

**Hiep Nguyen**

**From:** Office of Commissioner Clark  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 30, 2022 2:26 PM  
**To:** Commissioner Correspondence  
**Subject:** FW: Docket# 20200226- SU Environmental Utilities Application/ Sewer Project  
**Attachments:** Docket# 20200226- SU Environmental Utilities Application.pdf

Good afternoon,

Please place the attached letter in Docket No. 20200226.

**Hannah E. Branum**  
Executive Assistant to Commissioner Clark  
Florida Public Service Commission  
[2540 Shumard Oak Blvd.](#)  
[Tallahassee, FL 32399](#)  
(850) 413-6004

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**From:** Baez, Amanda <Amanda.Baez@charlottecountyfl.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 28, 2022 12:46 PM  
**To:** Office of Commissioner Clark <Commissioner.Clark@psc.state.fl.us>  
**Cc:** Stasio, Jean <Jean.Stasio@charlottecountyfl.gov>  
**Subject:** Docket# 20200226- SU Environmental Utilities Application/ Sewer Project

**For your records please see attached correspondence.**

Respectfully,



**Amanda M. Baez** | Legal Assistant  
**OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ATTORNEY**  
18500 Murdock Circle, Port Charlotte, FL 33948  
941.743.1448  
941.743.1550 fax  
[CharlotteCountyFL.gov](http://CharlotteCountyFL.gov)  
*Delivering Exceptional Service*



To: Florida Public Service Commissioner Clark  
From: Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners  
Re: Docket# 20200226-SU Environmental Utilities Application / Sewer Project  
Date: June 28, 2022

Dear Public Service Commissioner Clark,

Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners is submitting this letter to the Florida Public Service Commission to emphasize its support for the Environmental Utilities proposed sewer project and to confirm the County's position that the extension of sewer to Knight, Don Pedro, and Little Gasparilla Islands is not in conflict with either the County's Comprehensive Plan or the County's Sewer Master plan. Charlotte County is strongly committed to improving water quality and has developed defined strategies to sustain and improve the quality of our natural water resources.

In 2017, as a part of the County's Blue Water Strategy, Charlotte County adopted the Charlotte County Sewer Master Plan created by our consultants and based on a detailed analysis of existing septic systems. The Sewer Master Plan identified several priority areas by proximity to surface water, density and age of systems, and the quantity of nitrogen released. Don Pedro and Little Gasparilla Islands, which are to be serviced by the proposed Environmental Utilities sewer project, scored at the highest levels and were recommended to be converted from septic to sewer within a five-year period.

In 2020, Charlotte County entered into a Bulk Sewer Treatment Agreement with Environmental Utilities in support of, and in anticipation of, approval by the PSC for Environmental Utilities proposed project to provide wastewater service to Knight, Don Pedro, and Little Gasparilla Islands. Additionally, Charlotte County sent the Florida Public Service Commission a letter in 2021, authored by our former Utilities Director, Craig Rudy and our present Water Quality Manager, Brandon Moody in support of the project. The data and analysis provided in that letter explains, in detail, the rationale behind the County's support of the project. The 2021 letter is attached and incorporated for reference.

The County whole-heartedly supports Environmental Utilities' cost-effective proposal for the removal of septic systems and the connection to sewer to treat wastewater on the barrier islands with the condition that the project's estimated costs must remain

#### **BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

18500 Murdock Circle, Suite 536 | Port Charlotte, FL 33948-1068  
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substantially consistent with Environmental Utilities' proposal. Thank you for your consideration of Charlotte County's unwavering support for this very important project.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OF CHARLOTTE COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: William G. Truex  
William G. Truex, Chairman



September 27, 2021

Florida Public Service Commission  
Atten: Clerk  
2540 Shumard Oak Blvd.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

re: Docket # 20200226-SU

To whom it may concern:

Charlotte County Utilities and Administration Departments submit this letter in support of the expansion of sewer services to Knight, Don Pedro, and Little Gasparilla Islands. According to Charlotte County's 2050 Comprehensive Plan, extension of water and sewer services throughout the unincorporated portions of the county is considered an integral part of Charlotte County's development strategy. During the past decade the County has made significant progress in studying and understanding the impacts of septic systems. These efforts indicate that negative environmental impacts of septic tanks to coastal Charlotte County are quantifiable. The County has thus been working to promote sewer expansion through legislation, planning, and budgeting. The County's support of sewerage its barrier islands is in keeping with the approved sewer master plan and can ultimately be consequential to long-term protection of the surrounding waters.

During the 1960's it was first realized that the large amount septic systems installed as part of the numerous land sales in South West Florida were starting to have environmental impacts. Properly functioning septic systems rely on drain fields with sufficient filtration distance to allow for attenuation of nutrients and pathogens prior to reaching groundwater. For several years, Charlotte County has funded efforts to determine the potential contribution of septic tanks to nutrient concentrations in surface waters. In 2016, the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute published a nutrient source assessment of surface waters in residential portions of coastal Charlotte County using sucralose and stable nitrogen isotopes commonly found in wastewater. They concluded the following:

*Groundwater samples revealed a strong STE [Septic Tank Effluent] signal based on elevated nutrient concentrations,  $\delta^{15}N$  values, and sucralose concentrations. These data combined with the elevated BOD values observed during the reconnaissance sampling, indicate that STE contaminates shallow groundwaters and surface waters in Charlotte County and represent a significant source of nutrient and bacterial pollution in Charlotte Harbor. (Lapointe, 2016)*

Since the issuance of that report, Charlotte County has commissioned multiple studies demonstrating the positive impact of septic to sewer conversions on nutrient concentration in stormwater and

groundwater, as well as the rate and direction of flow from groundwater near septic systems to surface water bodies. These reports are available for review upon request.

When analysis indicates that a sanitary sewer treatment system (including septic systems) is adversely impacting the environment, the County has a responsibility to promote the repair or replacement of those systems. During a recent inspection of Knight, Don Pedro, and Little Gasparilla Islands, county staff noted numerous residential septic tanks and drain fields buried at or below the mean ground elevation. These installations are likely not meeting modern drain field requirements, based on observations of more recent elevated septic tank installations on the island. This lack of sufficient filtration capacity will be exacerbated if sea level rise continues as predicted along the coast. As base sea level elevation increases, the distance between drain field outlets and the water table will decrease, generating additional concerns over the efficacy of septic systems in the area. Extending sewer coverage to the islands eliminates these concerns.

The Comprehensive Plan states that the County shall encourage sanitary sewer disposal agreements whereby package treatment plants are to be replaced by treatment facilities and shall attempt to reduce the percentage of septic systems serving new development. It is important to note that the two package treatment plants present on the islands are nearing their end-of-life and as such will soon need to be refurbished or replaced, at expense to the taxpayers receiving waste treatment services from those facilities. Expansion of sewer service to the islands will eliminate the need (and therefore unnecessary cost) to refurbish those facilities.

The Comprehensive Plan allows the county to install water distribution and wastewater collection lines in a Rural Service Area (such as the barrier islands) only if deemed necessary to address situations where the public health, safety, and welfare are in danger; otherwise, expansion must be conducted by utilities regulated by the Florida Public Service Commission. The Charlotte County Sewer Master Plan (2017) Capital Improvements Project (CIP) Information Sheets W2 & W5 (provided as attachments to this letter) reflect this demarcation of responsibility, as Charlotte County Utilities is indicated as tasked with only providing the infrastructure to transfer wastewater from the islands to County treatment facilities located on the mainland. That said, the following project elements are also described on the aforementioned Information Sheets:

- The project boundary includes the existing treatment plants and the entire islands;
- The Project Details section indicates all lots in the project area are expected to be served by the new sewer conveyance system, not just those properties currently served by the existing treatment plants, and;
- Vacuum mains are described as a component of this project, indicating that individual properties are expected to be connected to the pumping station (otherwise vacuum mains would be unnecessary for this type of project).

Based on the description in the Information Sheets, it is apparent that the Plan authors, and the Commissioners who approved the Plan, expect sewer coverage to be extended throughout Charlotte County's barrier islands.

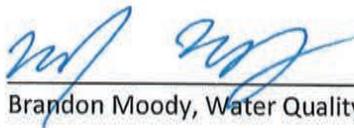
The Comprehensive Plan dictates that Charlotte County Utilities shall develop a cost-effective sewer expansion program consistent with the Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the Comprehensive Plan, with

the intent of reducing the impact of pollutants on the natural environment and preserving groundwater quality. It is our position that extending sewer coverage to the barrier islands of Charlotte County is in keeping with the goals and mandates stated herein, and these proposed activities abide by the directives laid forth in the County's Sewer Master Plan. We appreciate your consideration of this matter and stand ready to answer any questions you may have regarding the County's sewer expansion efforts.

Sincerely,



Craig Rudy, Utilities Director



Brandon Moody, Water Quality Manager

Attachments:

Don Pedro CIP Information Sheet

L.G.I. CIP Information Sheet

## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

**Project Name:** W2 - Don Pedro

**Predecessor CIP:** W-UTLCON-DP, W-FM-10

**Project Area Served:** W2

**DESCRIPTION:** This project includes the connection of a private utility's service area. The existing sewer system infrastructure will be used for wastewater collection. The existing WWTP will be converted to a pump station and the force main identified in the predecessor CIP will be used to convey wastewater flows to the existing system.

### ENVIRONMENTAL DETAILS

**Overall Impact Score**  
4.4/5.0

**Nitrogen Load Reduction**  
8,500 pounds per year

### PROJECT NEED

- Reduce nitrogen loading to environment
- Increase capacity to accommodate design flows
- Reduce O&M requirements

### EST. CONSTRUCTION TIME

**Start:** Year 6

**End:** Year 7

### PROJECT DETAILS

West County

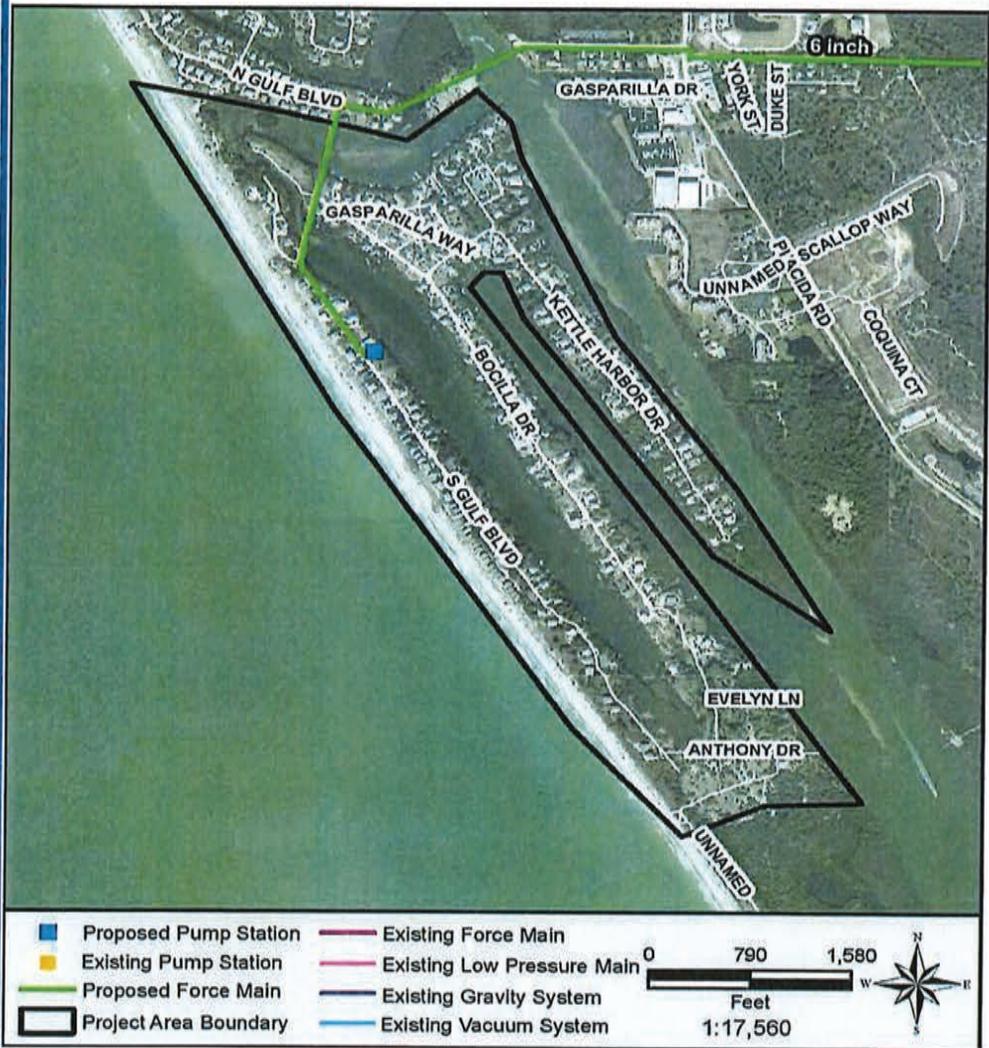
**No. of Occupied Lots**  
261

**No. of Vacant Lots**  
168

**No. of Total Lots**  
429

### PROJECT COMPONENTS

- Pump Station
- Force Mains
- Vacuum Mains
- Low Pressure Mains
- Gravity Mains



### Expenditure Plan (\$1000)

	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Total
Professional Services	630	252	252			1,134
Land (or ROW)	30					30
Construction Cost		2,568	2,568			5,136
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>2,820</b>	<b>2,820</b>			<b>6,300</b>

(Costs expressed in 2017 dollars)

## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

**Project Name:** W5 - L.G.I.

**Predecessor CIP:** W-UTLCON-HBBC, W-FM-12

**Project Area Served:** W5

**DESCRIPTION:** This project includes the connection of a private utility's service area. The existing sewer system infrastructure will be used for wastewater collection. The existing WWTP will be converted to a pump station and the force main identified in the predecessor CIP will be used to convey wastewater flows to the existing system.

### ENVIRONMENTAL DETAILS

**Overall Impact Score**

4.7/5.0

**Nitrogen Load Reduction**

10,500 pounds per year

### PROJECT NEED

- Reduce nitrogen loading to environment
- Increase capacity to accommodate design flows
- Reduce O&M requirements

### EST. CONSTRUCTION TIME

**Start:** Year 4

**End:** Year 5

### PROJECT DETAILS

West County

**No. of Occupied Lots**

500

**No. of Vacant Lots**

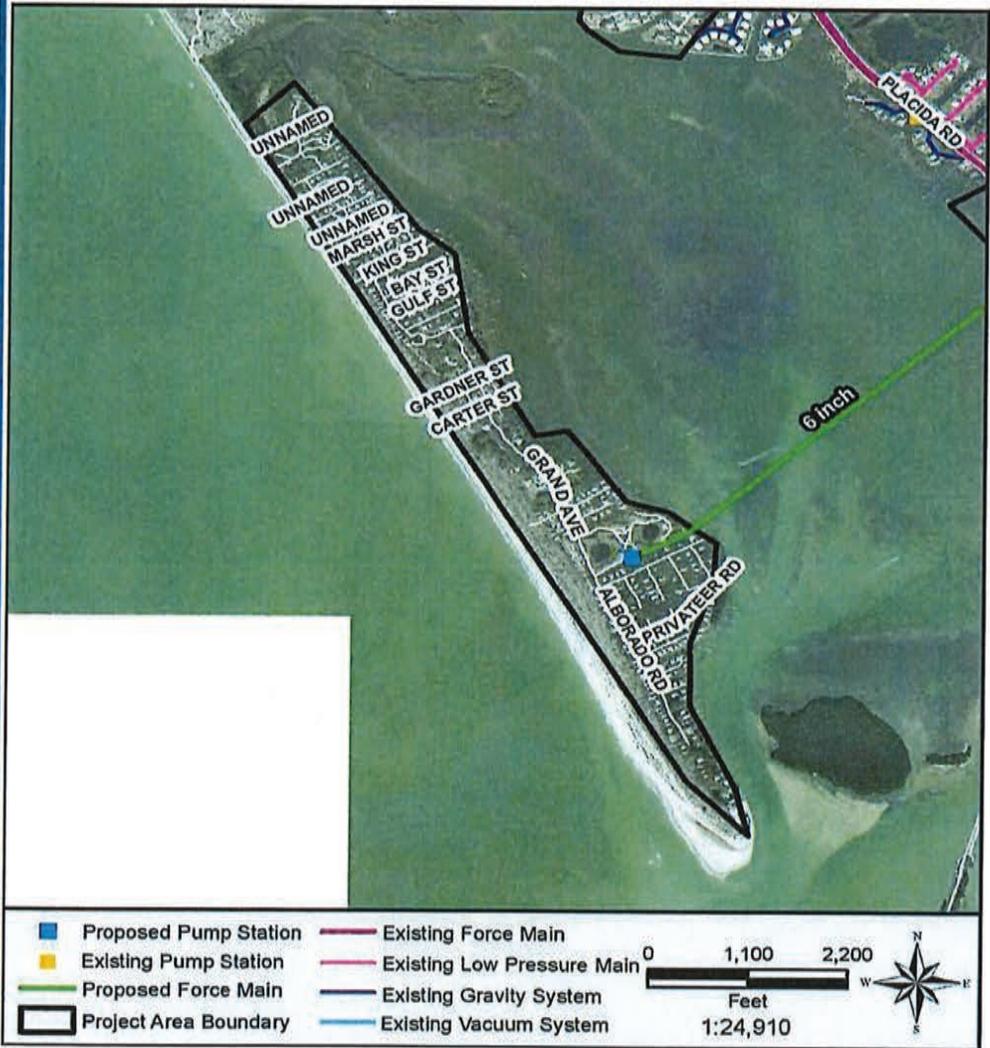
267

**No. of Total Lots**

767

### PROJECT COMPONENTS

- Pump Station
- Force Mains
- Vacuum Mains
- Low Pressure Mains
- Gravity Mains



Expenditure Plan (\$1000)						
	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total
Professional Services	1,040	416	416			1,872
Land (or ROW)	48					48
Construction Cost		4,240	4,240			8,480
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>1,088</b>	<b>4,656</b>	<b>4,656</b>			<b>10,400</b>

(Costs expressed in 2017 dollars)