

Antonia Hover

From: Betty Leland
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2025 7:34 AM
To: Commissioner Correspondence
Subject: Docket #20240032
Attachments: Docket No. 20240032; DENY EU APPLICATION - RE. Docket #20240032-SU; DENY EU APPLICATION Docket #20240032-SU; EU sewer proposal for Little Gasparilla Island

Good Morning:

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

Antonia Hover

From: Lindsay Yates <lyates@springsips.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 4:31 PM
To: Records Clerk; Office of Commissioner Clark; Office of Commissioner Passidomo Smith; Office of Commissioner Graham
Subject: Docket No. 20240032

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You still have the opportunity to do the right thing and DENY the application of Environmental Utilities. It was with extreme disappointment and frustration that we read the staff's recommendation in this matter.

We do not understand the staff's reasoning in reference to the question of requests for service when the overwhelming majority of the affected residents are adamantly opposed to Mr. Boyer's plan and have tried to make their voices heard through correspondence and hearing testimony. If the EU application had contained just ONE request for service, would that have been enough to fulfill the requirement of "request for service?" In fact, included in the application - contrary to Mr. Boyer's testimony - were just 9 letters from owners of 29 lots. That is 9 individuals and 29 lots out of 1,248 potential ERCs – approximately 2 percent of the affected lots.

The residents of these fragile barrier islands are a very environmentally-educated population with great respect for the human impacts on the delicate ecosystems, wildlife, vegetation and waterways. We are a community of conservationists and have asked time and time again for proof of adverse impacts caused by our well-functioning septic systems. To our knowledge, still no testing has been done. Mr. Boyer professes to want to protect the environment and "save the islands" for his grandchildren and future generations. Don't buy that. We all want to "save" the islands. Mr. Boyer is an opportunist who simply wants to make money and is going to make it on the backs of his neighbors. He was handed the golden ticket by the Charlotte County Commissioners with no process of vetting or attempt to find the most qualified company for a project of this scope. Amazingly, Mr. Boyer – and no one else, no other company - just sort of wandered in and said, "Hey, guys, let me take those darn islands off your hands." Charlotte County has abdicated its responsibility to the citizens of these islands throughout this entire process.

All that is left to say after four years of this hanging over our heads is that the following issues need to be taken into consideration in making your final decision: the proposed system is a bad system – one no longer used by Charlotte County if possible; the costs of construction are way UNDERestimated; the costs of service are way UNDERestimated; the possibility of lines breaking and spillage in the IntraCoastal Waterway are way UNDERestimated; the technical ability of EU to manage this project and its ability to serve the requested territory was way OVERestimated.

Is it in the public interest for EU to be granted the wastewater certificate? Not at all until such time that water quality testing is conducted and a better plan presented. Also not until such time as EU and Knight Island Utilities become more transparent as to their ultimate goal concerning providing service to Palm Island Resort. Why is the system being overdesigned with a 10-inch line at the Resort gate? Are island residents being duped into paying for the overdesign?

Environmental Utilities' application two years ago was denied because it was not proven that there was a need for service in the proposed service area. Contrary to staff's conclusion, we don't think that that need has been proven. We also would like to have some consideration given to the devastating effects on people's lives – people who have lived on these islands for many years – who will not be able to afford to stay. Many are just hanging on after the devastating effects of last year's hurricanes and the horrific costs associated with Mr. Boyer's project will push them over the edge and out of their homes.

What works on the mainland does not always work on the fragile barrier islands and all projects must be looked at individually. This is just such a case. We implore you to use your discretion – and good sense – in denying this application. Thank you for your time throughout this entire process and your consideration.

Lindsay Yates and Jon Goranson

2 Pointe Way, Don Pedro Island

Antonia Hover

From: A Ridings <a.ridings@att.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 5:11 PM
To: Records Clerk; Office of Commissioner Passidomo Smith; Office of Commissioner Clark; Office of Commissioner Graham; Office of Commissioner Fay; Office of Chairman La Rosa
Cc: Pat Ridings
Subject: DENY EU APPLICATION - RE. Docket #20240032-SU

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We understand the committee staff may in fact support the granting of EU's application for the central sewer certification on LGI. We honestly cannot fathom the reasoning for this conclusion. The vast majority of homeowners are fully against such a system for all the reasons presented in the countless letters you have received and the number of owners who spoke out at the recent hearings.

Little Gasparilla Island is a small bridge less barrier island. We have no roads, no commercial properties, and no amenities. This tiny island is not suited for high density development, which we all assume will be the next push. Proof of this includes the staffs comments as stated in the filing "requests for service from existing property owners and "potential developers". If you look at how few existing property owners are requesting this service versus the vast number of property owners who adamantly reject this service you will see for yourself the majority are opposed. And who are these so called "potential developers" that have a voice in our islands future? We believe the island should remain "Old Florida" and in that belief we also support the new Bocilla islands Chain Conservation District Act (HB 4077) to ensure the islands future.

Your prior denial of this application is still the very same, EU cannot demonstrate a "need" for service. Nor is it in the public's best interest. Nor do they have easement rights. Nor do they have the expertise to engage in such an endeavor. Nor do they have the financial means. If they get this certificate, they will not be around long. They will transfer/sell and retire happily. This is not about what's best for the island, it's about what is best for the Boyers and those "potential developers".

We respectfully ask that you again deny the Application of Certificate by Environmental Utilities (EU) for the proposed central sewer system.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Jp and Angela Ridings
8318 Grand
LGI

Sent from my iPhone

> On Apr 11, 2024, at 6:40 PM, Angie Ridings <a.ridings@att.net> wrote:

>

> Dear Clerk/Commissioners,

> We are truly surprised Environmental Utilities (EU) request has once again been submitted when the prior application was denied in 2022 (Old Document # 20200226-SU). Our objections in regard to EU providing a wastewater service to Little Gasparilla Island have not changed. The conclusions for denial remain the same now as in the original filing.

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> There has been no evidence provided that supports the need for such service, and no request for such service has been requested or warranted. Nor will it be a request in the future. Little Gasparilla Island is a small private, bridge-less barrier island that we believe falls under the Rural Service Area Classification, which prohibits the county to extend a central sewer service to a bridge-less barrier island. Individual septic systems are already in place. This island is not suited for high-density development.

>

> Again, how does EU plan to use "our" private property and/or easements for their pump stations/waste collection system without cost to them? Our property will just be donated? Access to our private property would be required at all times in order for EU to empty their septic tank. How is installing "their" septic tank and taking out our septic tank any improvement? In addition, their system needs to be connected to each homeowner's electrical service. In Florida, electricity is unavailable quite frequently. Especially on a barrier island, the time it takes to restore electricity can be extensive thereby making the system unusable with the likelihood of a sewer backup. How is that environmentally sound?

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> The "estimated" cost to homeowners is astronomical. Best guess hook up fee at \$40,000, plus this fee, and that fee and oh yes, that other fee. Not including the wastewater charge and probably a maintenance charge, and I'm sure there is just one more charge to add on. This doesn't even include the water bill that EU currently charges, which is radically high as well. With the recent devastation from Hurricane Ian, many islanders are still engaged in fighting with insurance companies, and many have already paid out large sums to rebuild their homes. Several have just put in new septic systems and others have spent thousands on improvements. This places excessive burden on all the homeowners of LGI.

>

> The owners of EU still have no technical expertise needed to operate a wastewater system on a barrier island, nor have they provided any documentation of qualified professionals who they "may" hire to operate such a system. No health concerns have been identified, nor any water quality issues. IF this were the case why would the County still continue to issue permits for new septic systems on the island?

>

> It makes me ponder, what is the real reason this application is back on the table?

> Please consider our concerns. They are the very same as before, nothing has changed.

> Best Regards,

>

>> JP Ridings

>> pridings1109@gmail.com

>> Angela Ridings

>> a.ridings@att.net

>

>

>> On Jan 20, 2022, at 1:01 PM, Records Clerk <CLERK@PSC.STATE.FL.US> wrote:

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>> Good Afternoon, JP Ridings,

>>

>> We will be placing your comments below in consumer correspondence in Docket 20200226-SU and forwarding them to the Office of Consumer Assistance and Outreach.

>>

>> Thank you.

>>

>> Lisa Smith

>>

>> Commission Deputy Clerk I

>> Office of the Commission Clerk

>> Florida Public Service Commission

>> 2540 Shumard Oak Blvd.

>> Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

>> 850-413-6770

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>> PLEASE NOTE: Florida has a very broad public records law. Most written communications to or from state officials regarding state business are considered to be public records and will be made available to the public and the media upon request. Therefore, your email message may be subject to public disclosure.

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>> -----Original Message-----

>> From: Angie Ridings <a.ridings@att.net>

>> Sent: Thursday, January 20, 2022 12:46 PM

>> To: Records Clerk <CLERK@PSC.STATE.FL.US>

>> Cc: Pat Ridings <pridings1109@gmail.com>

>> Subject: Docket #20200226-SU

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>> Dear Clerk of the Commission,

>>

>> As an interested party in property located on Little Gasparilla Island, We object to the Application of Certificate by Environmental Utilities (EU) for the proposed central sewer system based on the following:

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>> 1. Environmental Impact. Little Gasparilla is a Barrier Island with no connecting roadways or bridges to the mainland of Florida, you arrive only by boat. There are no commercial facilities, no roadways or retail development on the island, only our modest homes. It is old Florida, not Boca Grande. If a sewer pipeline is installed across the intracoastal waterway, how will a pipe leak in the middle of the waterway be detected? Who will be responsible for cleanup of such an environmental catastrophe? Who will be responsible for maintenance and/or equipment failure of such proposed sewer line? A private company with no employees or experience? To our knowledge, no water testing has been performed to determine the actual need of a sewer line vs. the septic systems currently in place. The waste management system in Florida is already overtaxed. If a central sewer system is installed, how will the mainland system handle additional households from the barrier islands, along with any additional development occurring on the mainland itself? Millions of gallons of raw sewage have been spilled into waterways by damaged lines throughout the State of Florida; therefore, is a sewer pipeline across the waterway the correct solution for our island and the environment?

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>> 2. Financial Stability/Experience of EU. Environmental Utilities (EU) is a "for profit" private company with no financial history and unknown sewer utility management experience regarding environmentally sensitive endeavors such as tying a sewer line from the mainland to a private barrier island. EU should be required to provide a history of all sewer projects of this magnitude, especially since it involves environmentally sensitive areas including the intracoastal waterway. Do they have such history? No, they do not. In addition, how will EU financially complete this project? What happens when EU runs out of money or goes bankrupt prior to the completed project? Where does that leave the homeowners? Where is our recourse?

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>> 3. Unknown Cost to Homeowners. There are so many unknown/hidden costs to the homeowners with this proposal. An estimated upfront hookup fee of \$15,000-20,000 per homeowner has been rumored regarding the system connection and current septic removal. Since there are no "roads" on the island how will large equipment transverse the island to fill or remove all septic tanks without destroying private property? Who pays for that damage? In addition, no estimated cost of monthly rates, no estimated amount of maintenance costs and no estimated operational costs have been provided. What happens when equipment needs to be replaced in five years due to the nature of island living? Will this be our expense directly or indirectly through rate hikes? Power outages occur frequently on the island, what happens if the system uses a grinder pump? The system will be unable to operate without power, resulting in a sewer back-up. Is that more environmentally friendly than septic? Will homeowners be required to purchase and have generators in place to ensure EU's system is operational during power outages? Will the homeowners pay for the charges to run those generators? In addition, if there is an upfront fee required, there should be other payment options available to homeowners such as payments spread over time. Rates should be fair and equitable, not just to the benefit of a private company who can increase rates whenever they want.

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>> 4. 2017 Sewer Master Plan. If this sewer project is state mandated, why is this environmentally sensitive project being proposed by an unknown inexperienced sewer utility management company (EU) and not handled by the County and/or State of Florida?

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>> 5. Location of Lift Station(s) and Sewer Lines. No map has been provided indicating the location of any lift stations, lines, etc. The island is private; therefore, no easements. Homeowners should be provided with a map(s) of the proposed location of all lift stations, lines, etc. and given ample time to review such plans prior to any approval or commencement. IF this project is approved, EU should be required to pay all homeowners current market value for any and all easements they may require for implementation.

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>> Possible Alternatives:

>> 1. Perform a Water Quality Test to determine if such a system is necessary.

>> 2. Property owners commit to have current septic systems inspected, and upgraded/improved (if necessary).

>> 3. County to initiate, complete and maintain the project vs. a "for profit" private company with no financial history or sewer utility management experience.

>>

>> As a stakeholder in the proposed service area, it is important to have all of the relevant information regarding the proposed central sewer, including but not limited to, the proposed rates, connection fees, maintenance and operational costs, homeowners recourse, and the type of system intended for installation. We therefore request that EU's request be denied.

>>

>> Sincerely,

>>

>> JP Ridings

>> pridings1109@gmail.com

>> Angela Ridings

>> a.ridings@att.net

Antonia Hover

From: Debbie Dunn <debbiedunn8457@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 8:43 PM
To: Office of Commissioner Graham
Subject: DENY EU APPLICATION Docket #20240032-SU

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

Good evening. I am writing as a property owner on Little Gasparilla Island. Unfortunately, our home was one of the three that burned down during hurricane helene so we've nothing left but a sandy lot, and I might add: A PERFECTLY INTACT SEPTIC TANK.

We're currently in the process of planning to rebuild and have engineered plans, have had surveys done and have already spent nearly \$40,000.

We are going to have to install another septic tank (new code requirement) in order to move forward building this house, which is going to cost a considerable sum. As I'm sure you're aware, we live on a barrier island with no bridges and have to barge everything over which greatly increases the cost of everything we do.

It is highly unfair that we have to pay for a new septic system and then be forced to tear it out within a year or two in order to accommodate a sewer system that we do not want nor need and also fear. And, there are many others in this same situation.

Island-wide fear is due to the lack of effectiveness of the kind of system being proposed, the time it will take to complete along with the interruptions to our right for the peaceful enjoyment of our property. The destruction to our island will compound the devastation already inflicted by the recent hurricanes. In addition, the estimated costs are going to far exceed the estimate presented by the applicant and does not include the upgraded electrical system that each home or property will be required to provide.

And then, God forbid, what will happen should there be another storm the magnitude of Ian, Helene or Milton. What will happen each time the power goes down on the island (which most recently went down for the entire day on March 24th) and happens often? What is the plan for another catastrophic storm surge? Who will be responsible for the damage to property owners due to effluent escape?

The majority of the people on the island do not want this and the very few in favor appear to have personal reasons: either they are related to the applicant, good friends of the applicant or stand to benefit from the approval of the subsequent project.

I listened via zoom to all of the people who came and spoke at the hearing. Nearly all were against it.

The testimony that I found most appalling, and also quite interesting, was from the gentleman who stated that he had been offered to buy this sewer system for eleven million dollars. Why would he say this if it wasn't true? With all due respect, this has shade of backroom shenanigans.

I am disappointed (and quite honestly, disgusted) should there have been any sort of back room positioning in order for persons to make money off the backs of people who have already been through several traumatic, damaging and expensive experiences since 2021, some losing everything with no federal, state or local help.

I have to say that personally for us, this development will have an impact on whether we do rebuild, because we simply can't afford to put in a new septic system only to have it torn out; have to undergo further interference on the island again in order to put in this unwanted and unnecessary sewer system. The only advantage I see is not for the island, the environment or our people , but for the enrichment of a private company (person) that plans to sell as soon as possible.

There has been no evidence presented of environmental damage to sensitive areas that surround our beautiful island. The current systems in place to the north, south and east of us all had major problems due to the fact that the systems did not perform as planned during and after these recent storms, subsequently wreaking havoc with overflow waste flowing into and onto private property, not to mention the surrounding waters.

I would ask you from the bottom of my heart to deny this application due to the following:

1. The applicant is not qualified to install and operate the planned system.
2. He (jack boyer) has expressed to others the plans to sell the "slam drunk" project to enrich himself, and has stated to others that this is "his retirement plan".
3. 95% of the community opposes this application.
4. Most owners are not able to afford it and will have to sell which, in all likelihood, will create a "land grab" by those who wish to change one of the last, beautiful vestiges of Old Florida... for personal monetary gain.
5. Many owners will refuse to give an easement or right of way which will result in long, embroiled and acromonious lawsuits.
6. To add insult to injury, should this be forced upon us, we will be obligated to pay monthly fees for the "privilege" of having this unwanted atrocity after being strong-armed to fund it in the first place.
7. The likelihood of unforeseen mishaps due to the nature of our unique island, and the lack of the adequate infrastructure to support such a fiasco, would surely reap dire consequences to our surrounding environment, not to mention our individual homes and land.

I appreciate you taking a moment to read my letter and to consider my request, as I'm sure it will be same request of many islanders who have like opinions and desires.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Deborah Dunn
Property Owner
8314 Grand Ave
Placida, FL 33946
386-479-7981

Antonia Hover

From: Maggie Main <fancymagpie95@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 8:49 PM
To: Office of Commissioner Clark; Office of Commissioner Passidomo Smith; Office of Commissioner Graham; Office of Chairman La Rosa; +Commissioner.Fay@psc.state.fl.us
Subject: EU sewer proposal for Little Gasparilla Island

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To whom it Should Concern,

I am writing ... again ... to reiterate objection for E.U.'s proposal to the installation of sewers on the LOW POPULATION DENSITY barrier island known as Little Gasparilla Island. It has been proven time and time again that this proposal is not needed, not wanted and could potentially cause an environmental disaster in times of power outages, storms and hurricanes to name a few. With a permanent resident population of only 220 this proposal is ludicrous.

The application contradicts Charlotte County's Comprehensive Plan and Sewer Master Plan, *a finding consistent with the PSC's prior denial.*

EU underestimates the project's costs by millions (e.g., construction, easements, and island logistics) and lacks the technical expertise to execute it, especially given the unique challenges of our bridgeless islands.

EU has not secured the necessary easements—over 21,000 linear feet on Little Gasparilla Island alone—nor shown it can, with many islanders unwilling to grant them.

I ask you - What has changed? The last proposal was denied 3 years ago. Those advisors who are recommending the go ahead have no idea how this wee island works. What was the point of the hearings held where it was clearly evident the proposed sewer input was a bad idea from the start. Well maintained septic systems / AI systems are THEE most environmentally suitable way to deal with waste on this bridgeless barrier island.

You have bigger fish to fry. The antiquated and failing infrastructure (that we presumably would tie into) on the mainland should be your top priority.

We respectfully implore you to again, deny this certificate. 🙏

Sincerely,

Margaret Main

Dr. Dan McMaster

8550 Little Gasparilla Island