

Charlie Smith

From: Office of Commissioner Fay
Sent: Tuesday, May 7, 2024 9:16 AM
To: Commissioner Correspondence
Subject: DOCKET No. 20240032-SU
Attachments: DOCKET # 20240032-SU; Please include the letter of comment into Docket #20240032-SU; Please include the attached letter in docket number 20240032; Docket #20240032-SU

Please place the attached emails in Docket No. 20240032

Thanks

Charlie Smith

From: Margie <777mmk@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 4:11 PM
To: Records Clerk; Consumer Contact
Cc: Office of Chairman La Rosa; Office of Commissioner Clark; Office of Commissioner Passidomo; Marissa Ramos; commisioner.Graham@psc.state.fl.us; Office of Commissioner Fay
Subject: DOCKET # 20240032-SU
Attachments: commission re sewer objections may 5 2024.pdf

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

Please find attached letter pertaining to above referenced DOCKET #20240032-SU
Please include/attach this letter in the docket.

Letter of comments pertaining to reference application.

I thank you for all the work you do for all the people of the great State of Florida!

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Marjorie Kelsey
9798 Little Gasparilla Island

138 Hattaway Drive
Altamonte Springs, FL 32701

(407) 718-1786

May 5, 2024

TO:

Clerk of the Commission clerk@psc.state.fl.us, contact@psc.state.fl.us

COPY TO:

Commissioner LaRosa: Commissioner.LaRosa@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Clark: Commissioner.Clark@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Passidomo: Commissioner.Passidomo@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Graham: Commissioner.Graham@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Fay: Commissioner.Fay@psc.state.fl.us

FROM:

Marjorie Kelsey

138 Hattaway Drive

Altamonte Springs, FL 32701

407-718-1786

RE: Docket #20240032-SU

Dear Public Service Commission,

Please include this letter of comment into above referenced Docket #20240032-SU

My name is Marjorie Kelsey and my family has owned property on Little Gasparilla Island for over 50 years at 9798 Little Gasparilla Island. I love and enjoy the island and all of Florida's exceptional coastal beauty. As a marine biologist/conservationist, it is my desire to protect its unique character and beauty. I am in favor of protection of the environment, but I question the ability of the proposed application for Central Sewer for Little Gasparilla island to reduce risk to the environment. To the contrary, I foresee a greatly increased risk to our sensitive ecosystem.

I am requesting the Public Service Commission deny the application to Environmental Utilities, for the following Reasons:

Septic risk not removed but pressure system adds additional risk

The current proposed system requires the replacement of current septic tank/drainfield systems with a low-pressure wastewater system. Essentially, you are not removing the risk associated with septic tanks, as the new system requires septic holding tanks for its operation. Each individual house will still have and maintain holding tanks. Rather than utilizing drainfields, you are now required to “run off” the wastewater into pipes that will move the wastewater through numerous lift stations and eventually piped off the island.

- The new septic holding tanks require electricity to function properly, thus increasing risk at each individual household. (the old systems function on gravity alone, reducing risk due to failure).
- The psi and lift stations/pumps for the new system relies on electricity, not only at the individual household, but through the series of lift stations. This greatly increases risk due to failure, not just for a single house, but for a conglomerate of houses and in some instances could detrimentally affect the entire island simultaneously. The risk is multiplied by a large factor.
- The system must remove the wastewater from the island and move it to the mainland. This requires electricity to maintain the psi underwater piping. With constant pressure on the system as the wastewater moves through our waterways, any failure of the piping or fittings of the system will result in wastewater release into the ecosystem without knowledge for ongoing lengths of time. Any breach of electricity puts our ecosystems at tremendous threat of potential environmental disaster.

Breaches of electricity are to be expected on an island such as Little Gasparilla Island, not only during the impacts of hurricanes, but during small storm events and even without environments factors at all. This puts the entire sewer system at risk and imposes the potential for environmental damage.

Essentially,

- You *retain* the risk of septic/holding tanks while *compounding* the risk because of the necessity for electricity.
- Substantially much greater risk is added with the addition of pumps and lift stations, and the need to transport hazardous wastewater via pipelines through sensitive marine ecosystems, both on the land and more so in the waterways, with the proposed new system.

When you consider that most of Little Gasparilla Island is mostly vacation homes that are occupied for only a fraction of time, where is the benefit? The drainfields are of little effect to the island's environment. There are no studies suggesting otherwise.

Affects to the Island's land areas

Now consider the required removal of current septic tanks and their current content. How do we remove these from the island? Will the county provide resources? How do we get their contents off the island? Individual owners deal with these issues occasionally over time. But for every homeowner dealing with pumping septic tanks all within a specified timeframe is going to be devastating to the island ecosystem.

So much attention is focused on the waterways. The island itself also hosts a delicate functional ecosystem that could be decimated by the construction of digging new pipelines, removing the content of old septic tanks, digging up old septic tanks, removing them from the island – affecting the entire island in one huge construction project.

The effects of construction alone offers an array of environmental risks that need to be studied before engaging in such a project.

Financial hardships

I might add, as a point of note, this island is still reeling from the devastating effects of hurricane Ian. This storm is not over for us. Many of us have spent huge amounts of money to rebuild and many are still rebuilding. To even propose such a project at this particular time is insensitive at the least. In the last 12 months, the county has approved and permitted the replacing of septic systems for many homeowners on the island, which is an enormous expense compared to mainland installs, with of course additional expenses to make them meet new codes and requirements (some upwards of \$40,000 to \$50,000 per system). Now the county proposes to require my neighbors to dig up these expensive systems and replace them.

Notwithstanding this, by comparing the costs proposed by the first application several years ago with the costs proposed in this latest application, there does not seem to be an adjustment for current costs/expenses/inflation. According to an expert in public utilities that I spoke with, the expectation per household for such a system runs double to triple for mainland installs at today's prices. Factor in the difference for installs on a bridgeless barrier island and the expectation jumps. Now factor in inflation over the next few years.

With a private contractor, it seems by the proposal, the bid winner will be given essentially a blank check with no limits on what can be charged to the homeowners for the buildout. The bid winner also gains the ability to lien the properties for nonpayment. How does this

work for the property owners? Where is the county's oversight and protection for the property owners?

Why impose such hardships on the owners of property still recovering from a devastating hurricane? Why is the county not applying for grants and programs to help fund such a project? Why is it arbitrarily being imposed carte blanc on the homeowners? Why a private company with carte blanc privileges and little or no recourse for the homeowners it services?

Miscellaneous Concerns

This company is required to prove it can finance the project. But the numbers are not accurate.

The named financier for the project needs to prove their ability to fund at the appropriate numbers.

Why is the homeowner being forced to enter into legally binding contractual agreements with a private company by force and not by will?

More importantly, where has this company proved their experience, education, or ability to perform this contract with the county? Or are they going to learn as they go, at the expense of the homeowners *and the increased risk to the environment* for any learning curves (mistakes) they incur?

Summary

There are so many questionable issues surrounding this application. I ask you to consider all these issues as you consider my request to the Public Service Commission to deny the application to Environmental Utilities. Engage in proper studies that include the barrier islands specifically and tie in the actual occupancy of this island and the water/wastewater usage of the populace. Include studies of the environmental impact to the island itself for such a project, especially pertaining to the construction impact. Then we can all move forward with great confidence that our dollars spent are doing the work we intend, protecting our precious Florida marine resources, waterways and beautiful barrier islands.

With great appreciation for your attention to this matter,

Marjorie Kelsey
138 Hattaway Drive
Altamonte Springs, FL 32701
(407) 718-1786

Charlie Smith

From: Craig Ad <777cl2@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 4:10 PM
To: Records Clerk; Consumer Contact
Cc: Marissa Ramos; Office of Chairman La Rosa; Office of Commissioner Clark; Office of Commissioner Passidomo; Office of Commissioner Graham; Office of Commissioner Fay
Subject: Please include the letter of comment into Docket #20240032-SU
Attachments: S Philip Kelsey Letter.pdf

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Please include the letter of comment into Docket #20240032-SU

May 5, 2024

TO:

Clerk of the Commission clerk@psc.state.fl.us, contact@psc.state.fl.us

COPY TO:

Commissioner LaRosa: Commissioner.LaRosa@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Clark: Commissioner.Clark@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Passidomo: Commissioner.Passidomo@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Graham: Commissioner.Graham@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Fay: Commissioner.Fay@psc.state.fl.us

FROM:

Sean Kelsey

PO Box 75

Seville, FL 32190

407-810-4110

Dear Public Service Commission

Please include the letter of comment into Docket #20240032-SU

My name is Sean Kelsey and my family have been owners on Little Gasparilla Island for over 50 years at 9798 Little Gasparilla Island.

I am requesting the Public Service Commission deny the application to Environmental Utilities, a Private Sewer Monopoly, for the following Reasons:

1. When a typical county government makes a procurement for a project the size of a central sewer system like the one being proposed in this docket, the county government in most cases is required to obtain 3 "qualified" bids and then a selection process is made to award the contract. In Charlotte County Resolution 2023-155, included in this application, the Board of County Commissioners are asking the PSC to approve this application but why in this case does the county have the right to endorse one solitary vendor for a "privately owned" system without going through the procurement process of 3 bids like a "publicly owned" system would require? I am asking the PSC to strike Resolution 2023-155 from Docket #20240032-SU
2. In the application there is a copy of County Ordinance Sec. 3-8-41 requiring all homeowners to hook up to this system regardless of the cost or the ability of the homeowner to pay for such service. It appears the cost to each homeowner will be about \$13,500 of charges from Environmental Utilities (EU) plus an additional

potential \$10,000+/- out of pocket cost to the homeowner for septic tank upgrades, electric panel upgrades, backup generators, and sump pumps bringing the total cost per homeowner to around \$23,500. In the event that a homeowner does not have the financial ability to hook up, according to Sec 3-8-41 the service provider has the right to lien and eventually foreclose their property. There are many common everyday folks on the island who can't absorb this cost.

3. If the county were to undertake this project as a "public utility" the funding source would come first before the construction. There are potential grants out there for this type of project. If the county was heading this up as a public utility they would first apply for the grants and then move forward with construction, but as homeowners being individually required to fund this project we cannot as individuals apply for such grants.
4. Environmental Factors: The Charlotte County Sewer Master Plan (CCSMP) in paragraph 4.4 on page 4-12 prepared by Jones Edmunds compares three types of central sewer systems, 1. Low Pressure, 2. Gravity, 3. Vacuum. The low pressure system being proposed in this application would require a low pressure underwater line be ran from the barrier island to the mainland county collection point thus crossing the intercoastal waterway. If this low pressure underwater line were to get damaged a pressurized leak would spill sewer water into the bay and if the leak was small enough it might go undetected for years. Environmentally speaking to risk of contamination in this case is greater than the use of individual septic tanks.
5. In the event you approve this application against our wishes, I am requesting you mandate a Performance Bond. On the application to the Public Service Commission (PSC), Part 2, B) 2) states: *"The applicant shall provide copies of any financial agreements between the listed entities and the utility and proof of the listed entities ability to provide funding, such as financial statements"*. The application contains a letter from Freedom Holdings Manatee LLC (FHM) stating they will provide 75% of the financing for this project. According to the Florida Division of Corporation website "Sunbiz.org" FHM has a "Managing Partner" "Eric Howell". There is not any type of proof provided with the application to PSC that Eric Howell or FHM has the 75% of cost to loan to Environmental Utilities. From his other ventures it doesn't appear he is in the business of loaning money but rather doing real estate deals. Likewise does Boyer have the other 25% funding available?
6. Most of the homes on the Island are vacation homes with very low occupancy. The "Bulk Service Agreement" between Environmental Utilities LLC and Charlotte County on page 1 states:
"WHEREAS, the environmental scoring criteria, which utilizes a scale of 1 to 5,

includes scoring based on three factors: (1.) proximity to surface waters, (2.) age of septic tanks, and (3.) nitrogen loading“

There is a 4th factor not referenced above that needs to be considered and added: (4.) *Number of days in the year a typical home in the service area is occupied.* Being that very few of the homes on Little Gasparilla Island are occupied by full time residents but rather weekend vacation homes, the bulk sewage going into septic tanks is much less than other mainland residences with full time occupancy. This can be proven by looking at the water meter consumption per dwelling as compared to mainland full time occupancy homes, thus the following statement from the Bulk Service Agreement is incorrect:

“WHEREAS, based on the environmental scoring criteria, the areas of Cape Haze, Little Gasparilla Island, Don Pedro Island, and Knight Island scored in the highest impact level of 4.0 to 5.0”

Since Little Gasparilla Island has very few full-time residents if a study of the water consumption per residential water meter was to be done it would show LGI is not rated a 5 due to low seasonal occupancy. In the report prepared by Brian E Lapointe, PHD which was included as backup for the PSC application, on page 4 quotes the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) citing “average residential” septic tank inflow being 300 gallon per day or 9000 (30x300) per month. I would seriously doubt any houses on LGI has this high of a consumption rate and surely a review of the records from Little Gasparilla Water Utility would be in order and show these facts.

7. In the report prepared by Brian E Lapointe, PHD which was included as backup for the PSC application, on page 9 Mr. Lapointe states: “Although the previous research in Port Charlotte conducted by Florida Atlantic University-Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute in 2016 **DID NOT include sampling on the barrier islands in Charlotte County...**” This statement is clearly saying no sampling of Little Gasparilla Island or any other adjoining islands has been done thus THIS WHOLE REPORT IS BASED ON ASSUMPTIONS AND NOT FACTUAL DATA!

Charlie Smith

From: Jaynee Grace <jayneegraceart@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 3:59 PM
To: Records Clerk; Consumer Contact
Cc: Office of Chairman La Rosa; Office of Commissioner Clark; Office of Commissioner Passidomo; Office of Commissioner Graham; Office of Commissioner Fay; Marissa Ramos
Subject: Please include the attached letter in docket number 20240032
Attachments: Jaynee's Letter pdf.pdf

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

Please include the attached letter in docket number 20240032

May 5, 2024

TO:

Clerk of the Commission clerk@psc.state.fl.us, contact@psc.state.fl.us

COPY TO:

Commissioner LaRosa: Commissioner.LaRosa@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Clark: Commissioner.Clark@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Passidomo: Commissioner.Passidomo@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Graham: Commissioner.Graham@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Fay: Commissioner.Fay@psc.state.fl.us

FROM:

Jayne Kelsey
2260 Brownlee Road
Seville, FL 32190
407-834-6967

Dear Public Service Commission

Please include this letter of comment into Docket #20240032-SU

My name is Jaynee Kelsey and my family have been owners on Little Gasparilla Island for over 50 years at 9798 Little Gasparilla Island. I am a lover of aquatic nature and believe in the preservation of our natural aquatic environment.

I am requesting the Public Service Commission deny the application to Environmental Utilities, a Private Sewer Monopoly, because the applicant has not demonstrated that the environmental concerns will be addressed by implementation of this system; therefore, this application should be denied.”

THIS PROPOSED SYSTEM IS MORE DANGEROUS TO THE ENVIROMENT THAN SEPTIC TANKS!! The Charlotte County Sewer Master Plan (CCSMP) calls for the removal of septic tanks yet the proposed system in this application only removes the drain field and not the actual septic tank. In paragraph 4.4 on page 4-12 of the CCSMP prepared by Jones Edmunds compares three types of central sewer systems, 1. Low Pressure, 2. Gravity, 3. Vacuum. The low pressure system being proposed in this application would require a 60psi low pressure underwater line be ran from the barrier island to the mainland county collection point thus crossing the intercoastal waterway. If this low pressure underwater line were to get damaged a pressurized leak would spill sewer water into the bay and if the leak was small enough it might go undetected for years. Environmentally speaking the risk of contamination in this central sewer system

is greater than the use of individual septic tanks. Likewise, if the island was hit again by a major hurricane the risk of a massive sewer spill with a central sewer system is so much greater than the use of individual septic tanks.

In the report prepared by Brian E Lapointe, PHD which was included as back up for the PSC application, on page 9 Mr. Lapointe states: "Although the previous research in Port Charlotte conducted by Florida Atlantic University-Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute in 2016 **"DID NOT" include sampling on the barrier islands in Charlotte County...**" This statement is clearly saying no sampling of Little Gasparilla Island or any other adjoining islands has been done thus THIS WHOLE REPORT IS BASED ON ASSUMPTIONS AND NOT FACTUAL DATA. It is my understanding that that other sampling has been done more recently than the 2016 report which indicated that there is not an issue with the barrier islands likely due to the very low seasonal occupancy of the vacation home located there.

With great respect,

Jayne Kelsey
2260 Brownlee Road
Seville, Fl 32190
Jaynee GraceArt@gmail.com

Charlie Smith

From: Bruce Kelsey <brucekelsey@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 3:49 PM
To: Records Clerk; Office of Chairman La Rosa; Office of Commissioner Clark; Office of Commissioner Passidomo; Office of Commissioner Graham; Office of Commissioner Fay
Subject: Docket #20240032-SU
Attachments: PSC post 5-6-24.docx; PSC post 5-6-24.pdf

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From: Bruce C Kelsey

PO Box 3462 Placida, FL 33946

physical address 9798 Little Gasparilla Island

brucekelsey@yahoo.com

phone 863-288-0286

Please deny Docket 20240032-SU for the Environmental Utilities, LLC. Application for certificate to provide wastewater service to the barrier islands in Charlotte County.

My detailed objections are attached

May 5, 2024

From: Bruce C Kelsey

PO Box 3462 Placida, FL 33946

physical address 9798 Little Gasparilla Island

bruceckelsey@yahoo.com

phone 863-288-0286

To:

Clerk of the Commission clerk@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner LaRosa: Commissioner.LaRosa@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Clark: Commissioner.Clark@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Passidomo: Commissioner.Passidomo@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Graham: Commissioner.Graham@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Fay: Commissioner.Fay@psc.state.fl.us

SUBJECT: Docket #20240032-SU

Please deny the Environmental Utilities, LLC. Application for certificate to provide wastewater service to the barrier islands in Charlotte County.

Having owned property from the bay to Gulf with a home on LGI for more than 50 years and having been a professional engineer in Florida, I believe the proposed wastewater **system is a greater risk** to the environment than leaving the existing drain fields in place. My primary concern is based on the research referred to in the application admits it, **“did not include sampling on the barrier islands.”** Therefore wastewater from LGI was based on assumptions and did not consider there are very few full time residents on the barrier islands. I am in favor of protecting the environment but **object to the proposed low pressure wastewater system.**

Summary

- 1) **Risk of a massive spill** on the island or in the inland waterway due to concentrating all of the island wastewater into one low pressure system pipe line, lift stations and transfer pumps. A few of the existing drain fields that might fail or leak at one a time is a far less risk to the environment.
- 2) **System failure would shut down all or part of the island.** The main line and lift stations would be in low sensitive areas on the island subject to flooding and vehicle traffic.
- 3) **No samples were taken for the islands** as mentioned above. The research and justification in the application are only based on samples taken in Charlotte Harbor and do not apply to the barrier islands that are about 10 miles from the area sampled.
- 4) **The islands predominately consist of vacation homes** that produce far less wastewater than each of the 45,000 homes in the county with septic tanks that mostly consist of full-time residents. Full time residents on the islands could have been estimated based on the number of Homestead Tax Exemptions reported to the tax appraiser.
- 5) **Only drain fields** would be replaced by the proposed system. Transfer pumps would pump the wastewater from each holding tank to the system main line.
- 6) **Holding tanks required at each home** would be subject to flooding and spills the same as the existing septic tanks. Solids would remain in the holding tanks and need to be periodically pumped out the same as the existing septic tanks.
- 7) **Removing septic tanks and drain fields** and barging the debris to the mainland for disposal would be a considerable risk to the environment.
- 8) **Island wastewater** from the 964 homes on LGI is probably less than 2% of the wastewater from the 45,000 septic tanks in Charlotte County. (see calculations in the details below) A more accurate calculation could have been based on potable water used and reported by the water companies.

9) **Grants and funds** are only available for public systems. Considering the low % of contamination from the islands compared to other parts of the county, I recommend waiting for funds to become available and install a more reliable public system.

10) **Economic Burden** The proposed system would likely impose significant financial burdens on residents.

11) **Experience and ability** are not included on the Application for the private owner applicant.

12) **Rumors: EU will sell the system once it is approved.** Perhaps the PSC should determine if EU plans to stay in business. Who would run the system if a new buyer is not approved by the PSC?

The following Details are intended to explain and verify the above comments

Details

Greater Risk

1) The proposed system only eliminates the existing drain fields. The system would require holding tanks with the same risk of a spill or flooding as the existing septic tanks. The transfer pumps required at each home would even add a greater risk of a spill at each home.

2) Concentrating all of the wastewater on the barrier islands into a pipeline is a greater risk than leaving the existing drain fields in place. The proposed main line would be in sensitive low areas in the roadway down the middle of the island that are subject to flooding. The roadways were badly damaged due heavy equipment FEMA hired to remove massive heavy debris due to hurricane IAN. A pipeline and lift stations in the roadway would have been at great risk of damage and a massive spill.

3) Having owned property from bay to gulf for more than 50 years, I am only aware of a few septic tanks being flooded due to storms or occasional abnormal high tides. (except for hurricane IAN) Failure of the proposed wastewater system would shut down all or part of the entire island for an extended period of time compared to only a few drain fields failing at one time.

4) The proposed pipeline under the inland waterway connected to the county system and the transfer pump at the connection point on the shoreline would pose a great risk of a massive spill of wastewater into the inland waterway.

5) Existing septic tanks and the sludge inside them would need to be removed and hauled to the mainland on barges. This would also be a significant risk to the environment.

6) Even though the proposed system is low pressure there would still be about 60 psi on the wastewater pipe lines. That is similar to water pressure in a home. A nick in a pressurized line would be like turning on a home garden hose and spraying water all over the lawn.

7) The county comprehensive plan discusses several wastewater systems including low pressure, grinders, vacuum and gravity. The plan seems to prefer a vacuum system. Debbie Daugherty who has a masters degree in Environmental Engineering and currently the Water/Wastewater Officer for Gainesville Regional Utilities owns property on LGI. She mentioned in her objection to the application that low pressure wastewater systems have not been satisfactory on mainland parts of Florida.

N factors used to estimate contamination

1) The county has used N factors of 1 to 5 to rank the severity of existing drain fields due to proximity to bodies of water. N1 is the best and is for drain fields more than 900 ft from bodies of water. N5 for drain fields is the worst for drain fields less than 100 ft from bodies of water. LGI has been given the

worst rating of N5 even though the drain fields are predominately more than 100 ft from the Inland Waterway.

2) The county has also used N factors for ranking contamination based on samples taken in Charlotte Harbor. **But the report stated it “did not include sampling on the barrier islands”** (24) D-1 page 9 Perhaps the samples were not taken because the barrier islands are not in Charlotte Harbor. The research estimated the nitrogen and other contamination in Charlotte Harbor and assumed it was due to 45,000 septic tanks in all of Charlotte County. Even though homes on the barrier islands have a **low occupancy rate** they were assumed to produce the same wastewater per home as the average for all homes with septic tanks that are probably mostly full time residents in the rest of the county.

Why wasn't wastewater estimated based on potable water used?

Sewer bills are usually based on the potable water measured and billed for each residence. The application referred to 45,000 homes with septic tanks in the county use an average of 4,000 gal of water a month per home. Assuming wastewater is in proportion to the amount of water used, I have estimated the wastewater from the 964 homes on island to be less than 1% or 2% of the total wastewater from the county as follows:

estimated days of use

(3 weeks vacation + 20 week ends = 21 + 40 = 61 days) / 365 = 17% occupancy of vacation homes
adding the few full time residents might increase the overall average to 25% occupancy

estimated potable water used

$(4,000 \times 25\%) \times 964 \text{ homes} = 964,000 = \text{gal/mon from the island}$

$(45,000 - 964) \times 4,000 = 176,144,000 \text{ gal/ mon from the rest of homes with septic tanks}$

Total water used = 177,108,000 gal/mon

island water / total water = 0.54%

Even if the island homes used the same as the rest of the county the % would be

$964/45,000 = 2.1\%$

Why wasn't the water billed by the water company used to estimate the wastewater from the islands?

Why has the county considered a wastewater system on the islands to be a priority project when the islands probably contribute less than 2% of the contamination? Why not wait until grant money is available for a more reliable public system?

Public vs Private wastewater system

1) I have heard there are significant grants and funds available for publicly owned sewer systems to remove septic tanks and install new wastewater systems. Private companies would need to find private financing.

2) The application form for approval of a private company requires a disclosure of their financial abilities but does not seem to require proof of experience or ability to install and operate a wastewater system especially in a risky area like LGI.

3) Charlotte County permitted the septic tanks and drain fields on LGI. So if a wastewater system is a priority, why doesn't the county pursue the available grants and funds to install a system. The impact on the environment per ca-pita on LGI is much less than other parts of the county. Why not wait until funds are available for a public system? I would be in favor of a raise in property taxes for a well planned, well operated, reliable, and well maintained public system.

May 5, 2024

From: Bruce C Kelsey

PO Box 3462 Placida, FL 33946

physical address 9798 Little Gasparilla Island

bruceckelsey@yahoo.com

phone 863-288-0286

To:

Clerk of the Commission clerk@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner LaRosa: Commissioner.LaRosa@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Clark: Commissioner.Clark@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Passidomo: Commissioner.Passidomo@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Graham: Commissioner.Graham@psc.state.fl.us

Commissioner Fay: Commissioner.Fay@psc.state.fl.us

SUBJECT: Docket #20240032-SU

Please deny the Environmental Utilities, LLC. Application for certificate to provide wastewater service to the barrier islands in Charlotte County.

Having owned property from the bay to Gulf with a home on LGI for more than 50 years and having been a professional engineer in Florida, I believe the proposed wastewater **system is a greater risk** to the environment than leaving the existing drain fields in place. My primary concern is based on the research referred to in the application admits it, “**did not include sampling on the barrier islands.**” Therefore wastewater from LGI was based on assumptions and did not consider there are very few full time residents on the barrier islands. I am in favor of protecting the environment but **object to the proposed low pressure wastewater system.**

Summary

- 1) **Risk of a massive spill** on the island or in the inland waterway due to concentrating all of the island wastewater into one low pressure system pipe line, lift stations and transfer pumps. A few of the existing drain fields that might fail or leak at one a time is a far less risk to the environment.
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- 4) **The islands predominately consist of vacation homes** that produce far less wastewater than each of the 45,000 homes in the county with septic tanks that mostly consist of full-time residents. Full time residents on the islands could have been estimated based on the number of Homestead Tax Exemptions reported to the tax appraiser.
- 5) **Only drain fields** would be replaced by the proposed system. Transfer pumps would pump the wastewater from each holding tank to the system main line.
- 6) **Holding tanks required at each home** would be subject to flooding and spills the same as the existing septic tanks. Solids would remain in the holding tanks and need to be periodically pumped out the same as the existing septic tanks.
- 7) **Removing septic tanks and drain fields** and barging the debris to the mainland for disposal would be a considerable risk to the environment.
- 8) **Island wastewater** from the 964 homes on LGI is probably less than 2% of the wastewater from the 45,000 septic tanks in Charlotte County. (see calculations in the details below) A more accurate calculation could have been based on potable water used and reported by the water companies.

9) **Grants and funds** are only available for public systems. Considering the low % of contamination from the islands compared to other parts of the county, I recommend waiting for funds to become available and install a more reliable public system.

10) **Economic Burden** The proposed system would likely impose significant financial burdens on residents.

11) **Experience and ability** are not included on the Application for the private owner applicant.

12) **Rumors: EU will sell the system once it is approved.** Perhaps the PSC should determine if EU plans to stay in business. Who would run the system if a new buyer is not approved by the PSC?

The following Details are intended to explain and verify the above comments

Details

Greater Risk

1) The proposed system only eliminates the existing drain fields. The system would require holding tanks with the same risk of a spill or flooding as the existing septic tanks. The transfer pumps required at each home would even add a greater risk of a spill at each home.

2) Concentrating all of the wastewater on the barrier islands into a pipeline is a greater risk than leaving the existing drain fields in place. The proposed main line would be in sensitive low areas in the roadway down the middle of the island that are subject to flooding. The roadways were badly damaged due heavy equipment FEMA hired to remove massive heavy debris due to hurricane IAN. A pipeline and lift stations in the roadway would have been at great risk of damage and a massive spill.

3) Having owned property from bay to gulf for more than 50 years, I am only aware of a few septic tanks being flooded due to storms or occasional abnormal high tides. (except for hurricane IAN) Failure of the proposed wastewater system would shut down all or part of the entire island for an extended period of time compared to only a few drain fields failing at one time.

4) The proposed pipeline under the inland waterway connected to the county system and the transfer pump at the connection point on the shoreline would pose a great risk of a massive spill of wastewater into the inland waterway.

5) Existing septic tanks and the sludge inside them would need to be removed and hauled to the mainland on barges. This would also be a significant risk to the environment.

6) Even though the proposed system is low pressure there would still be about 60 psi on the wastewater pipe lines. That is similar to water pressure in a home. A nick in a pressurized line would be like turning on a home garden hose and spraying water all over the lawn.

7) The county comprehensive plan discusses several wastewater systems including low pressure, grinders, vacuum and gravity. The plan seems to prefer a vacuum system. Debbie Daugherty who has a masters degree in Environmental Engineering and currently the Water/Wastewater Officer for Gainesville Regional Utilities owns property on LGI. She mentioned in her objection to the application that low pressure wastewater systems have not been satisfactory on mainland parts of Florida.

N factors used to estimate contamination

1) The county has used N factors of 1 to 5 to rank the severity of existing drain fields due to proximity to bodies of water. N1 is the best and is for drain fields more than 900 ft from bodies of water. N5 for drain fields is the worst for drain fields less than 100 ft from bodies of water. LGI has been given the

worst rating of N5 even though the drain fields are predominately more than 100 ft from the Inland Waterway.

2) The county has also used N factors for ranking contamination based on samples taken in Charlotte Harbor. **But the report stated it “did not include sampling on the barrier islands”** (24) D-1 page 9 Perhaps the samples were not taken because the barrier islands are not in Charlotte Harbor. The research estimated the nitrogen and other contamination in Charlotte Harbor and assumed it was due to 45,000 septic tanks in all of Charlotte County. Even though homes on the barrier islands have a **low occupancy rate** they were assumed to produce the same wastewater per home as the average for all homes with septic tanks that are probably mostly full time residents in the rest of the county.

Why wasn't wastewater estimated based on potable water used?

Sewer bills are usually based on the potable water measured and billed for each residence. The application referred to 45,000 homes with septic tanks in the county use an average of 4,000 gal of water a month per home. Assuming wastewater is in proportion to the amount of water used, I have estimated the wastewater from the 964 homes on island to be less than 1% or 2% of the total wastewater from the county as follows:

estimated days of use

(3 weeks vacation + 20 week ends = 21 + 40 = 61 days) / 365 = 17% occupancy of vacation homes
adding the few full time residents might increase the overall average to 25% occupancy

estimated potable water used

$(4,000 \times 25\%) \times 964 \text{ homes} = 964,000 = \text{gal/mon from the island}$

$(45,000 - 964) \times 4,000 = 176,144,000 \text{ gal/ mon from the rest of homes with septic tanks}$

Total water used = 177,108,000 gal/mon

island water / total water = 0.54%

Even if the island homes used the same as the rest of the county the % would be

$964/45,000 = 2.1\%$

Why wasn't the water billed by the water company used to estimate the wastewater from the islands?

Why has the county considered a wastewater system on the islands to be a priority project when the islands probably contribute less than 2% of the contamination? Why not wait until grant money is available for a more reliable public system?

Public vs Private wastewater system

1) I have heard there are significant grants and funds available for publicly owned sewer systems to remove septic tanks and install new wastewater systems. Private companies would need to find private financing.

2) The application form for approval of a private company requires a disclosure of their financial abilities but does not seem to require proof of experience or ability to install and operate a wastewater system especially in a risky area like LGI.

3) Charlotte County permitted the septic tanks and drain fields on LGI. So if a wastewater system is a priority, why doesn't the county pursue the available grants and funds to install a system. The impact on the environment per ca-pita on LGI is much less than other parts of the county. Why not wait until funds are available for a public system? I would be in favor of a raise in property taxes for a well planned, well operated, reliable, and well maintained public system.