

March 7, 2019

Triumph Gulf Coast Inc.
Tallahassee, Florida

Dear Triumph Board of Directors:

The Wakulla Commercial Fishermen's Association Inc. opposes Triumph Proposal 177 requesting \$1.5 million for a Marine Service Occupational Training Program, submitted by Tallahassee Community College for the Wakulla Environmental Institute.

Our opposition is two-fold: If WEI's track record is a valid indicator, its marine center would create threatening competition for local businesses and Wakulla County would receive limited, if any, benefit.

WEI indicates Proposal 177 would "train individuals who launch at least 2 new local businesses" (p. 38), each year in boat building/sales and marine maintenance service. This, undeniably, would produce more competition for our local marine businesses.

Also in Proposal 177, TCC/WEI wants more than \$700,000 for tools and equipment, including \$48,000 for welding (p.77). Without question, welders in Wakulla County would be negatively impacted if BP's millions bankroll new competition.

WEI argues Wakulla needs boats that can run in tight spaces created by a "new" demand for more oyster farms. This need is questionable since federal SAJ-99 regulations prohibit aquaculture from creating a hindrance (tight spaces) to navigation in our waters. Moreover, Florida's Aquaculture Division said in February 2019, there are no applications for more oyster-farm leases in Wakulla County, indicating that a "new" demand is non-existent.

WEI also implies it will use an existing warehouse on its Crawfordville campus for the marine center (p. 66), but requests \$6,500 a month to lease and insure a warehouse (p. 78). While its contradictory language is confusing, we question WEI's need for a lease because, on any given day, the WEI campus has unused buildings and classrooms.

Examine WEI's track record: In 2012, TCC made sweeping promises to get millions of dollars to build WEI as an environmental center and offer eight degree and certificate programs focused on the environment. Wakulla County cheered.

By 2013, with great fanfare, TCC purchased 158 acres of land for a WEI campus, even though the purchase eliminated property tax revenue for the county, in addition to 48 acres TCC took off Wakulla County's tax rolls in 2010, which have done nothing but grow weeds.

Then, four years later, TCC trustees deleted its A.S. degree for Environmental Science Technology and, in November 2018, wiped out its environmental science courses.

By 2018, WEI offered only four classes for the whole year – one Spring drone class with seven enrolled; two Fall drone classes with nine enrolled, and an oyster class with 27 enrolled.

So, instead of becoming North Florida's "hub" for all things environmental, WEI might want to change its name to Wakulla – Institute.

Rather than fulfill its promises, TCC/WEI created an oyster farming business for itself, by signing, in 2017, a business-partner deal with a for-profit corporation set up by WEI oyster students who included TCC/WEI people as directors.

Furthermore, as Triumph's board may be aware, TCC/WEI's Proposal 91 and its "business partner" Proposal 154 are now asking a total of \$32.5 million for oyster processing, among other things, which would threaten the livelihoods of at least four Wakulla oyster processors.

WCFA's members object to a state-created board awarding millions of BP dollars to those who want to develop projects that could threaten established legitimate businesses in our county, and we appeal to Triumph directors to examine TCC/WEI's claims and consider the detrimental impact its proposals could have.

Sincerely,

Lance Barker, vice president of the Wakulla Commercial Fishermen's Association Inc.
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