



WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HISTORICAL NOTES

MARCH 2014

THE FIRST VILLAGE MEETING

APRIL 28, 1947

By Benjamin B. Little
Wilton Manors Historical Society

Patricia Staples, Deputy City Clerk, has made a spectacular find in the City archives and provided it to the Historical Society. It is a Xerox copy, before Xerox copies were a sure thing or even, strictly speaking legible, of a verbatim transcript of what was the final organizational meeting prior to Mr. Robinson going to Tallahassee to incorporate the Village of Wilton Manors in April 1947. This was a group of volunteers and neighbors concerned about their community.

At their April 4 meeting, the Civic Association scheduled what its minutes called “the big meeting.” The notice said that it was to be held at the Tropical Homes Offices, either inside or out, at 8:00 pm on April 28. This was Alvar Hagen’s office.

The meeting seems to have been carefully orchestrated by members of the Civic Association. There were dissenters. The objectives were simple: define the area of the new municipality, exclude any question on levying taxes, and qualify who was allowed to vote.

The published meeting notice stated that the area to be included in was everything to the west of the FEC rail road tracks, west to 1,200 feet west of Andrews Avenue (about N.W. 5th Avenue), south of N.E. 26th Street to the South Fork of the Middle River. Specifically excluded were the Richardson Golf Course and Lazy Lake. Highland Estates, which was a viable community and a logical inclusion, was also excluded, at its request. It was north of N.E. 26th Street.

Al Hagen opened the meeting and turned it over to Colonel Robinson. While the perennial threat had been Fort Lauderdale, both Hagen and Robinson mentioned an imminent threat of annexation from Oakland Park. Discussion was lively. John Pedersen, one of the largest land holders in Wilton Manors and the Fort Lauderdale area was opposed.

The meeting got hot. Pedersen wanted to know why his property holdings could not be excluded. At one point, Mr. Windle wanted to know if Pedersen was threatening the meeting.

Colonel Robinson did a masterful job running the meeting, but lost control several times. “Did you have your ears open...?” “You are so darned blockheaded you can’t see it.”

Nevertheless, the motion passed and Colonel Robinson was authorized to take the legal steps to convert the petitions into official status as the Village of Wilton Manors. A Mayor and Aldermen were elected.

On April 30, 1947, Dave Turner was sworn in as Mayor by a judge in the Circuit Court of the

Fifteenth Judicial Circuit. What had started as a small subdivision in 1926 now qualified as a municipal corporation to be known as the Village of Wilton Manors, with a population of roughly 350. The slate elected at the April 28th meeting became the village's first officers. Curiously, the Aldermen were now Councilmen. Turner was Mayor and Municipal Judge. Alvar Hagen was President of the Village Council serving with Arthur Chabot, Colonel Robinson, who doubled as the village's first attorney, James Boyd, and J. Marvin Brown. Katherine V. Johnson became the Village Clerk. Boyd and Brown were elected to three-year terms. The others were all re-elected in the second Village election on November 8, 1949, and Boyd and Brown were reelected unopposed on November 11, 1950.

The first town meetings were held in Hagen's real estate offices on Wilton Drive. From 1947 to 1952, Wilton Manors records were stored in Col. Robinson's law offices.

On May 13, 1947 the State of Florida completed its processing of the paperwork sent to Tallahassee and declared the community officially the Village of Wilton Manors, legally separated from Fort Lauderdale. There were no property taxes. Revenue was received from fees on occupational, beverage and power franchise licenses, and from a cigarette tax. Village barbecues were held to fund special projects.

The following is a verbatim transcript of the meeting. It was probably recorded in "short hand," and none of the remarks appear to have been previously prepared. The English is occasionally awkward. The photocopy available to the Historical Society is of poor quality. It suffers from spelling and English errors. A best effort has been made to reconstruct the illegible portions.

MINUTES OF ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF WILTON MANORS HELD MONDAY EVENING, APRIL 28, 1947 AT 8:00 P.M.

A. L. Hagen brought the meeting to order, stating the purpose of same, and reading the following statement:

"You have signed a petition that you want to incorporate:

1. One of the reasons is so that if either Oakland Park or Fort Lauderdale decide to outvote us as a municipality, we can make our own terms. Otherwise, our only resort is court procedure.
2. It is not proposed to levy taxes. It is simply for our protection, in case we are taken in.
3. The only way we can accomplish this is for everybody to show up at the April 28th meeting
4. Oakland Park, through its representative, has already solicited our going with them, but we feel our interests are common to ourselves, and we are justly proud of our little community.
5. We propose at this meeting to incorporate, giving our community a name and elect officials.
6. We must have not less than 2/3 of the qualified voters express their approval in writing, at the April 28th meeting.
7. It is up to you to come out and make your decision now!
8. The meeting will be held April 28th – 8 P.M. at the TROPICAL HOMES OFFICE, either inside or out," which is the present time.

We should appoint a temporary Chairman to take charge. If there are any questions to ask, he is qualified to answer them. I believe Mr. Robinson has been suggested as the temporary Chairman. All in favor of having Mr. Robinson temporary Chairman, say "I."

A: "I"

Q: . Negative?

By Mr. W. J. Robinson:

Folks, we all live out here in this little community and I think we all have more or less common purpose for living out here and common interests. Sometime ago a petition was circulated as far as possible to everyone, - some of you have moved in since – asking for personal opinion as to whether or not you desired to keep this little community together, so that if at any time it became necessary for us to express an opinion as a whole as to whether we should go in with someone else – we would be able under the laws of Florida – we could do our bargaining as a whole instead of individuals.

At a meeting of the Wilton Manors Association, which is purely a non-profit organization, trying to be use to our little community, it was decided, as you know, to circulate these petitions. Then the question came up of the boundaries and, after some little question about where the boundaries should be, a decision was reached which is to be subject to your approval. This Civic Association has reached out to every member of this community and some attend and some don't. Some don't get notices, but, if you will recall that some of this territory out here has been occupied so rapidly that you don't know who your neighbor is. We have common purposes of coming here this evening.

I will read legal advertisement of "Notice to Organize town" which appeared in the Fort Lauderdale Daily News March 26, April 2, 9, 16 1947.

"TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

You are hereby notified that on the 28th day of April, 1947, at the hour of 8:00 pm, Eastern Standard Time, at the office of the Tropical Homes Company, located on South Wilton Drive, in the community known as Wilton Manor, there will be an assembly and a meeting of all of the citizens who are registered voters residing within the following described boundaries, located in Broward County, Florida, and known locally by the name of WILTON MANORS, to wit:

"Bounded on the south by a line coincidental with the northern boundary line of the City of Fort Lauderdale as it presently exists ; bounded on the east by the western right-of-way line of the Florida East Coast Railway ; bounded on the west by a line running parallel with a street known and marked as North Andrews Avenue Extension and being 1200 feet west of North Andrews Avenue Extension ; bounded on the north by a line running coincidental with the south right-of-way line of a road known as Prospect Road and/ or North East 26th Street, said northern boundary line extending east of the terminal point of said Prospect Road and/ or North East 26th Street in a straight line to where it intersects with the right of way of the Florida East Coast Railway, and extending west along the same southern boundary of the right of way of said Prospect Road and/ or North East 26th Street west of said road's terminal point to where it intersects the western boundary line heretofore mentioned, said lands above described all lying and being in Broward County, Florida, to which is excepted all those lands belonging to George Richardson and Rachel Richardson, now used for the operation of a golf course, known as Richardson's Golf Course, and Lazy Lake, a subdivision, according to a plat thereof recorded in Plat Book 22, Page 35, of the Public Records of Broward County, Florida, said subdivision situated in Broward County, Florida:

"At which meeting it is proposed to organize, set up and establish a municipal government in and for the above described territory, which proposal results from petitions indicating that a large majority of interested parties are in favor of such proposal." (There were 86 who signed the petition in favor of it and 10 who signed it as being against it.)

"It is further proposed to select a name and corporate seal for the said proposed municipal government and to select and elect officers to maintain, operate and govern said municipal government and to do such other necessary and essential acts and deeds as may be required for the establishment of said proposed town or village government, as provided for and required to be done in Chapter 165 of the Florida Statutes Annotated, which said Chapter provides for the organization and

dissolution of municipalities and acts amendatory thereto, insofar as they may be applicable to the organization and establishment of said municipal government.” Signed by the Committee consisting of Dave Turner, W. J. Robinson, A Hagen, M. L. Prindle, and Perry Mickel.

This meeting is called for the purpose of having you people as qualified electors to decide whether or not you wish to become incorporated under the Statutes of the State of Florida: If 2/3rds and not less than 25 be in favor of such incorporation then we will have an incorporated government in this community.

As your temporary Chairman, it seems to me the first thing to do is to read the proposed ballot and answer questions which anyone may have. As to what this ballot says, it is proposed to incorporate this community here of Wilton Manors, and in this proposal is provided certain things.

By Mr. Warren Windel:

This is the ballot you vote upon to organize the town.

“IT IS PROPOSED :

That a certain area, described by metes and bounds in ‘NOTICE OF MEETING TO ORGANIZE THE TOWN’, published in the Fort Lauderdale Daily News, in the issues of March 26th, April 2nd, 9th, and 16th, 1947, excepting thereout and therefrom the following parcels of land, to wit:

All those lands belonging to George Richardson and Rachel Richardson, now used for the operation of a golf course, known as Richardson’s Golf Course, and Lazy Lake, a subdivision, according to a plat ??? of Plat Book 22, Page 35, of the ??? Broward County, Florida, said be incorporated under the general laws of the State of Florida, as a municipal corporation, with authority to act as such under the general laws of the State of Florida, and particularly under the authorization of Chapter 165, Florida Statutes Annotated.”

Two boxes follow:

“For the Proposal to Incorporate”

“Against the Proposal to Incorporate.

“The undersigned is a qualified elector who casts this ballot.” Then signature.

By Mr. Robinson:

The reason for that signature is on account of the very rapid influx of people into this community, which has been impossible to make check against the registration books as to those qualified to vote. Therefore, we will ascertain within five minutes after this ballot is collected whether we have requisite number of those who are qualified electors. Put your name down and we can tell five minutes afterwards whether we have enough. The chair would entertain motion to elect a Secretary of this meeting.

I nominate Miss Ester Achenback as Secretary of the meeting. Seconded.

Mr. Robinson: Any other nominations?

I move that the nominations be closed. Seconded.

Mr. Robinson: It has been moved and seconded that the nomination be closed. All in favor say “I”.

A: “I”

Mr. Robinson:

Q: Opposed

Mr. Robinson: So ordered.

The chair will entertain motion for election of three inspectors to supervise voting and election.

I nominate Mr. Brown.

Seconded.

I nominate Mr. Turner.

Seconded.

I nominate Mr Prindle.

Seconded.

Mr. Robinson:

Any other nominations?

Mr. Robinson:

Mr. Brown, Mr. Turner, and Mr Prindal have been nominate as inspectors of the election. No other nominations. All in favor signify by saying "I".

A: "I"

Q: Opposed?

Mr. Robinson: So ordered.

Q: Does a person have to live out here to vote?

By Mr. Robinson:

I will explain it in this way. For any effective and legal purpose the person has to live out here to vote.

Q: You mean people will incorporate this town without having power to vote on it, property owners?

A: Yes sir. The question of being a property owner has nothing whatsoever to do with it. However, we asked everybody to show up because we want an expression from everybody and are passing the ballots to everyone, which ballot as read, give everybody the opportunity to express themselves because we certainly don't want to do anything here that does to meet with the wish and will of the majority of the people.

Q: If you are not a qualified voter out here do you still want us to sign here?

A: Some place on the ballot, but not down on the bottom because we want expression of everybody.

Q: Define "qualified electors"?

A: Anyone who is qualified to vote in a general election and who resides in this community.

Q: If you have not been in this County long enough to qualify as a voter, no matter how much you have invested.

A. Not in this particular ballot.

Q: Lots of people who have property here could not vote if they were here?

Mr. Robinson:

A: That is right

Mr. Robinson:

A: Practically all of the people who live here own their property and who have as much interest in it as anybody else. This is purely and simply for the protection of this little community and it is not intended to float bond issues for City Hall, etc.

Q: It could be done.

A: Yes. If the people here want to tax themselves.

Q: How far could they go with the tax system?

A: Just as far as you can get people to advance money.

Q: What are we going to do paying all of the officers?

A: As far as I know there are no salaries asked.

Q: I, personally, don't want to be incorporated. I did not sign the petition.

Mr. Robinson:

If you people prefer to be in Oakland Park that is entirely a matter for you people to decide. The only reason we are not in Oakland Park tonight Mr. Turner said we were going to incorporate and we did not want to go into Oakland Park.

Q: What procedure would Oakland Park have to go through to incorporate this in Oakland Park?

A: Up here at the Legislature and ask the Legislators to put the matter through.

Q: We don't have a vote in that?

Mr. Robinson:

A: No.

Q: We would have a vote in this way. We could tell the Representatives themselves we did not want to go in?

A: That is right

I make motion to go ahead.

I don't think all of the people quite understand what they are to sign that thing?

A: Only qualified voters should sign on the bottom; others any place on there.

Q: How long do you have to be a qualified voter?

A: If you are registered to vote in the county or national elections you are qualified to vote. You can sign your name but on the bottom.

Q: I just moved out here. I vote in the city of Fort Lauderdale. Would I be qualified to vote "yes" or "no" on the proposition? I bought a house here. I don't see why I should be qualified. I have lived in Fort Lauderdale 21 years and have moved out here, and I am in favor of this and would like to vote for it.

Q: Would he not be a qualified voter in the County?

A: Yes.

Q: I don't want to be in it at all.

Mr. Robinson

That is your privilege. There is a place provided for that vote.

There is a motion made.

By Mr. John Pedersen:

Q: I have signatures here except one. Can we be exempt the same as Lazy Lake and the Richardsons. Have we the same privilege?

Mr. Robinson:

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Could you clarify the advantages of this incorporation?

A: I don't know that there are any advantages.

Q: Then what is the purpose of this meeting?

A: The Statutes of the State of Florida way that any other community can take you in by vote or action of the Legislature and you have nothing to say about proportion ?????? you are voted to assure of that individual ???? you in. You can make your own ???? ???? ???? incorporated.

???? ?????? Lazy Lake to get out of it?

A: They said they had their maintenance and police to take care of.

Q: We will do the same thing.

Mr. Robinson:

Q: Is there a second to the motion to vote?

A: Yes

Q: All in favor of balloting on the question of organizing the town signify by saying "I".

A: "I"

Q: Contrary?

Q: Let's have some more discussion.

Mr. Robinson:

Q: Will everybody who wants to cast ballot mark the ballot as indicated?

Q: Why don't you answer about Lazy Lake?

Mr. Robinson:

A: I told him over at the office.

Q: I was not over in the office. Is this a meeting?

Mr. Robinson:

A: Yes.

Q: Answer the man's question. As long as they don't want to take advantage of us there is no advantage to have us in.

Mr. Windle:

I believe I can answer the question. We have to come to a conclusion on this at some time. This has been pending for some time, several months. I live in this area on the old Dixie Highway. We do have to come to a definite conclusion at some time. If you still want to be exempt I think you should vote against incorporation at this time to allow you further opportunity to make arrangements that you want.

Q: I ?????? why we did not have the same privilege as ????????????????

A: ?????? arrangements before advertisement ?????? \$100,000.00 I am going to fight it to take all of the way to the Legislature.

Q: It is worth over half a million. You will find out it will cost these people more money and who is going to pay the bills?

By Mr. Windle:

A question has been asked. Who besides your particular group wants out, do you know?

Mr. Pederson:

A: Our own section.

Q: What is your section? Name your section.

A: We want the same privileges as the others have.

A: It was published in the paper.

Q: You don't want to go in Oakland park. That is your situation.

By Mr. Windle:

We live in a Democracy and we are here to determine whether or not we want to incorporate this area or not and if you do not want to incorporate it your privilege is to vote against it.

Q: What about Lazy Lake? They are not doing that.

Q: Are they voting tonight?

Mr. Robinson:

A: No

Mr. Pederson:

Q: What difference should it make if you eliminate us.

Mr. Windle:

A: I imagine they would just as soon you were out.

Mr. Pederson:

We have signatures here of everyone who lives north of Lazy Lake

Mr. Robinson:

Q: How many?

A: Twenty-one.

A: That will be twenty one votes.

Q: Mr. Chairman, you have a motion.

????????????????????

???????????????? on the question of organizing ??????????????????????

Q: Out of order.

A: He is not out of order.

Mr. Pederson:

I happen to be the largest property owner in the City of Fort Lauderdale. This is what you will have out here; it will lower the value of our property inside of the City limits.

By Mr. Windle:

Q: Are you threatening this group?

A: No.

Q: It sounds like it.

By Mr. Windle:

We have heard his side.

Q: Why would it lessen the value of our property?

A: That is one man's opinion. There is another one along this line. They can not levy taxes and your values will be high. That is stipulated in the minutes. Mr. Prindle, I think you brought that up over at the office a few minutes ago?

Mr. Prindle:

A: I did.

Q: Did you have your ears open when he read that a while ago? He agreed to have that in the minutes.

Q: It is on there that the propose to levy taxes. Can it be changed?

A: Not until we incorporate. You are so darned blockheaded you can't see it.

Mr. Robinson:

Q: Will everyone who chooses to vote mark the ballot in two blocks, either "for" or "against," sign it and pass by and put it in the box.

We would appreciate you folks staying. As soon as we have a decision whether or not ????

Mr. Turner appointed Chairman of the supervisors of elections.

Mr. Robinson:

Inspectors of election are ready to announce.

Mr. Turner:

Qualified voters "For" 46

"Against" 11

Non-qualified voters "for" 34

"Against" 11

Percentage 80% of the qualified voters expressed a desire for the incorporation.

Mr. Robinson:

These votes will have to be filed in the Court House and if those who have here had signified they are qualified and are not they will be thrown out.

Q: That fellow's ballot was passed back to him.

A: The ballot has been announced.

Q: We can still put it in according to law.

Mr. Robinson:

The vote has been announced in favor of the election.

A: To avoid any further discussion eliminate my ballot from that.

A: No

Q: It is a signed ballot.

A: I did not want to have anything they would bring up.

Mr. Robinson:

The Association has suggested a name for this which will have to be passed upon and that is a suggestion of "Wilton Manors." Are there any other suggestions?

A: That is good enough for me.

Mr. Robinson:

Q: Is there a motion that that be the name of this municipality?

????????????????

????????????????

Be called "Wilton Manors." All in favor signify by saying "I."

A: "I"

Q: Opposed?

A: So ordered.

Mr. Robinson:

We have to adopt a seal and suggested seal is simply a round seal with border of "Wilton Manors" with inscription on it with word "Seal", year "1947". Is there a motion that this be adopted as the seal of the municipality?

A: I make a motion.

Seconded.

Mr. Robinson:

It has been regularly moved and seconded that this be adopted as the seal; all in favor say "I".

A: "I".

Q: Contrary?

A: So ordered.

Mr. Robinson:

Under the law there will have to be an election of a Mayor, five aldermen, City Clerk and Marshall. The Chair is open for the office of Mayor nomination.

A: Dave Turner.

Seconded

If there are no further nominations same is closed.

A: I will make the nomination of Bill Robinson for Mayor.

(Declined)

A: I propose that nominations for Mayor be closed.

Q: Is there a second to that motion?

A: I second it.

???? moved and seconded that the nominations be ????

????????????????

????????????????

Mr. Robinson:

I call for nominations for five Aldermen. Several names have been suggested as possible nominees: Al Hagen, W.J. Robinson, J.S. Boyd, Arthur Shabbot, and J.M. Brown. You will find vacant spaces on the ballot so that you may fill in any other names.

A: I nominate Mr. Pedersen.

Mr. Windle:

Q: Do we hear motion that the five nominees be placed on the ballot for Aldermen?

A: I move that the five names be voted on for Aldermen.

Q: Are there any other nominations?

Q: Is there a second to that nomination of these five names?

A: Seconded.

Q: Are there any further names?

A: I make a motion that nomination be closed for Aldermen.

A: I second it.

Mr. Robinson:

It has been moved and seconded that nominations be closed for Aldermen. All in favor signify by saying "Y"?

A: "Y".

Q: Opposed?

A: So ordered.

Mr. Robinson:

We will now have names for office of City Clerk. Katherine V. Johnson, who has been Secretary of the Association throughout its life, has been suggested. Is there a motion to that effect?

A: I make the motion.

Q: Is there a second to the nomination?

????????????

????????????

A: I move that the nominations be closed.

A: Seconded.

Mr. Robinson:

It has been moved and seconded that nominations for City Clerk be closed. All in favor signify by saying "Y".

A: "Y".

Q: Opposed?

A: So ordered.

Mr. Robinson:

I call for nominations for the office of Marshall. We have two suggested names, Mr. H. B. Sanderson and Mr. V.E. Starkey. Is there a motion on that?

A: I make the motion.

A: Seconded.

Mr. Robinson:

It has been moved and seconded that H. B. Sanderson and V. E. Starkey be nominees for City Marshall; any other nominations?

A: I move that the nominations be closed.

A: Seconded.

Mr. Robinson:

It has been moved and seconded that nominations for City Marshall be closed. All in favor signify by saying "I".

A: "I".

Q: Opposed?

Mr. Robinson:

So ordered.

Mr. Robinson

These ballots containing the names and their blank spaces and in each space it says how many to vote for.

Q: What is the term of office?

A: The term of office on everybody except Aldermen is one year ?????????? their successors are elected and qualified. ????? for Alderman is for one year or under the ??????????????????will not be a vacancy.

Mr. Robinson:

A: Same thing as before.

Q: No space for signatures?

A: No.

I move that those who are candidates be disqualified as supervisors of election.

Seconded.

Mr. Robinson:

Moved and seconded that those disqualify by reason of being candidates and withdraw and Ray Coleman and A. F. Coleman and Warren Windle be elected inspector for this ballot. All in favor signify by saying "I".

A: "I".

Q: Opposed the same.

A: So ordered.

Mr. Robinson:

The Association has for its purpose the interest of everyone who lives out here. The ????? of garbage collection is a matter of work on the part of those people in the Association. The Association stated and helped get the bus line out here. This incorporation is simply expression of your attitude and determination that we will continue to have common interests and common purposes as long as you people decided that, and you are all cordially invited to attend Association meetings and become members. Every interest of members of that Association is of interest to you we thank you very heartily for being here.

RESULTS OF ELECTION”

Dave Turner was elected Mayor, 62 votes.

Hagen – 65 votes

Robinson – 64 votes

Chabot– 64 votes

Brown– ?? votes

Boyd

??????

?????

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????????????

??????????

THEREUPON, the meeting closed.

STATE OF FLORIDA

COUNTY OF BROWARD

I, M. ESTHER ACHENBACK, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that the forgoing is a true transcription of the proceedings had in the meeting aforesaid.

This April 30, A.D. 1947

Attached are nine (9) Exhibits:

- Exhibit 1 – Circular by Association
- Exhibit 2 – Sample Ballot for Election of Officers
- Exhibit3 – Sample Ballot on Incorporation
- Exhibit 4 – Certificate of Result of Election as to Incorporation
- Exhibit 5 – Certificate of Result of Election for Mayor
- Exhibit 6 – Proof of Publication of Notice of Meeting
- Exhibit 7 – Oath of Mayor
- Exhibit 8 – Seal
- Exhibit 9 – Certificate of Officers-Elect

CERTIFICATE

The undersigned hereby certify as follows:

1, That they are the officers-elect of the recently incorporated municipality of Wilton Manors:

That under the name of each is the office to which he was elected; there were 57 qualified electors present;

That the forgoing transcript is a fair and complete transcript of the proceedings of said meeting under which said municipality was organized.

IN WITNESS THEREOF the undersigned have caused this certificate to be signed and attested to by the Clerk and the corporate seal hereto affixed.

Katherine V. Johnson - City Clerk-elect

H.B. Sanderson - Marshall-elect

Dave Turner - Mayor-elect

James A. Boyd - Alderman-elect

Alvar S Hagen - Alderman-elect

Arthur S. Chabot - Alderman-elect

J. Marvin Brown - Alderman-elect

W. J. Robinson - Alderman Elect

The Historical Society thanks Patricia Staples and the City Clerk's Office and those who helped her. The Commission and the City also owe her a thanks for a great job.

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