

Jacob Veaughn

From: Jacob Veaughn on behalf of Records Clerk
Sent: Monday, January 24, 2022 11:28 AM
To: 'Dale Novak'
Cc: Consumer Contact
Subject: RE: Docket #20200226-SU / Environmental Utilities Proposed Sewer

Good Morning, Dale & Julie Novak

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

Jacob Veaughn

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From: Dale Novak <dnovak@novakcreative.net>
Sent: Sunday, January 23, 2022 1:21 PM
To: Records Clerk <CLERK@PSC.STATE.FL.US>; Office of Commissioner La Rosa <Commissioner.LaRosa@psc.state.fl.us>; Office of Commissioner Clark <Commissioner.Clark@psc.state.fl.us>; Office of Commissioner Passidomo <Commissioner.Passidomo@psc.state.fl.us>
Subject: Docket #20200226-SU / Environmental Utilities Proposed Sewer

January 23, 2022

Florida Public Service Commission
LaRosa, Clark, Passidomo
Clerk of the Commission

Re: Docket #20200226-SU / Environmental Utilities Proposed Sewer

Dear Commissioners:

As I am sure you are aware, the barrier islands known as Don Pedro, Palm Island, Knight Island & Little Gasparilla, and the homeowners thereof, are in the process of being subjected to a central sewer system as proposed by Jack Boyer of Environmental Utilities (EU).

As a property and homeowner on Don Pedro Island, we are without reservation opposed to this proposal as detailed below.

1) There is absolutely no “environmental” need for the system. Most of the septic systems on the island have been updated and further, most are tested yearly to meet environmental standards (both state and county). There has also been numerous new homes built on the islands in the last several years. Those new homes have met or exceeded the requirements for an environmentally efficient waste disposal system.

2) Our water quality has NOT been effected by the septic systems on the islands. The primary driver of the pollution and water issues is flowing down the Caloosahatchee river via releases from Lake Okeechobee. This is well documented by Captains for Clean Water, an environmental group based in Fort Myers — of which we are Members.

3) The EU has no experience — and no track record for providing sewer service. How it is possible for a company to have no experience in a project of this scale and complexity, and be considered and approved to provide this service is beyond words. It seems so immensely illogical that it's akin to handing the controls of a 747 full of passengers to a person with no flying experience. It is absolutely absurd. Have the Commissioners considered the possible outcomes, or possible solutions, if the EU goes bankrupt during this process, or fails to meet any memorable timetable? Or, if the systems they are proposing simply fail to work? What happens if the system fails and dumps millions of gallons of waste water into our waterways? Will the EU be able to financially absorb and correct a failure of that magnitude — or will they just pass the cost on to the property owners? What about storm damage? Will the EU be able to restore service in a timely manner entirely at their cost — or once again, is their plan to pass on those expenses to the property owners? It appears that the entire EU proposal is based on passing ALL OF THE COSTS on to the property owners. Imagine FPL doing that after every storm or failure of the electrical grid.

4) The EU has shown zero accountability to demonstrate their ability to reasonably finance their proposal other than to suggest that all the costs will be burdened to the property owners. It is absolutely implausible to think that every property owner on the barrier islands can simply write checks for unknown amounts in perpetuity. The response by the EU to this complexity thus far is for the property owner to simply “get a loan” to pay for it. Again, this is beyond any sort of logical explanation. We don't own a money printing press.

5) Some homes have been recently built. The investment cost to install brand new septic systems could easily range from \$25,000 to \$50,000. These homes and builders have followed every rule and procedure, including permitting, to install these systems. Why does the Charlotte County continue to allow homes to be built, and for septic/drain fields to be added, if they are environmentally defective? It is incredibly irrational to think that a recently built home, or an older home with a brand new system installed, that was properly permitted, would now be asked to light a match to the money they spent on that system without compensation by the EU or County to remove it. Imagine if you purchased a brand new gasoline powered car for \$50,000 and were now being “dictated to” by Charlotte County and a private company that you must purchase an electric car — and your brand new car was to be crushed and sold for scrap. Does that sound reasonable and fair? That is exactly what's happening here.

6) The EU has no technical expertise in the venture. Zero. This is a disaster just waiting to happen and Charlotte County will be on the hook for the accountability of their actions in this matter when the entire process starts to unravel and fail. The EU will NOT be able to recover financially from a mass failure of the system without passing on ALL of the costs to the property owners. This is a brand new “for profit” venture with no guardrails whatsoever.

7) The EU has not demonstrated or provided any forecast of service costs other to suggest some canyon size ranges of proposed costs. “We don't know what it will cost yet” seems to be the answer — which is no answer of course. Plus, there is the connection cost which, again, seems to be a wide range from about \$10,000 to \$30,000 depending on the complexity. There's also the question of property rights with no compensation for the

homeowner and the intrusion to their property. The fact that this unproven system, by a start-up company with no experience, will dictate that every homeowner be required to hook up to the system seems unconstitutional to me — given that it's a private company.

8) There seems to be a mandate that would also require every homeowner to install a back-up generator system to be able to prevent a back-up of the system in the event of a power interruption ... which happens often on the island. Again, the fact that a private company will “force” me to install a very expensive generator system just to ensure that their private system doesn't fail is just piling on the absurdity. Does any of this seem logical — to anyone?

We love these barrier islands. It's a unique lifestyle for sure. We understand that living out here is a personal choice. I think that the vast majority of property owners are uniquely in sync with our sensitive environment. We want what's best for our waters, which we all enjoy. For us, we just don't see the EU proposal to be based on any scientific fact, or more importantly, that they have zero experience in building or operating a sewer utility company. We all know what this entire proposal is actually about — the EU making money as a private company. It's not about helping our waterways or environment. It's about profit. It always is.

We ask, respectfully, that the State consider the property owners who choose to live on the islands, have a voice in this matter. In fact, we demand it. As such, we ask that the PSC deny the EU's application for central wastewater service.

Regards,

Dale & Julie Novak
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