

Yvette Gillespie

From: Betty Leland
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2024 12:51 PM
To: Commissioner Correspondence
Subject: Docket #20240032
Attachments: RE. Docket #20240032-SU; For Centralized Sewer; Docket No: 20240032-SU; DOCKET # 20240032-SU; Docket #20240032-SU

Good Afternoon:

Please place this email in Docket #20240032.

Thanks.

Betty A. Leland, Executive Assistant to
Commissioner Art Graham
Florida Public Service Commission
bleland@psc.state.fl.us
(850) 413-6024

Yvette Gillespie

From: joe.noto@comcast.net
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2024 12:33 PM
To: Records Clerk
Cc: Office of Chairman La Rosa; Office of Commissioner Clark; Office of Commissioner Passidomo; Office of Commissioner Graham; Office of Commissioner Fay
Subject: RE. Docket #20240032-SU

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Dear Clerk of Commission and Commissioners LaRosa, Clark, Passidomo, Graham, and Fay,

My name is Joe Noto and I live at 181 N. Gulf Blvd. #10, Placida, Florida 33946 on Palm Island. I apologize for the length of this email, but this central sewer / wastewater service project is unnecessary and wrong for so many reasons. And the PUC, having heard all the arguments a couple years ago, did not grant approval of the application. But now we have to go through this costly process again. This is simply not right or fair.

The central sewer system proposed by Environmental Utilities will have a significant negative impact on me, the environment, and our community. As a homeowner in the proposed service area. **I am formally requesting that the PSC deny EU's application for wastewater service, and they be prohibited from applying again if it is denied.** We went through this lengthy and costly process once before, and there was ample support and evidence for not approving the EU application. I'm not sure anything has changed; so it's very troublesome that we now have to go through it again. Seems to imply this will never end, and that's simply not right or fair.

Please read my concerns below so that you understand why **I strongly oppose the central sewer system proposed by Environmental Utilities (EU).**

1. I am opposed to the installation of a central sewer by a privately owned, for-profit utility. Charlotte County is abdicating its responsibility to a private operator who has never owned a wastewater utility company before.
2. There has been no evidence provided that supports a need for service in the proposed service area. I have not requested, nor do I need this unnecessary system.
3. Expert witnesses at the last Administrative Hearing refuted the arguments that EU put forward supporting the need for service.

- a. Previously, the Final Order released by the PSC on this very matter stated: "noting the level of opposition to EU's proposal by its prospective customers, we find that customers are highly unlikely to voluntarily connect to EU's system."
 - b. As a public official, I would like to think you do things in the best interests of your constituents. This project is certainly not in the best interests of your constituents.
4. I cherish our environment, and you should too.
- a. No water quality testing has been done in our area to prove the need for a central sewer system.
 - b. This project could very easily have a negative impact on, and interfere with, the habitat of endangered species such as the gopher tortoise.
 - c. The risk of a central sewer leak into the intercoastal waterway seems greater than the risk of one or more septic systems developing leaks.
5. I am concerned about the ability of Environmental Utilities to financially handle this project, and adequately maintain such a system. I have not been provided any information about the financial history, stability or viability of Environmental Utilities and their management team.
6. I am also concerned as to whether Environmental Utilities has the technical expertise and capability to handle such a project.
- a. To the best of my knowledge, EU is not a contractor that has won a bid to install sewer systems.
 - b. It is my understanding that Environmental Utilities has not provided adequate information on how the system will be serviced in the event of failure during a storm or other adverse conditions.
 - c. What experience do they have with other wastewater systems?
7. I am concerned about the costs of this **unnecessary and unwanted project**. My current system costs about \$20 per month (about \$700 to have my tank pumped every three years) Given what I've seen, it appears the EU system will cost me at least \$350 per month (amortize the \$12,000 initial hook up cost over 10 years, plus monthly service, plus the same periodic pumping) plus unknowns (c, d, e, and f below). Without the unknowns this is a 1,750% (one thousand seven hundred fifty percent) increase. That's ludicrous and irresponsible.
- a. Initial hook up cost. \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$.
 - b. Monthly service costs. \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$
 - c. Cost for a separate electrical panel. \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

- d. Cost for a generator to ensure there is no sewage back up during a power outage (which we experience frequently). The system's grinder pump will probably not function long without power. \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$
 - e. I am concerned about the life of the equipment installed by Environmental Utilities and their ability to maintain it. This could result in future charges to homeowners because of the needed repair costs. \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$
 - f. Cost to replace existing (more than "basic") landscaping that will be destroyed digging out my existing septic tank, putting in an EU septic tank, and running sewage lines. \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$
 - g. Cost to have the EU tank pumped out periodically as I currently do. \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$. If my existing system is replaced by EU tank, they should be required to pay to have it pumped out. It would be their system.
 - h. In summary, this unnecessary and unwanted project will be very costly to me and a lot of other homeowners who live on a fixed income. It will only further burden us, coming at a time when we're dealing with high inflation and soaring costs on top of Hurricane Ian repairs.
8. Also, it is my understanding that EU wants a utility easement, at no cost to them, that will go through my property from the tank that would be located near my house to the connection to the sewer line near the main road. This is my property, and I should not be forced to grant a free easement for this **unnecessary and unwanted project**.
9. It is my understanding that our island is in the Rural Service Area which supposedly is not designed for commercial / high-density development. It appears this project is designed to encourage and attract commercial / high-density development which is certainly not in the best interest of residents.
10. There is, and will continue to be, a lot ferry traffic for the existing level of residents, renters and tourists, along with the construction traffic related to re-building from the hurricane, and new construction. This has made wait lines / times for the ferry unpredictable and ridiculously long. The heavy equipment and materials needed on the island for this project would make this situation even worse for a very long time.

The central sewer system proposed by Environmental Utilities will have a significant negative impact on me, the environment, and our community. As a homeowner in the proposed service area. **I am formally requesting that the PSC deny EU's application for wastewater service, and they be prohibited from applying again if it is denied.**

Sincerely,

Joe Noto

574-904-7224

joe.noto@comcast.net

Yvette Gillespie

From: Trudy Lombard <trudy414@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2024 12:12 PM
To: Office of Commissioner Graham
Subject: For Centralized Sewer

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

> Dear Commissioner,

>

> I am very not usually one to take the time to send out emails to government officials, however, this matter has me completely baffled and quite upset. The health and safety of those living on Little Gasparilla Island is at a terrible risk. Seventeen people died after Hurricane Ian due to wastewater related issues. ONE person dying is too many, let alone SEVENTEEN. Environmental experts have been to the island and confirmed that the situation there is a health hazard, therefore it should be MANDATORY that septic is removed and centralized sewer is put in. Why should homes located on our most fragile environment NOT have centralized wastewater when the rest of the county does? Why is it a choice? It makes zero sense. As a taxpaying citizen of Charlotte County and a frequent boater and beach-goer, I am asking that you correct this matter of urgency before the seventeen lives lost turns into eighteen. I certainly couldn't live with that on my conscience, can you?

Yvette Gillespie

From: Jeffrey Bashore <jeffreybashore@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2024 11:58 AM
To: Records Clerk
Cc: Mel; Office of Chairman La Rosa; Office of Commissioner Clark; Office of Commissioner Passidomo; Office of Commissioner Graham; Office of Commissioner Fay
Subject: Docket No: 20240032-SU

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Florida Public Service Commission
2540 Shumard Oak Blvd
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Dear Public Service Commissioners,

Thank you for once again providing an opportunity for public input from residents who would be directly impacted by the proposed wastewater plan included in Docket #20240032-SU.

Mr. Boyer and Environment Utilities are back again with the same deeply flawed plan that was rightfully denied by the Commission just two years ago. Only two things have changed from my perspective.

1) Mr. Boyer made a point to obtain the formal support of Charlotte County, where he maintains cozy relationships. If there is a true need for a sewer system for barrier islands the county should take responsibility to install a proper high pressure system that does not leave solids on site at each home. Charlotte County does not want take on the financial or administrative burden for managing the installation. They appear to be all too happy for anyone else to step forward to do their job for them, even if that is done for profit on the back of the community or with an improper system for the stated purpose.

2) Our community has very recently been devastated by Hurricane Ian, a horrific category five storm in late 2022. Every resident continues to struggle with the aftermath in some manner to this day; the economic and emotional impact has been life altering for many homeowners. There couldn't be a worse time to lay a massive financial burden on the community, particularly where it would not achieve a proven environmental benefit.

We plead for your consideration in once again rightfully DENYING the application from Environmental Utilities. Our four primary points of objection are included below:

- A) There is no proven need for the proposed sewer system
- There are no proven need for the installation of sewer. No studies have been conducted/published to demonstrate that water pollution is occurring as a result of residential septic systems.
- B) Even if there was a proven need this is the WRONG system
- The proposed system is deeply flawed. It contains multiple points of failure and would be even more susceptible to failure during extreme weather than properly managed residential septic systems.

- The proposed low pressure system continues to hold solids on site. It does not solve for current challenges with pump outs on bridgeless barrier islands.

C) Environmental Utilities lacks the experience, capital or community trust to take on this endeavor

- The utility has zero experience with installing or maintaining a wastewater system.
- They currently struggle to maintain consistent, safe freshwater service without frequent outages, water contamination and poorly communicate boil water notices. In their ~20 years of operation they have failed to earn the public trust.
- Environmental utilities currently imposes some of the highest, if not the highest, water rates in the state. They recently increased rates again to the maximum amount possible without holding administrative hearings. It is estimated that they currently mark up the cost of water provided by over 100%.

D) There is no environmental benefit that justifies the crippling economic impact

- The initial installation and hook up estimates of \$13K per home (which are likely grossly underestimated) would be a financial death blow to residents who have recently endured recovering and rebuilding from one of the worst hurricanes in Florida's recent history.
- Many homeowners would be forced to sell. It would adversely impact the most financially vulnerable residents and reshape our community likely leading to more high intensity rentals and overdevelopment.
- The installation of the system would further exacerbate the destruction of delicate natural ecosystems in some of the final vestiges of wild Florida. In particular, the protected gopher tortoise population was highly impacted by the sudden coastal flooding caused by Hurricane Idalia in August, 2023.

In closing, I would reiterate that Environmental Utilities continues to fail to meet their obligation of demonstrating a need for the service, providing an appropriate proposed system that would actually solve for risks and challenges associated with residential septic systems and finally this is not an organization that has the experience, proper capital or community trust to get this right. We compel you to do the right thing once again and DENY this deeply flawed application from Environmental Utilities.

For your reference our prior correspondence to the Committee is included below. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Jeff and Melissa Bashore

8738 Marsh Street, Little Gasparilla Island

8728 Grande Avenue, Little Gasparilla Island (preserved/undeveloped lots)

From: Jeffrey Bashore <jeffreybashore@gmail.com>

Date: March 15, 2022 at 9:01:40 PM CDT

To: Office of Commissioner Clark <Commissioner.Clark@psc.state.fl.us>, Records Clerk <CLERK@psc.state.fl.us>, Commissioner.LaRosa@psc.state.fl.us, Commissioner.Passidomo@psc.state.fl.us

Cc: Mel <melbashore@gmail.com>

Subject: Re: Docket #20200226-SU

Dear Public Service Commissioners,

Thank you all for providing an opportunity for island residents to share their input about this incredibly impactful proposed project that would have a profound impact on the environment and our homes. Commissioner Clark - I personally appreciate that you took the time to acknowledge our family's written response.

You have a difficult decision on your hands. We fully recognize the desire and public interest in connecting the barrier islands to an effective sewer system. We are strong advocates for clean water and leaving a thriving ecosystem behind for our children.

I plead with you to recognize that the current application is so deeply flawed that it will only cause significantly greater environmental damage while also financially devastating island residents and ripping up our unspoiled ecological dreamland.

The proposed low pressure sewer system will only greatly exacerbate the problems that exist today with private septic systems. With multiple points of failure in the system at every home we are merely one storm and an extended power outage away from seeing massive water pollution after millions of dollars of taxpayer dollars are completely wasted.

As any island resident will tell you, the elements on the barrier islands are severe. They take a rapid, hard toll on everything, particularly electrical components. The concept of leaving solid waste behind in tanks and depending on hundreds to thousands of properly operating electric pumps to siphon off liquid waste is so broken at it's core that it is hard imagine that a knowledgeable, rational person could even propose it as a viable solution.

The many deeply flawed elements of the proposed system design are terrible enough that they should never see the time of day in a hearing in front of you. That is before you begin to consider that the applicant, Mr. Boyer, has the exact same amount of experience as me and most other island residents when it comes to installing and maintaining a large scale sewer system - absolutely zero. He not only lacks the experience but he also lacks the answers to critical questions about the planning, costs and logistics related to the massive infrastructure project.

The water utility that Mr. Boyer operates charges some of the highest rates in the state, has frequent outages, fails to properly distribute boil water notices and is considered unreliable by those in his service area. He lacks the experience and capital to make this project a success. It is a foregone conclusion that if he is granted the sewer permit that it will be a devastating outcome.

In closing, we personally appeal to you as a parents and environmental enthusiasts. Like our neighbors, we have a deep love for preserving some of our most pristine, unspoiled environmental treasures in Florida. We want to do our best to leave our barrier islands in better condition than we found them for future generations. The proposed project would permanently impact our islands and leave the future for our homes and neighbors in great uncertainty. That is a huge price to pay for a solution that would not have a chance of solving the stated problem even under the best of circumstances and outcomes.

Regards,
Jeff and Melissa Bashore
8738 Marsh Street
Placida, FL 33946

(484) 769-4870

On Mar 15, 2022, at 1:47 PM, Office of Commissioner Clark
<Commissioner.Clark@psc.state.fl.us> wrote:

Dear Mr. and Ms. Bashore,

Thank you for contacting me regarding the Application for certificate to provide wastewater service in Charlotte County, by Environmental Utilities, LLC- Docket No. 20200226. I know how concerning it can be when presented with a possible change regarding utilities.

I have had the opportunity to hear from many of you over the past few months, both in person at our service hearings, and through the countless emails I have received. I want to stress how valuable the customer perspective is to me. Tomorrow the parties in this case will be filing briefs, laying out their arguments, and we are scheduled to make a decision the morning of Tuesday, May 3rd at our monthly Agenda Conference. If you would like to watch the Agenda Conference you may go to FloridaPSC.com, where it will be live streamed.

Thank you, again, for contacting me. I appreciate the opportunity to hear your concerns.

Sincerely,

Gary F. Clark
Commissioner
Florida Public Service Commission
2540 Shumard Oak Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32399
(850) 413-6038

-----Original Message-----

From: Jeff Bashore <jeffreybashore@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 24, 2022 3:11 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>
Cc: Mel <melbashore@gmail.com>
Subject: Docket #20200226-SU

Jeffrey & Melissa Bashore
8738 Marsh Street
Placida, FL 33946
Jeffreybashore@gmail.com

January 21, 2022

Florida Public Service Commission
2540 Shumard Oak Blvd
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Re: Docket #20200226-SU

Commissioners of the Public Service Commission:

I am a property owner at 8738 Marsh Street on Little Gasparilla Island, which is a property within the service area of the proposed central sewer system, Docket #20200226-SU.

I formally object and request that PSC deny Environment Utilities (EU) application for Original Certificate of Authorization for this proposed central sewer system.

While I feel strongly that the barrier islands and low lying inland areas of the state should be swiftly migrated to a sewer system to protect our fragile ecosystem, I am concerned that the current proposal is deeply flawed.

Turning a project of this magnitude over to an LLC that has zero experience with installing or operating a sewer system is unacceptable. Environmental Utilities lacks both the experience as well as the capital to take responsibility for the proposed massive undertaking that will impact some of the most delicate, unspoiled areas of the SW Florida coast. The proposed solution leaves many critical questions unanswered about right-of-way access and how the many points of failure involved with a 'low pressure' sewer system would be effectively managed in the harsh climate presented on the barrier islands.

Charlotte County should be held responsible to implement and manage the project directly. It is clear that they are trying to find any bidder to insulate them from the obligations of managing this important work. Turning this over to an inexperienced, under-capitalized, for-profit LLC with the county maintaining no accountability for the outcome is not the right move for the environment, property owners in the affected areas or the citizens and visitors of Florida at large.

Regards,
Jeff and Melissa Bashore

Regards,
Jeff

(484) 769-4870
Sent from my iPhone

Yvette Gillespie

From: laurie gaines <gaines555@earthlink.net>
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2024 11:00 AM
To: Office of Commissioner Graham
Subject: DOCKET #20240032-SU

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TO: Commissioner Graham

FROM: Laurie and Buddy Gaines
8814 Grand Avenue
Little Gasparilla Island, (Placida) FL. 33946
815-440-0001

SUBJECT: DOCKET #20240032-SU

It has been brought to our attention that once again, a small local company is attempting to force LGI residents to connect to a proposed sewer system on our remote barrier island.

We have several objections to this proposal and would request that you deny the application.

First and foremost, we do not need central sewer and have never asked that this service be provided. We have been successfully using septic systems for the over 40 years that we have owned on the island. We maintain the system dutifully, have had it pumped when necessary and have never experienced any leakage or overflow. In addition, the island now has access to “city” water (also forced upon us recently at significant expense) so there is little to no concern about septic contamination of ground water for drinking, since we no longer have shallow wells to provide drinking water.

Secondly, being forced to hook up to this utility will cause undue financial hardship for many island residents. Most of us are still recovering from the devastating effects of Hurricane Ian and still fighting with insurance companies in order to complete needed repairs. Adding the financial burden of a forced hookup to septic services when many of us have paid thousands and thousands of dollars already — and in some cases hundreds of thousands — in unreimbursed hurricane repairs puts an unnecessary strain on the finances of most of our island neighbors. Many of us are senior citizens/retirees on fixed incomes and simply cannot afford the hookup fee (rumored to be in excess of \$20,000.) Many of our neighbors have also just replaced their aging septic systems with brand new, extremely expensive systems. This is simply an unfair expense for them.

Third, however — and perhaps most important — is the fact that many of us are not actually opposed to sewer service as long as it is affordable (monthly payments or property tax assessments possibly) and well-managed by a reputable entity. However, we **prefer that the services be provided by Charlotte County** which at least has a regulatory structure in place and offers financial stability. **Environmental Utilities is an unknown company with absolutely NO EXPERIENCE WHATSOEVER in managing a wastewater utility.** We believe something as critical as wastewater treatment needs to be handled by a professional entity, not a local individual merely looking to profit. I am not privy to all details, but whether the option is to pump waste off the island under Placida Bay OR treat it on the island, handling of this waste is of paramount importance to

maintain the quality of the water in the Bay and to maintain the quality of life on the island. We do not believe that Environmental Utilities has the knowledge or experience to properly deal with any unforeseen circumstances, much less effectively manage it on an ongoing basis.

We respectfully request that you deny this application.

PS: I originally sent this email on April 8 but did not receive confirmation that it was received. So I am sending it again. Can you acknowledge receipt of this communication?

Respectfully,
Laurie and Buddy Gaines

Yvette Gillespie

From: Randy Blalock <randyrbalock@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2024 10:53 AM
To: Records Clerk; Office of Chairman La Rosa; Office of Commissioner Clark; Office of Commissioner Passidomo; Office of Commissioner Fay; Office of Commissioner Graham
Cc: Paul Blalock; Randy Blalock
Subject: Docket #20240032-SU

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Public Service Commission

RE: Docket #20240032-SU

To: Whom it May Concern,

We are writing to you today to ask the Public Service Commission (PSC) to please deny the recent Application for certificate to provide wastewater services in Charlotte County by Environmental Utilities, LLC. (Docket # 20240032-SU). My husband and I purchased our home on Don Pedro Island last June because we loved the old Florida lifestyle that this island offers. When looking at homes on the island we were pleased to know that it had a septic tank vs sewer system. To be proactive, we chose to have our septic system replaced so we would not question the condition of an existing tank, knowing we will properly maintain our new septic tank. Having lived in Florida for our entire lives, we have seen how sewer system pollution has become a problem throughout the state, especially in coastal areas where flooding occurs after major rains, storms, and hurricanes. We are opposed to the new proposal for a central sewer system. Our concerns for our island are the following:

- 1-We have not heard of or had a conversation with any of our neighbors on the island that requested the change from septic to sewer. Who is requesting this change? Is there a large group of property owners that are in favor of the change?
- 2-We have not been given or found any factual evidence that a central sewer system is more environmentally friendly, has more advantages, or is better than a septic system.
- 3-What experience does Environmental Utilities have in wastewater systems? Do they have the financial backing to support emergency situations and constantly maintain their systems over the years to prevent leakage and harm to our beautiful island and surrounding waterways?
- 4-The costs associated with the new system (Hook-up, increased electric bills, generators, tree removal) will be a hardship on many and without proven evidence of the advantages. This change should be our choice and not one of someone who does not live on the island.

5-The infrastructure of our island will be disrupted with the placement of a new system that will affect property owners, wildlife (some endangered), property rights, and traffic.

6-Potential leaks in future if not maintained or damaged.

We personally would not choose to have a central sewer system installed on Don Pedro Island and hope you will consider denying the recent application for certificate to provide wastewater services in Charlotte County by Environmental Utilities, LLC. (Docket # 20240032-SU). We have stated our concerns and our desires as property owners at 391 Kettle Harbor Dr., Placida FL and strongly feel that it should be the island property owners that make this decision because we are the ones that live and care for our special island.

Please feel free to reach out to us if you have any questions and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mr. and Mrs. Paul and Randy Blalock

391 Kettle Harbor Dr

Placida FL 33946

(863) 698-0767

randyrblalock@gmail.com

paulblalock505@gmail.com