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Bob Turner

'Wall' is on paper

The stakes aren't as high, for sure, but some folks in posh Dana Shores and on across the bay in Clearwater must know a little of what it's like to be a Berliner.

By quirk, or fingers of fate, a city limit line shuts off a number of Dana families on their filled-in residences from virtually all municipal contact save its tax bite.

They want out.

Go west into Pinellas and Clearwater and you'll find such vagaries are not limited to the likes of Dana Shores, Bower tracts and comparable complexities.

AFTER THE Hillsborough legislative delegation hearing when the Dana Shores city-county anomaly came up — along with everything else in the kitchen sink — Councilman Vince Meloy, who heard it, observed:

—The isolated, cut-off, inaccessible Dana residents who live on the slivers of "city" territory but get few of the municipal services they pay taxes for, that's another argument for consolidation.

—They do, however, get some municipal return for their dollars, and if you want to see a really bollixed-up case, check Clearwater.

THE PROBLEM AT Dana Shores is peripheral, in the literal sense — though the affected taxpayers certainly don't so regard it — because it's at the edge of the city limits, with their only street access through "county" territory down the upland end of the fingers.

Residents said this apparently is alien entry the city people don't care to traverse, and besides, the nearest city fire station, for example, is hopelessly far away.

But in Clearwater, the city went to the Pinellas' legislative delegation asking a cure for a most unusual case of city-county "splotch."

THE DILEMMA THERE is what to do about a bunch of little islands, pockets or enclaves of developed territory lying completely within the corporate limits of Clearwater that aren't legally part of the city.

These maverick subsections range in size from several square blocks down to a single lot. Unlike the Dana fingers, these lands are not blocked off from — but surrounded by — municipal hegemony.

One lumber yard is a county island in the city, and residential examples date back to subdivision development in the boom, or after, when a project sprawled over a city line and was incompletely brought in later.

ACCORDING TO Bud Parmer, former Tampa newsman who is now administrative assistant to the Clearwater city manager, not all the reasons how it came about are fully known any longer.

But city officials do know that actual and potential health hazards exist from this dappled demography, with geological surveys to back them up, Parmer said.

Concentrations of people still on septic tanks in some of those enclaves jeopardize the shallow aquifer which feeds the deep aquifer associated with that area. Some wells have been shut down.

"WE ARE NOT trying to bring people in, but to protect our people and people in the enclaves," asserted Parmer. There are 15 of these territories.

Some persons in the pockets are begging to come in, but others want to stay "out." Inevitably, several vocal disputants resided far from any of the affected areas.

Both Pinellas and Hillsborough lawmaking delegations are getting all the facts in their respective tribulations with isolationism, keeping their own counsel on what to do about it for a while.

Consolidation might even east-west tensions, at least around Courtney Campbell Causeway.

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