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February 3, 1986

Dear Friend:

Enclosed is an advance copy of a statement which I will be making to the Corpus Christi City Council at 2:00 p.m., on Tuesday, February 4, 1986. It deals with our plans to build the proposed Texas State Aquarium on a new site at the southern tip of Corpus Christi (North) Beach.

We are excited about these plans. We think you will agree that this is a decision that had to be made in the interest of launching our fundraising campaign and getting on with the job of making this major new facility a reality.

I hope you'll have time to read over this statement. We welcome your comments and suggestions. Most of all, we will look forward to having your active support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Dorn".

John Dorn

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Enclosure

February 4, 1986

STATEMENT BY JOHN DORN, PRESIDENT, CORPUS CHRISTI AQUARIUM
ASSOCIATION

Mayor Jones and members of the City Council:

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you this afternoon about our plans to build an aquarium. I'm accompanied today by some of our Board members and consultants, and all of us will be available to answer any questions you may have at the conclusion of my presentation.

Plans for an aquarium in Corpus Christi date back to the late 1960's. Countless supporting organizations and hundreds of Board members have been involved during the almost twenty years this project has been kicked around. One of our stalwarts joked the other day that when she first joined the Aquarium Board she did so to help build something in Corpus Christi that would benefit her children; now, she is saying she wants "to do this for her grandchildren".

All joking aside -- no one regrets more than we do the

delays that have caused one postponement after another in getting the aquarium built. Virtually all of these delays have been caused by our inability to acquire a suitable site.

We are here today to tell you that we believe we have solved that problem, and with your support and help, and with the help of the citizens of Corpus Christi and South Texas, and from people throughout the state, we're going to build the Texas State Aquarium in Corpus Christi, not in Dallas or Houston. And, we promise it will be a facility that will be a major asset for Corpus Christi and for Texas.

Here are the specific details:

We have obtained options on approximately six acres of land on the south end of Corpus Christi Beach (or North Beach, as some people prefer to call it) which, we believe provides the ideal site for a new aquarium. I have with me several photographs that will show you the exact area.

Please note that it is directly across the ship channel from

the Bayfront Plaza Convention Center and the Art Museum of South Texas.

These sixty day options -- all of which are currently running -- must be exercised quickly if we are to obtain the property. Total property costs will run in the neighborhood of \$3 - 3 1/2 million, and to buy it we will need immediate and substantial contributions from local citizens who support this site for the aquarium.

We believe locating the aquarium on this part of North Beach is preferable to the landmass, the Peoples Street T-Head or anywhere else for the following reasons:

(1) It gives us a site that will prove to be highly visible from the Convention Center, the downtown hotels and the bayfront. From the aquarium, there will be a spectacular view of our city's downtown area, the Harbor Bridge and the ocean-going ships that pass right by it.

(2) It will allow us to build a taller, more dramatic

building than the location on the landmass or Peoples Street T-Head would have permitted.

(3) It provides ample adjacent land for parking and, most importantly, for future expansion.

(4) It satisfies those of our citizens who object to any additional congestion on the downtown bayfront.

(5) It gives the North Beach area the shot in the arm long needed to spur other major development there, which will greatly enhance community development and property values in that area.

(6) It will make financially feasible the city's often talked about water taxi service, because we would want and need access by boat from downtown and other points around the bay.

(7) It is immediately available for site development and construction.

When this project was first planned, it was envisioned to be a \$2 1/2 million local facility. A number of things have happened since to alter substantially our plans:

(1) Through the effectiveness of our local legislative delegation, and in particular because of the leadership of Speaker Pro Tem Hugo Berlanga, the last session of the Legislature designated our aquarium the "official" aquarium of Texas. That is why our Board recently voted to name our new facility the Texas State Aquarium. This official designation is not to be taken lightly, and our Board decided that if we were indeed going to be the state aquarium, we had to build a facility worthy of the name.

(2) Corpus Christi is today placing a much greater emphasis on tourism and conventions than it did several years ago. The decline of the oil industry here, coupled with the recent construction of the Bayfront Plaza Convention complex and several large hotels, has pushed us into expanding this

important new source of business and jobs. It is a new industry that we must continue to nourish if we are to compete with other cities. We believe the Texas State Aquarium as now envisioned will prove to be an important addition to our attractiveness to out of town visitors.

(3) Nueces and San Patricio Counties -- which comprise the Corpus Christi metropolitan area -- now have, according to latest census figures, close to 375,000 residents. That represents a 32% population gain since 1970, when the aquarium was first planned.

By the time the aquarium opens in 1989 or 1990, it is estimated that our population will be over 400,000. Homeport will likely make it even larger. We clearly will have the population base to support a much larger aquarium than we previously had planned.

For these reasons, and because of inflation, we are now planning an aquarium that will cost \$10 - \$12 million just to

build the structure and obtain the exhibits. Add our land costs and we are talking about raising nearly \$15 million.

This will not be easy. It will take the maximum financial participation of thousands of people, particularly in Corpus Christi and the surrounding area. But, we are optimistic it can be done. We have found overwhelming support for the aquarium throughout the city and beyond. As an example of that support, we are proud to have recruited some very prominent Texans to Chair our Statewide Advisory Committee:

Vice President George Bush

Mrs. Lady Bird Johnson

Ambassador Anne Armstrong

Dr. Hector P. Garcia

Their willingness to lend their names to this project and to help us is positive evidence of the support we have.

We are, therefore, willing to take on the task of raising \$15 million.

But, we must also have help from the City of Corpus Christi.

We estimate that approximately \$4 million more will be needed to cover site preparation and infrastructure costs.

We will need bulkheading and passenger docks for water taxis; the relocation of utility lines; the possible use of the city's power of eminent domain to obtain adjacent properties for a municipal parking lot. Such funds would also be used to pave and light those parking lots and to provide curbs, gutters and sidewalks; we will need landscaping and upgrading of the facilities in North Channel Park: renovation and restoration of the old City Fire Station in that park for a related use; closing of city streets within our property boundaries; adequate outdoor lighting throughout the area; and, possible rerouting and beautification of access roads.

We respectfully request that the City Council approve

allocating the money to do these things, either from existing funds or projected future revenues, or by including the amount needed in the upcoming April 5 bond issue. Our architects will be available to work with city staff in coming up with a more definitive cost figure.

Let me stress again that we are not asking the city to make this money available directly to us or to use it in any way to build the aquarium or to purchase land on which the aquarium building would be located. Rather, we are asking that the city pay for necessary infrastructure and site preparation, provide for adequate adjacent parking, and vehicle and public access. In return we will work with the city in whatever way necessary -- including the possibility of giving the land we purchase back to the city in exchange for a long term lease on the property on which we would build the aquarium, as originally was contemplated on the other city owned sites.

I should mention here that with only one exception (Monterey, California, where one individual gave all the money to build an aquarium) all of the new aquariums in this country already opened or still being planned have been done with a mix of public and private funds.

Now, a few words about the landmass:

We regret that this decision to acquire a new site on North Beach means that we no longer will be able to consider the proposed landmass as a viable site for the aquarium.

We are not opposed to the landmass. Indeed, it is my opinion that the vast majority of our Board supports the landmass. But, for three basic reasons we cannot build our aquarium on the landmass:

They are:

(1) We worked hard to win the state's official designation. If we are not open and operating by 1991, the legislature has already provided that we automatically will

lose our state designation. We cannot start our fundraising with our site unsettled, and the present and potential future delays expected in conjunction with the landmass rule it out as a site.

(2) When we agreed to consider the landmass as a possible site, we were planning a smaller local facility, for which the two acres promised us there (plus two acres for non exclusive parking) would have been adequate. The larger, statewide facility we are now planning requires a much larger site, both for present needs and future expansion.

(3) The unfortunate controversy surrounding the landmass has convinced us that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to raise the \$10 million necessary to build the aquarium on the landmass. Frankly, we think it will be easier to raise \$15 million for our North Beach site than it would be to raise \$10 million for a building on the landmass.

Any one of the foregoing reasons -- standing alone -- would force us to no longer consider the landmass or the back up site, the Peoples Street T-Head. All of them collectively provide overwhelming reasons why we must move.

I would like to close by reiterating some things about the aquarium project that are often overlooked:

We are representing a non-profit corporation. With the exception of a few professional consultants and a small paid staff, all of us are volunteers who are taking substantial time away from our jobs and businesses, not to mention our families, to do something positive for Corpus Christi. This is not our aquarium. It will be an aquarium for all the citizens of this city and of this state.

We have already invested thousands of man and woman hours and tens of thousands of our own dollars in this project, and we will give much, much more time and money during the next two years.

But before we can go any further, we must have tangible evidence of support both from the City and from our local citizenry.

We commend you, Mr. Mayor, and you, the members of this City Council for the leadership you've provided in building a better Corpus Christi. You have been forward looking in your approach to providing for our city's future.

A new aquarium will be a major boost to our city's obvious need to develop a strong convention and tourist industry here. It can be the breakthrough we've all been talking about for years. No longer will we have to complain about or apologize for the lack of anything for our visitors to do while they're here.

The new aquarium will be a major center for education and research. It will provide entertainment and excitement for our children, and for their parents and grandparents, too. It will raise considerable tax revenues for the city --

both in increased sales and property taxes. It will help create, directly and indirectly, hundreds, even thousands, of new jobs. In short, it will be, along with Homeport, a tremendous boost to our economy.

If you want the aquarium, we are willing to raise the money to build it.

Thank you for your time and your consideration. We'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.