

Antonia Hover

From: Office of Commissioner Fay
Sent: Thursday, April 25, 2024 12:50 PM
To: Commissioner Correspondence
Subject: Docket No. 20240032
Attachments: RE. Docket #20240032-SU; Proposed low pressure sewer system for Charlotte County
Barrier Islands: DPP, LGI and PIE

Place the attached emails in Docket No. 20240032

Thanks

Antonia Hover

From: Todd Belden <todd.belden@onedigital.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 25, 2024 12:48 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; mfriedman@deanmead.com; cbelden@huff.com
Subject: RE. Docket #20240032-SU

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Dear Clerk, Commissioners, and Mr. Friedman,

As homeowners effected by the above application, we object to EU's application to provide wastewater services. Here are several reasons:

Hook-up Cost: According to the application, the initial connection fee will be \$12,000. There is an additional \$1,097 "Sewer Lateral Connection" fee to run the pipe from the road to the location of the equipment near your home. There is also an initial deposit required of \$414, which is identified as 2x the estimated monthly bill. That's a total of \$13,511.00. Note that costs could exceed the estimates by large measure and homeowners will likely be saddled with additional burdens.

Average Residential Bill: The rates and tariffs submitted to the PSC shows a base rate of \$115.81 per month just to provide wastewater service. In addition, the monthly residential service charge is \$39.64 per 1000 gallons. EU estimates average household usage at 2,500 gallons/month. Based on this, the monthly billing would be \$207.00/month. However, when the PSC prepared a Rate Case summary that was distributed at the 2022 Administrative Hearing, they cited a more realistic average household usage estimate of 4,000 gals/month. Using this average the monthly billing would be \$263.57/month for wastewater service alone. This is exclusive of your water bill.

Electric: the system pump requires a separate electric panel, installed by a licensed electrician at the expense of the homeowner.

More electric: If the owner has maxed out their main electric grid with pool equipment or other large-draw items, the panel will need an expensive upgrade.

Generator: the pump has a limited capacity (60 gal) and in the event of a power outage will be unable to function for long. Homeowners will need a generator to keep the system running to avoid sewage back-up.

Tree removal: Landscaping and hardscaping around the septic area will need to be cleared at the expense of the homeowner to gain access to the crush & fill the existing septic tank and install the new one.

No pay-over-time plan: Ratepayers may need to take loans to cover the cost of connection.

Mandatory Hook-up: Charlotte County regulations require all homes to connect to central water and wastewater within 1 year of availability.

No grandfathering of septic systems: regardless of age or condition.

No “contractor” and no single point of general oversight: EU is not a contractor that has won a bid to install sewer. The PSC approves certification based solely on four criteria: need for service, financial ability of the applicant, technical expertise of the applicant and fair/equitable rates and charges. Each of the other agencies (County, DEP, Army Corps, etc.) is responsible for supervising only their specific area where regulation and/or permitting is involved. There is no performance bond required and we have no single point of recourse in the event of cost overruns or project failure.

Access to homes: Some properties have physical constraints that will complicate how the applicant gains access to the property without leaving the boundaries or damaging the grounds.

Disruption of traffic: Vehicles have only one point of entry/egress -- the car ferry. With normal traffic, service and construction trucks, delays at the ferry line in season can be an hour or more. This project could result in years of traffic issues.

New easement giveaway: Most utility easements are placed in the road right-of-way. EU has claimed ownership of a utility easement that will go from the sewer equipment, located near the house to the connection in the road without compensating the homeowner.

System maintenance and emergencies: The applicant has not addressed how the system will be serviced in the event of failure during a storm or other adverse conditions.

Lifespan of the equipment: Salt air takes a heavy toll on mechanical and electrical equipment here. Equipment will need replacing when it fails, possibly at 5-year intervals. This proposal places too much responsibility on the homeowner at too great a cost.

Environmental concerns: No water quality testing has been done in our area to prove a need for sewer. This project brings the potential for destruction of habitat and interference with endangered species such as the gopher tortoise.

Potential of sewer spill in the Intracoastal: The risk of a central sewer leak with a subaqueous crossing is greater than the risk of one or more septic systems developing leaks.

Please STOP this ridiculous ask!

Todd J. Belden
171 Bocilla Drive
Placida, FL 33946



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Antonia Hover

From: Debbie Dunn <debbiedunn8457@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 24, 2024 3:54 PM
To: Records Clerk
Cc: Commissioner.LaRose@psc.state.fl.us; Office of Commissioner Clark; Office of Commissioner Passidomo; Office of Commissioner Graham; Office of Commissioner Fay
Subject: Proposed low pressure sewer system for Charlotte County Barrier Islands: DPP, LGI and PIE

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Dear Commissioner:

This letter is to respectfully ask that you reject the proposed central sewer system for the above-referenced barrier islands here in Charlotte County. My husband, Pete, and I bought a house at 8314 Grand Avenue on Little Gasparilla Island. We have had a second home here in Placida at Boca Vista Condos for 20 years and decided after Hurricane Ian and its damage, to sell the condo and seek another property elsewhere to escape astronomical assessments and lack of control over our surrounding complex. We were familiar with Little Gasparilla Island and were fortunate enough to be able to purchase a home here where we will be spending most of our time. We do have another property and I travel back to DeLand, Florida to take care of my real estate brokerage, but will spend our time here at our homestead; one we bought with no plans of being under another mandatory assessment of any kind. So, we have been bonafide taxpayers in Charlotte County for over 20 years.

We are in receipt of a letter outlining the proposed sewer system for LGI. We are vehemently against it for many reasons. The first being that we see no problems with the current septic systems located on individual properties. There has been no study that I am aware of to determine that the septic tanks on the island are causing any damage to the estuaries or the surrounding environment.

The second reason that I am not in support of this system is because it is owned by a for-profit company and from my understanding, this is not a large corporation with the ability to install, handle and maintain for the long haul, this type of sewer/septic system. It depends on electric power, and should there be an outage, (and there are many on the Island) the system would go down... and I shudder to think about what the outcome of that mishap could be. In addition, why does a for-profit company get to apply and perhaps be awarded with this job when it has not even been put out for bids by the County or the State? I'm not sure how that works, but one would surmise that a job of this magnitude would require a governing body to request bids by qualified contractors. I do not know this contractor/company who has made an application to put in this system, have no personal reasons to object to him/it, but only care about what happens to this Lovely Little Piece of Old Florida that we now call home.

The third reason is that this island is a piece of off-the-beaten-path paradise. There are no vehicles allowed here, with the exception of a few workers still here making repairs to homes and properties destroyed or severely damaged by Ian and Irma; this island has only sandy paths and roads (if you can call them that) which are traversed by golf carts. There is no County, State or municipal infrastructure here that would be able to support the kind of elements putting this system in would require. There are many areas of native vegetation, landscaped properties with tropical plants and trees. There is also wildlife that would and should not be disturbed by such a project, including endangered species such as the gopher tortoise, many birds, native

reptiles and mammals. Tearing up the sandy paths and its accompanying easements that are home to this vegetation, trees and wildlife would be a huge detriment to all of the home owners and inhabitants of Little Gasparilla Island., especially after almost getting back to normal after the devastation wrought by Hurricane Ian.

The fourth reason is the expense that would be incurred by each homeowner: many have family homes that have been passed down through the generations and cannot afford to pay for the required hookup. Many others have a second home here and live elsewhere most of the time, so their septic tanks are rarely used. Furthermore, if a for-profit company wishes to come in and do such a project, why should any property owner bear the burden of this cost. Let that company foot the bill. The majority of the islanders do not wish to have this thrust upon them and their right to a peaceful existence, so why should they be forced to use their hard-earned resources to pay for something that is not needed nor wanted?

If a sewer system was deemed a necessity because what LGI has here is broken, then let there be studies to prove that. And, should such studies show the need, then let a municipal entity (the one who collects the majority of real estate taxes from the properties on the island) take care of the project, and do it as it is done on the mainland. I don't know alot about this proposed system, but I have read enough to understand that there are many problems that are associated with the mechanics of it. If these barrier islands are to be forced to hook up to a sewer system, it should be the same types of systems used by those provided to the residents of other parts of Charlotte County and/or the State of Florida; and this should be after a need for such a service has proven to be necessary.

As a side note: this island does not need a bridge. Everything is fine just the way it is and those of us who live here the majority of the time seem to manage just fine with our boats and taxi services or with a little help from our friends. Should our access be diminished due to the sale of the Eldred's Marina in the future, then Charlotte County should step up and provide a solution to the limited availability of parking, boat ramps and slips needed for the Island access. A bridge is certainly not the answer due to the lack of infrastructure on Little Gasparilla Island.

In closing, I wish to state my strong objection to the approval of this project and request that the application for a central sewer/septic system for these barrier islands, and in particular, Little Gasparilla Island be rejected.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to following this process and to continuing to be a voice of opposition.

Sincerely,

Debbie Dunn, wife of Emory "Pete" Dunn
Homeowners at 8314 Grand Ave., Placida, FL 33946
Little Gasparilla Island resident

Debbie Dunn, President/Founder
HOFFRW
DeLand, FL 32720

and last but not least:

Debbie Dunn, Broker/Owner

Town and Country Realty

Your Powerhouse of Real Estate

516 West New York Avenue

DeLand, FL 32720

386-734-8890 - office

386-479-7981 - cell

