

Governmental Research Department

Wide Range of Activities

Charity Endorsement Committee:

The purpose of this Committee is to investigate expenditures, activities and management of various philanthropic institutions that appeal to the public for support; with the view of safeguarding the Chamber of Commerce membership and citizens against unworthy appeals. Those organizations which present properly audited books and have in their work programme no duplicating functions of work are given endorsements by this Committee. Endorsements are withheld from those organizations which do not measure up to these standards.

This Committee has analyzed the audits and budgets of the Associated Charities, the Boy Scouts and the Y. W. C. A. The financial campaigns of all the above organizations were endorsed by the Committee and each campaign has terminated with success. The Committee also has complete information on all other philanthropic institutions in El Paso and stands ready to consider any financial campaigns that are proposed.

Since Dec. 24, 1919, to date this Committee has had eight meetings with good attendance.

The proposition of raising funds for all philanthropic institutions in one campaign at one time is a problem this Committee should consider in its future work programme.

Tax and Economy Committee:

Since Dec. 24, 1919 this Committee has devoted its entire time to the County road situation. In the interest of economy it has protested the award made by the County Commissioners for the construction of the "Island road," on the grounds that the award made by the County Commissioners was not made to the best bid. A brief of the work of this Committee appears in the attached memorandum Exhibit No. 1.

On the County road situation the accomplishments of the Committee to date are:

1. Recommendation by the Committee and adoption by the Commissioners of the serial type of bond issues resulting in an annual saving of \$8,000.00 to the tax-payers.
2. Secured the advertisement of road bonds for public sale instead of selling bonds at private sale which will probably save from two to five cents on each dollar of the \$700,000.00 advertised.
3. Secured improvement of specifications on the crushed rock road with a bitulithic top for the Island.

City Planning Committee:

The City Planning Committee has made a survey of all proposed large park sites with the view of recommending to the Mayor and Council the site most suitable for the city's immediate parking purposes. The survey as presented to Mayor and Council is attached herewith Exhibit No. 2.

The Committee agreed upon the area known as the Fisher and the Collins survey as the site to be recommended to Mayor and Council for purchase.

The plan for purchase is to organize a holding company which would purchase the entire survey, subdivide same and sell lots in order to pay for the land and to transfer to the City 216 acres for parking purposes for a consideration of \$30,000 from the City.

The Committee submitted its recommendations to Mayor and Council Wednesday, Feb. 25, 1920, at which time the City officials heartily approved the suggestions made and the Mayor appointed a Committee of two Aldermen with instructions to assist the City Planning Committee in formulating the final details of the plan.

EXHIBIT NO. 1

The County Road Situation

By D. A. BANDEEN

The suggestions of the Chamber of Commerce to the County Commissioners in regard to selecting the best bid on the Island Road were finally turned down by the Commissioners' Court at its meeting, Wednesday afternoon, Feb. 11th. The final action of the Commissioners was taken after a number of hearings were granted to Chamber of Commerce, and after the submission of all the data and information collected by the Chamber of Commerce in support of the suggestions made.

The first action taken by the Tax and Economy Committee, and the Chamber of Commerce Directors, was on Nov. 14, 1919, when the \$800,000.00 bond issue was endorsed and supported. At this time it was also suggested "that in the interest of economy the principles of competitive bidding in awarding contracts be fully observed." It was also suggested "that with the view of handling the proposed \$800,000.00 bond issue with the minimum burden upon the tax payers, the County Commissioners care for the debt by issuing a serial type of bonds for a thirty year period of time, maturing annually." This suggestion was compiled with the County Commissioners.

The next action taken by the Chamber of Commerce was on Dec. 19, 1919. At this time it was learned that the County Commissioners were planning to give bonds to contractors as payment for road work, instead of selling the bonds and paying contractors in cash. The Chamber of Commerce protested this on the ground that the arrangement would result in a loss to the tax payers, because contractors would protect themselves in selling the bonds by adding to their bid on the road work. The result would be that the tax payers would get about 95c or 97c worth of work on the dollar instead of a dollar's worth of work.

It was suggested in a resolution of Dec. 19, 1919, "that the recently voted County bonds be sold for cash to parties disinterested in road building and construction, and that County road bonds be not given to any contractor as payment for road work." This request was repeated in a resolution to the County Commissioners on Jan. 15, 1920. At this time it was again pointed out that tax payers would lose money in case the bonds were not sold in the regular and prescribed way—as shown by the fact that one contractor had bid 5% higher on the road work in case of accepting the bonds as payment for work.

The County Commissioners adhered to their original plan of paying contractors in bonds until Feb. 4th, 1920, when they authorized the auditor to advertise for sale in the Bond Buyer, \$700,000.00 worth of County bonds. This includes all the bond issue, with the exception of those necessary for the construction of the Island Road.

Another request made by the Chamber of Commerce Dec. 19, 1919, was that State and Federal aid moneys be retained by the County and distributed to projects with the view of obtaining Federal and State engineering advice on specifications and guarantees for maintenance after the roads were constructed. It was thought that this arrangement would guarantee to the tax payers their money's worth in the construction of the County roads.

On Dec. 29, 1919, information was received from the State Highway Department that \$17,500, the amount of Federal aid, was transferred to State aid. This meant that Federal engineers would have nothing to say about maintenance of our roads. The Tax and Economy Committee immediately conferred with Judge McClintock in regard to this; and to date the situation stands with all Federal aid transferred to State aid and the County will not obtain any benefits from the Federal Highway department engineers.

Saturday, Jan. 10th, 1920, the specifications for the Island road were received by the Tax

and Economy Committee. The specifications were immediately analyzed and an appraisal of the comparative worth of the various types of pavement called for was prepared in written form.

On Monday, Jan. 12th, the bids were received and on Tuesday, Jan. 13th, the contract was awarded to the Bitulithic Company for the construction of a Bitulithic pavement on concrete base at \$2.90 per square yard.

The data and information collected up to this time overwhelmingly showed that the concrete base for the Bitulithic pavement was second class, due to which fact this road would not be as good a road as the straight concrete design which was of the highest type of construction and which was 41c per square yard cheaper than the Bitulithic. In the interest of giving the tax payers the most for their money, the Tax and Economy Committee on Jan. 14, 1920, "respectfully requested that the signing of the contract, as awarded for the construction of a Bitulithic pavement on a 1-3-6 concrete base at the price bid, \$2.90 per square yard, be held in abeyance until action by the Directors of the Chamber of Commerce in session Thursday evening, Jan. 15, 1920." The Chamber of Commerce Directors met—reviewed all the data and information gathered by the Tax and Economy Committee and passed a resolution requesting the County Commissioners "to rescind their action in awarding the contract for Bitulithic pavement at \$2.90 per square yard," and "to award the contract for the Island road to the El Paso Bitulithic Company for the construction of a concrete road at \$2.49 per square yard." Testimony from seventeen State Highway Departments guided the Chamber of Commerce in making this request. This information was unqualifiedly to the effect that because of our specifications the concrete road was a better road than the Bitulithic.

The Directors of the Chamber of Commerce authorized the Tax and Economy Committee together with the Trustees of the Chamber of Commerce to present all facts and suggestions to the County Commissioners.

Friday morning Judge McClintock informed the Committee that the Commissioners would meet at two o'clock that afternoon. At about 2:15 P. M. the Committee appeared at the Commissioners' Court. After the Committee presented all its facts and made its suggestions the Court stated that the contract had been awarded to a crushed rock road with a Bitulithic top at \$2.48 per square yard.

This action came as a surprise to the Committee, because information gathered showed that the crushed rock road in comparative value was worth only about 50% of the straight concrete road; while the price was only one cent different.

The Tax and Economy Committee and the Directors of the Chamber of Commerce immediately gathered additional data from leading Highway engineers on the question of what was the best bid, the \$2.48 bid for crushed rock road or the \$2.49 bid for the concrete road. Every opinion reviewed stated the \$2.49 per square yard bid was best.

January 17th, the Commissioners were requested "to rescind their action in awarding the contract for the crushed rock with a Bitulithic top at \$2.48 per square yard and award same to the Bitulithic Company for the concrete road at \$2.49 per square yard" and "to take this action in the interest of securing for the tax payers the best possible road at the least possible cost." At this time every telegram and every bit of information gathered by the Tax and Economy Committee was given to the Commissioners.

No action was taken by the Commissioners and on Jan. 24, or thereabouts, the Committee suggested that the difference on the road situation be passed upon by a board of engineers