1951-1952	19,632.00	\$ 668.40	20,300.40	3,830.36	16,470.04
1952-1953	26,401.00	1,806.78	28,207.78	3,754.25	24,453.53
1953-1954	<u>29,172.50</u>	<u>2,222.70</u>	<u>31,395.20</u>	<u>4,390.65</u>	<u>27,004.55</u>
	\$180,599.80	\$4,697.88	\$185,297.68	\$34,125.25	\$151,172.43

*Operating Costs include salaries of meter inspectors and clerk.

Above figures do not include the purchase price of meters.

First Meters installed December, 1940.

949

For the calendar year 1954 with 619 meters in service the gross meter revenues were \$33,582.00 or an average of \$54.00 per meter per year. On the basis of gross earnings for the first three months of 1955 during the second month of which (February) 390 meters were added, the average gross income per meter for the year should be approximately \$51.00. This reduction from the previous figure is due primarily to the fact that all of the additions made in February, 1955, were of the 10 hour meter type.

Because Fort Myers has a seasonal influx of people there are times during the summer months when some metered spaces are not used. The fluctuation of seasonal income is reflected in the gross earnings per meter per month for the calendar year 1954 and the first three months of 1955, as follows:

	<u>METERS</u>	<u>GROSS INCOME</u>	<u>AVERAGE PER METER PER MONTH</u>		<u>METERS</u>	<u>GROSS INCOME</u>	<u>AVERAGE PER METER PER MONTH</u>
January, 1954	619	\$3,216	\$5.20	September, 1954	619	\$2,585	\$4.20
February,	619	3,000	4.85	October	619	3,300	5.35
March	619	2,816	4.55	November	619	2,663	4.30
April	619	2,941	4.75	December	619	4,124	6.70
May	619	2,290	3.70	January, 1955	619	3,435	5.55
June	619	2,080	3.38	February	949	4,076	4.30
July	619	2,510	4.05	March	949	4,267	4.50
August	619	2,057	3.32				

It will be noted that during August of 1954 the average monthly earning per meter was \$3.32 but in December this average reached \$6.70. Even on the basis of this relatively low August earning the existing meters would gross approximately \$25,000.00 per year. However on the basis of \$50.00 per meter per year, which is conservative, the existing meters should gross in excess of \$47,000.00

during 1955. The monthly gross earnings for the first three months of 1955 were \$11,778.00.

To improve the effectiveness of meters the City has conducted a rigid police patrolling and over-parking fine system. From \$668.40 in the year 1951-1952 (April to March 31) the overparking fines increased to \$5,022.65 for the eleven months period, April 1, 1954, to March 1, 1955. To enhance the efficiency of this system the Commission employed two women meter inspectors as of January 7, 1955, who spend their entire time patrolling the metered areas. The effectiveness of this patrolling is reflected in the increase of fines.

A meter collection, servicing and repair division is maintained, the costs of which are also reflected in the previous table. For the eleven months period, April 1, 1954, to March 1, 1955, the costs of the service were \$7,612.72 which includes the salaries of the women inspectors, collection and repair man. Assuming a maintenance, operation and inspection cost approximating \$10,000.00 per year and a gross annual income of \$47,000.00 or better, would still leave the city a net revenue of \$37,000 which would enable it to meet the annual debt service charges as setup by the underwriters and further, provide a reserve to replace meters if necessary at the end of ten years.

As additional meters are installed within the bounds of the Central Business District the net revenues should increase proportionately because of the increase in annual demand for parking. More motorists seeking space for parking will result in greater revenues. Even with a reduction in fines and an increase in cost of maintenance and operation there will be more revenues than necessary to cover all debt service charges under the present time interval schedule. The City Commission can always, as the need arises,

revise the parking time intervals to improve parking conditions and augment the earnings. It is probable the income from fines will decline as people become more alert to the penalties for over-parking.

SCOPE OF PROPOSED PLAN

As stated previously, under the proposed plan, metered spaces will be installed within the authorized parking zone as needed and secondly, the recently acquired land adjacent to the present municipal parking lot at Hendry and Bay Streets, will be improved and metered. This extension to the present city parking lot will further service the nearby Central Business District. It is also proposed to acquire land at the southeast corner of Second Street and Broadway and improve it as an off-street parking lot, which will be the initial step in the development of an off-street facility adjacent to the Court House to serve the commercial and other needs on Main, Second and Hendry Streets.

CONCLUSIONS

The City of Fort Myers, Lee County and the areas tributary to them are experiencing a steady and substantial increase in population and economic enhancement. These various developments are constantly improving the importance of Fort Myers as a marketing, distribution and industrial center. Because of climatic conditions and the availability of many favorable recreation and fishing areas the city will continue to prosper as a site for winter residents and visitors. This combination of favorable assets will produce an increasing volume of automobile traffic, a great portion of which will be obliged to seek parking facilities in the Central Business District. In view of all this, the

proposed plan of expanding parking facilities is only the initial one to meet a growing need. And, from past experience with parking meter operations we are definitely of the opinion that, with good patrolling and administration, the City will encounter no difficulty in conforming to the debt service provisions of the proposed \$300,000.00 bond issue.