

**Antonia Hover**

**From:** Antonia Hover on behalf of Records Clerk  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 9, 2020 12:53 PM  
**To:** 'bdwyer31@yahoo.com'  
**Cc:** Consumer Contact  
**Subject:** RE: Docket # 20200226

Good Afternoon, Ms. Dwyer.

We will be placing your comments below in consumer correspondence in Docket Number 20200226, and forwarding them to the Office of Consumer Assistance and Outreach.

Thank you!

*Toni Hover*

*Commission Deputy Clerk I  
Florida Public Service Commission  
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Phone: (850) 413-6467*

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**From:** bdwyer31@yahoo.com <bdwyer31@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 9, 2020 12:10 PM  
**To:** Records Clerk <CLERK@PSC.STATE.FL.US>  
**Subject:** Docket # 20200226

Re: Wastewater System for Little Gasparilla Island  
Re: Docket Number 20200226-WS at the Public Service Commission

My name is Barbara Dwyer. I represent the Little Gasparilla Island Property Owners Association (LGPOA). We have concerns about the construction, operation, maintenance and cost of the wastewater system that is in the early planning stages with Charlotte County (CC), Environmental Utilities LLC (EU) and the Public Service Commission (PSC).

The LGPOA understands Little Gasparilla Island (LGI) and the surrounding areas are environmentally sensitive and would benefit from a wastewater system to curb the nutrient runoff from aging septic systems on the island. We are aware that CC put together a comprehensive Sewer Master Plan (SMP) in 2017 to address the issues. We also realize that CC has entered into an agreement with EU to potentially build and operate this system. We understand that the areas of Cape Haze, DonPedro/Knight Island and LGI are under the scope of the EU agreement.

EU attended a meeting with the LGPOA Board to talk about upcoming plans and answer questions. The LGPOA has a number of concerns with this project that we are asking to be considered before finalizing any plans to proceed.

1. The recommendations in the 2017 Sewer Master Plan (SMP) are not being followed. Though the changes were discussed, there was not a formal plan written, or at least not shared with us, giving a true expectation of cost. All questions about pricing were answered with the costs are as yet undetermined.
2. The low pressure grinder pump wastewater system being suggested was claimed to have lower initial costs, but have higher operation & maintenance (O&M) costs than the recommended vacuum system. We were told the current septic tanks would be pumped, crushed & filled then replaced with a grinder, pump and tank. All maintenance would be performed by EU. A little research indicated grinder pumps cost \$4-5,000 and have an average life expectancy of 8 - 10 years. The grinder pump system will place higher energy demands on the island electric grid. Monthly & annual maintenance will have to be performed. This is an expensive proposition for homeowners if pumps have to be replaced more frequently considering the corrosive nature of salt in the sea air.
3. Based on the 2017 SMP, the vacuum system that was recommended by CC has proven to be reliable. The capital costs associated with the vacuum system are on par with the low pressure system. The O&M costs are less. There would be minimal outfall of wastewater in case a line breaks. There would be very little Infiltration & Inflow into the system. It is likely we could get federal grants to help with the higher installation costs of the vacuum system. The higher O&M costs of the grinder pump low pressure system would be an ongoing burden to the homeowner.
4. Historically, any kind of work being done on LGI costs 1.5 - 3 times more than the same work on the mainland. The current barge cost to bring anything to the island is about \$1200. Adding a 15-20% profit margin on top of higher O&M costs could create problems for many of the long term residents.
5. On the mainland, the sewer expansion plans can be paid for over time on property taxes. The costs remain with the property. We were told there are possible federal grants to defray the costs for the initial impact fees, but we would have to pay the balance outright or get personal loans. In this case, the burden would remain with the owner at time of expansion.
6. There are 2 condominium complexes with 132 owners on LGI. There were no provisions included for bulk customers in the agreement signed by EU with CC. Though we realize Hideaway Bay Beach Club (HBBC) is considered its own DEP permitted utility, we believe provision should be in place at the beginning of the project for this potential connection.

The LGPOA is asking if Charlotte County would be willing to maintain this project so it will be kept a public utility instead of a for-profit utility? At least then, we would not have to pay the additional 15-20% profit margin on an already expensive proposition.

Are there any other measures CC would be willing to provide or perform to help with the enormous costs of this sewer expansion project other than applying for federal grants?

As taxpayers, we ask that CC do everything they can to keep the costs down as much as possible. A wastewater plan that has an environmental impact on such a wide area should not be profitized.

We ask for the courtesy of a reply to our questions and concerns prior to the EU certification hearing with the PSC on Jan 5, 2021.

Please keep the LGPOA informed of all meetings, notices, recommendations, information and final orders with regards to the wastewater system project affecting Cape Haze/Knight Island/Don Pedro/LGI.

Thank You,

Barbara Dwyer

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CC: Charlotte County Commission Bill Truex, Charlotte County Administrator Hector Flores, Charlotte County Utilities Director Craig Rudy, The Office of Public Council, Environmental Utilities LLC

Sent from my iPad