

State of Florida



Public Service Commission

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TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-0850

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RECORDS AND REPORTING

DATE: NOVEMBER 18, 1999

TO: DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF RECORDS AND REPORTING (BAYÓ)

FROM: DIVISION OF LEGAL SERVICES (VAN LEUVEN)
DIVISION OF WATER AND WASTEWATER (JOHNSON, REDEMANN)

RE: DOCKET NO. 990975-SU - APPLICATION FOR TRANSFER OF
CERTIFICATE NO. 281-S IN LEE COUNTY FROM BONITA COUNTRY
CLUB UTILITIES, INC. TO REALNOR HALLANDALE, INC.
COUNTY: LEE

AGENDA: NOVEMBER 30, 1999 - REGULAR AGENDA - INTERESTED PERSONS
MAY PARTICIPATE

CRITICAL DATES: NONE

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: NONE

FILE NAME AND LOCATION: S:\PSC\WAW\WP\990975.RCM

Handwritten notes: PRR, BSM, [initials]

CASE BACKGROUND

Bonita County Club Utilities, Inc. (BCCU) is a Class B utility which provides wastewater service in Lee County to 859 customers. According to BCCU's 1997 annual report, its operating revenues were \$209,946 with a net operating loss of \$50,184.

On July 28, 1999, Realnor Hallandale, Inc. (Realnor or utility) filed an application on behalf of BCCU for the transfer of Certificate No. 281-S to Realnor. Realnor, the transferee, obtained rights to the transferor's utility by an Assignment of Interest in the Certificate of Title from Northern Trust Bank of Florida N.A. (Bank), following its mortgage foreclosure. Realnor is currently operating the utility as required by Section 367.071(6), Florida Statutes. On September 7, 1999, Michael J. Miceli, as president of BCCU, filed a letter objecting to the application for transfer. Mr. Miceli's objection letter states that Realnor is not entitled to the entire utility as requested in

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Realnor's application. Accordingly, this matter is currently set for an administrative hearing. Moreover, on October 25, 1999, the Twentieth Judicial Circuit in and for Lee County, Florida (Circuit Court Case No. 98-6169-CA-WCM) held a hearing to clarify the Certificate of Title, but the Court issued a continuance until November 23, 1999. Prior to the Commission's involvement, the parties filed a Joint Stipulation in the Circuit Court to escrow certain revenues for the months of July and August, 1999, which the Court approved.

On September 17, 1999, Realnor filed a Motion to Expedite Application for Transfer or in the Alternate to Take Other Specified Action for the Benefit of Customers. BCCU filed no response to the motion and the time for filing such expired on September 29, 1999. The Commission disposed of Realnor's motion at the October 19, 1999, Agenda Conference accordingly, and issued Order No. PSC-99-2107-PCO-SU on October 25, 1999. Order No. PSC-99-2107-PCO-SU denies Realnor's first and second request for relief and grants their third request as modified in the body of the order. The third request was modified to reflect the essential terms of the Court approved Joint Stipulation for July and August with some additional modifications. BCCU was granted compensation for its billing services, and the remaining monies were to be deposited into an escrow account. Realnor was notified that it must provide continued service without interruption and compensation. However, the escrow account was established to protect the revenues so that compensation for services provided would be available upon resolution of the ownership matter.

On October 12, 1999, Staff met with BCCU and Realnor to discuss and obtain information on each party's monthly operating and maintenance expenses. Staff has reviewed each party's books and records. Accordingly, staff filed this recommendation to establish a second escrow account for CIAC income and to allocate a portion of the escrowed monies from the general revenues to BCCU and Realnor for reasonable operating and maintenance expenses during the pendency of this matter.

DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

ISSUE 1: What are the appropriate monthly expenses to be released from the escrow account for the purpose of operating Bonita Country Club Utilities, pending final resolution of the ownership interest?

RECOMMENDATION: While the issue of ownership is being determined, the terms of the escrow agreement established in Order No. PSC-99-2107-PCO-SU should be modified to ensure the continued operation of the utility. The modified escrow agreement should result in BCCU compensating Realnor Hallandale in the amount of \$9,383 each month from the escrow account for the monthly operations of the utility. In addition, after BCCU has compensated Realnor Hallandale for the monthly operations of the utility, BCCU should be compensated in the amount of \$5,703 each month for the billing services provided. BCCU should submit the 1998 annual report and regulatory assessment fee along with the required penalty and interest without further delay. (JOHNSON, REDEMANN)

STAFF ANALYSIS: On October 12, 1999, staff met with BCCU and Realnor to review the services being provided and the expenses incurred for providing services to the customers of BCCU. BCCU is providing the billing services for the utility and Realnor is collecting and treating the wastewater. Because BCCU is the holder of the certificate and to alleviate customer confusion, staff believes it is appropriate for BCCU to continue providing the billing services for the utility. This arrangement is consistent with the approved stipulation from the Circuit Court of the Twentieth Judicial Circuit in and for Lee County, Case No. 98-6169-CA-WCM. Commission Order No. PSC-99-2107-PCO-SU granted BCCU compensation for its billing services and ordered BCCU to establish an escrow account for the remaining revenues.

Realnor obtained the rights to the utility by an Assignment of Interest in the Certificate of Title from Northern Trust Bank of Florida N.A. (Bank), following a mortgage foreclosure. Realnor hired Severn Trent Environmental Services, Inc. (Severn Trent) to manage the wastewater facilities and to make repairs to the facilities as needed. The contract with Severn Trent requires them to provide three hours of service a day operating the wastewater facility, in addition to the repair and maintenance of the facilities and equipment, testing and laboratory service, emergency response service, ground maintenance services, disposal of process residue, and odor and noise control services at an annual fee of \$93,727. This annual fee is payable in equal monthly installments

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of \$7,810.58. Any major repairs outside the normal wear are billed separately by Severn Trent. As of today, Realnor has been billed \$32,396 for repairs not covered under the standard contract with Severn Trent.

The annual fee of \$93,727 includes the costs for billing services being provided by BCCU. Staff is recommending that services which are a duplication of BCCU services, should be removed from the contracted amount. Therefore, since BCCU is providing the billing services, staff has reduced Severn Trent's annual fee by \$29,707, for duplicated services.

In order to develop estimates of the appropriate amount for each party to receive from the escrow account, staff reviewed the yearly operating expenses, including operation and maintenance expenses and taxes other than income. Staff evaluated data collected from the twelve-month period between January 1, 1998 and December 31, 1998 from BCCU and 1999 data from Realnor. The operation and maintenance expenses incurred during that time were reviewed for prudence and reasonableness, in addition to being essential to the immediate operations of the utility. Adjustments have been made to remove non-recurring expenses and to allow reasonable interim expenses.

The utility's expenses have been allocated based on the utility's general ledger, invoices and the staff engineer's recommendation for operator allowance and management/maintenance service expense. Expenses that would be capitalized have not been included in this analysis. The following items are summarized on Schedule 1 at the end of this issue. It is staff's opinion that the necessary appropriations for utility operation are:

BCCU
Operation and Maintenance Expenses

1) Salaries and Wages (Acct. 701) - BCCU has three employees, but only one person works full time. The President of BCCU and the bookkeeper both spent about 25% of their time doing utility business. Therefore, staff has included 25% of the President of BCCU (25% x \$10,803) and the bookkeeper salaries (25% x \$54,953); and the cost for one full time staff person (\$7,010). The cost for these three workers are \$23,449 for salaries and wage expenses. It is recommended that a reasonable and appropriate amount for this expense is an annual amount of \$23,449.

2) Employee Pension and Benefits (Acct. 704) - Based upon the actual 1998 health insurance rate of 2.44% and the salaries and

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wages (2.44% x \$23,449) annual amount of health insurance is \$572. Therefore, staff is recommending an annual health insurance expense of \$572 for BCCU.

3) Purchased power expense (Acct. 715) - The purchased power costs include all utility expenses such as electric, garbage, wastewater, water and telephone costs. Staff used 1.77%, a computation of square footage and percentage of total space to determine the cost for purchased power. This common base percentage is necessary because there are several other businesses housed in the same facility as the utility. Staff has calculated the purchased power expense allocations based on the percentage of square feet used to the total square feet of the facilities. The total office space is 424.5 square feet. The utility uses 25% of the total office space, which is 106.13 square feet of the total office space. The entire building is a total of 6000 square feet and the percentage of the utility being used by the utility is 1.77% (106.13/6000). Staff used 1.77% to determine the utility's share of the electric expense. The total annual electricity expense is \$12,331. The utility's annual share of the electric expense is \$218 (1.77% x \$12,331) for BCCU.

Staff used 1.77% to determine the utility's share of the garbage expense. The total annual garbage expense is \$2,683. The utility's annual share of the garbage expense is \$48 (1.77% x 2683).

Staff used 1.77% to determine the utility's share of the wastewater expense. The total annual wastewater expense is \$2,863. The utility's annual share of the wastewater expense is \$51 (1.77% x \$2,863).

Staff used 1.77% to determine the utility's share of the water expense. The total annual water expense is \$654. The utility's annual share of the wastewater expense is (1.77% x \$654) \$12.

The total telephone expense incurred was \$9,705 for two phone lines. The total telephone expense included \$6,642 for directory advertising. One of the telephone lines and the directory advertising was for an affiliated business. Therefore, staff reduced the total telephone expense by \$6,642, and divided the remaining cost of \$3,063 between the two lines. Staff allocated \$1,531 as telephone expense.

The summation of each of these items provides a total of \$1,860 for purchased power expense. Therefore, staff recommends

BCCU receive an annual amount of \$1,860 for purchased power expense.

4) Materials and Supplies (Acct. 720) - BCCU is doing the billing services for the utility. Staff has included \$248 for office supplies, \$1,644 for postage and \$345 for bank charges. Therefore, staff has allowed an annual total of \$2,237 for the materials and supplies for performing the billing services.

5) Contractual Services Accounting (Acct. 732) - BCCU was the recipient of the operating revenues for the years 1998 and 1999. Therefore, BCCU should submit the required annual reports and regulatory assessment fees, along with the required penalty and interest for the late filing of the (1998) annual report and regulatory assessment fees. BCCU has stated that it is delinquent in filing its 1998 report because it doesn't have knowledgeable staff capable of completing the annual reports. Since the certificate still remains with BCCU, staff believed that it should still be responsible for filing the annual report. Therefore, staff is allocating \$2,250 to BCCU to hire a outside accounting consultant to complete the required annual reports.

If the issue of ownership is resolved before the end of the year 1999, Realnor Hallandale, will pay any outstanding regulatory assessment fees or fines if required by law and/or the Public Service Commission in order to facilitate the transfer of Certificate of Authorization. However, the continued delinquency of the 1998 annual report and RAFs will result in show cause actions, if not addressed by the parties. Therefore, BCCU should submit the 1998 annual report and delinquent fees without further delay.

6) Rental of Building/Real Property (Acct. 741) - The utility's rental expenses include the cost for office space and percolation ponds. The office space rent of \$1,590 is calculated based upon 106 square feet at \$15 per square feet. The percolation pond rent is \$13,698 for two ponds. It is recommended that a reasonable and appropriate amount for this expense is \$15,288. BCCU should be allocated an annual amount of \$15,288 for rental expense.

7) Taxes Other Than Income - Because BCCU is collecting the revenues, it will also have the responsibility for submitting the regulatory assessment fees and the property taxes to Lee County. Based upon the utility's 1998 records staff estimates the property taxes in Lee County to be \$12,930, and the gross receipt taxes to be \$9,854, for a total annual expense of \$22,784.

Realnor Hallandale
Operation and Maintenance Expenses

8) Contractual Services Management (Acct. 734) - As mentioned earlier, Realnor Hallandale hired Severn Trent as the operator of the wastewater facilities. Staff removed the cost of billing that was a duplication of services being provided by BCCU. Contractual services are reduced by \$29,707 to reflect the amount of \$64,020 for the services of Severn Trent as the operator of the wastewater facilities. Therefore a total of \$5,335 would be compensation on a monthly basis from the escrow account to Realnor Hallandale.

9) Emergency Repair Expense (Acct. 734) - This category has been included by the staff to attempt to respond to the need for repairs to the system that are required in order for service to be maintained to the customers. In addition to the monthly contractual amount billed to Realnor Hallandale by Severn Trent, there have been numerous repairs to the treatment plant, lift stations and the lines, which have totaled \$32,396. Most of these repairs have been necessitated by a delay or lack of repair by the former owner. Realnor Hallandale has assumed responsibility for these repairs, since it believes itself to be the owner of the lines.

In addition, Severn Trent developed a list of other repairs and improvements that it believed should be made to this system, which totaled \$155,300. Some of these are to respond to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), some are current problems that need to be fixed soon (to prevent further problems), and some are more long-term improvements. On October 13, 1999, a joint inspection of the plant and collection system was made by a representative of the DEP, Severn Trent staff and the PSC staff engineer. The purpose of the inspection was to view the actual facilities and discuss the timeframes and necessity for the repair items that had been listed by Severn Trent.

Under normal circumstances, many of these items would be considered capital improvements to plant, to be recovered through rates. Other items would be considered nonrecurring expenses, which a utility is normally assumed to handle within its annual budget. In this case, staff was faced with the dilemma of whether it was appropriate to consider an additional reimbursement amount from the escrow account to provide some offset to the expenses incurred by Realnor Hallandale that are necessitated by the declining state of some of the facilities and lack of preventive

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maintenance by BCCU, even though the expenditures were for items that would not normally be considered part of the "normal" expenditures necessary to operate the utility.

The staff recognizes that this is a very sensitive area for Realnor Hallandale, since the expenses have been sudden and substantial. In an effort to try and provide some type of compensation for repairs pending the ownership dispute, the staff performed two types of analysis.

In the first analysis, the staff reviewed the bills that comprised the additional \$33,396 expense recently incurred by Realnor Hallandale and attempted to determine which items would be expensed versus capitalized. The idea was that this amount might represent a ballpark of expenses that should be considered in a monthly escrow draw. The result was the inclusion in expenses of lift station repairs in the amount of \$19,205 (which reflects a downward adjustment of \$11,549 from the original total), line repair costs of \$216, as well as expenses of \$1,426 for wastewater plant repairs. This analysis results in a annual repair expense of \$20,847.

The second analysis reviewed the various repairs identified by Severn Trent that were required for the system (Attachment A), and used the information from the site visit to prioritize the list. The staff used an informal time line of expenses that should be made within the next six months, versus a larger timeframe, as well as separated out items that would be considered capital investment. For repairs and maintenance of the treatment plant, the staff believes that a reasonable amount is \$14,500 per year. Staff derived \$14,500 by adding items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 18 and 19, plus allowing \$2,000 for item 12 and amortizing the cost of item three over three years and using one year's expense.

There are approximately 14 lift stations that transmit wastewater to the wastewater treatment plant. Some lift stations are in need of immediate repair such as Wood Ibis, Fenner Circle and Sandy Hollow. A major break down has already occurred at Sandy Hollow this year. Some lift stations had pumps missing and many need extensive electrical and receiving well rehabilitation. For the collection system, the staff recognized the most expensive and expansive renovation required to the Sandy Hollow lift station, and allowed an amount of \$6,000, which was half of the estimated repair. Therefore, the total amount under this analysis was \$20,500 per year.

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Regardless of which estimate is used with respect to plant repairs, the staff also believes that the operation of the system will require more onsite time than the three hours currently allocated by the contract of Severn Trent. This is due to the plant and collection system's deteriorated condition, which may also involve the possibility of after hours plant emergencies, which have already occurred. Therefore, the staff is also recommending an additional \$28,078 for operation and maintenance and emergency repairs. In the previous year, Bonita Country Club had a full time operator.

Again staff recognizes that the plant and collection system have not been maintained in the best condition. Staff is recommending an annual expense compensation of \$20,500 for plant repairs and \$28,078, which may also involve the possibility of after hours plant emergencies for a total of \$48,578 annually. Therefore a total of \$4,048 would be compensation on a monthly basis from the escrow account to Realnor Hallandale, for responding to repairs beyond the terms of the standard contract.

The staff is concerned about the improper allocation of resources. Therefore, in an effort to insure that Realnor Hallandale receives compensation as detailed above, and since the only entity the Commission has jurisdiction over at this time is BCCU, the staff is recommending that BCCU be ordered to pay the total monthly amount of \$9,383 each month to Realnor Hallandale **before** distributing monies to itself in the amount of \$5,703 each month. The prior escrow agreement should be modified, and the modified agreement with the above distributions should be established by BCCU. The actual escrow account that was previously established should continue to be used for the purposes of collecting general revenues as follows:

1. All monies taken in by BCCU, for wastewater service payments, shall be deposited by BCCU in an escrow account, in order to maintain the status quo of the billing of the BCCU accounts.
2. BCCU will be compensated for its billing services only after compensating Realnor for services provided for in paragraph 4.
3. BCCU shall be compensated \$5,703 monthly from the escrow account.
4. BCCU shall compensate Realnor \$9,383 monthly from the escrow account for Realnor's operation and

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maintenance of the treatment facilities and collection system:

5. BCCU employee, Pamela Pass, shall be the only one allowed to make any disbursements. Before any disbursements are made, Ms. Pass shall send a statement or some other indication of what the disbursement is to the Commission for authorization to disburse.
6. All correspondence concerning the escrow account shall be copied to the designated representative of Realnor Hallandale.

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STAFF's RECOMMENDED MONTHLY
EXPENDITURES FOR THE OPERATIONS OF BCCU

SCHEDULE 1

	<u>BCCU</u>	<u>REALNOR</u>
<u>OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE</u>		
1 Salaries & Wages	\$ 23,449.00	
2 Employee Pension & Benefits	572.00	
3 Purchase Power:		
Electricity	218.00	
Garbage	48.00	
Water	51.00	
Wastewater	12.00	
Telephone	1,531.00	
4 Materials & Supplies	2,237.00	
5 Contractual Services Accting	2,250.00	
6 Rental of Building/Real Prop.	15,288.00	
7 Taxes Other Than Income	<u>22,784.00</u>	
8 Contractual Services Mgmt.		\$ 64,020.00
9 Emergency Repair Expense		<u>48,578.00</u>
TOTAL ANNUAL	<u>\$ 68,440.00</u>	<u>\$ 112,598.00</u>
TOTAL MONTHLY	<u>\$ 5,703.00</u>	<u>\$ 9,383.00</u>

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ISSUE 2: Should a separate escrow account be established for the purpose of collecting Contributions In Aid of Construction (CIAC)?

RECOMMENDATION: Yes, a separate escrow account should be established for the purpose of CIAC collections. All CIAC monies currently being held in escrow pursuant to Commission Order No. PSC-99-2107-PCO-SU should be deposited in the CIAC escrow account to be established. Any other CIAC received by BCCU should be deposited within seven days of its receipt in the CIAC escrow account to be established. BCCU should be put on notice that failure to comply with these requirements will result in the initiation of a show cause proceeding. (JOHNSON, VAN LEUVEN)

STAFF ANALYSIS: The staff became aware during the on site visit with the parties, that there existed the potential for a dispute over whether individuals who had prepaid CIAC to BCCU would be recognized as having paid this money to the appropriate entity and receive service upon request. Staff informally requested that a listing of such persons be made by both parties. However, staff has not received the requested information and will be pursuing the matter by formal discovery. Therefore, it remains a concern of staff's that a customer may have paid the CIAC fees, and not be recognized by BCCU and Realnor Hallandale as having satisfied the criteria to receive service.

Therefore, staff is recommending that a separate escrow account be established for the deposit of all CIAC revenues. Currently, all revenues are combined into one escrow account. This escrow account agreement was established in Order No. PSC-99-2107-PCO-SU, issued October 25, 1999. The escrow account established by Order No. PSC-99-2107-PCO-SU will capture all general revenue receipts, now that a separate account has been established for CIAC receipts. All CIAC monies currently being held in escrow pursuant to Commission Order No. PSC-99-2107-PCO-SU should be deposited in the CIAC escrow account to be established. Effective from the October 19, 1999, agenda all disbursements for operating the facilities are based upon staff's review of each party's books and records, and staff will specifically address each party's entitlement to escrowed funds for expenses during the pendency of the ownership matter. Staff believes that a separate escrow account will assist in tracking collections and eliminate potential disputes over a customer's CIAC payment status.

Staff recommends that an escrow agreement be established for the collection of CIAC, and it should be entered into by BCCU with the following provisions:

1. The Commission should be a party to the written escrow agreement and a signatory to the escrow account.
2. The written escrow agreement should state that:
 - a. The account is established at the direction of this Commission for the purpose set forth above;
 - b. No withdrawals of funds shall occur until the pending issue of ownership is resolved;
 - c. Information concerning that escrow account shall be available from the institution to the Commission or its representative at all times;
 - d. The amount of CIAC revenues received shall be deposited in the escrow account within seven days of receipt; and
 - e. Pursuant to Cosentino v. Elson, 263 So. 2d 253 (Fla 3d. DCA 1972), escrow accounts are not subject to garnishments.
3. All monies taken in by BCCU, that are for impact fees, shall be deposited by BCCU in an escrow account within seven days of receipt.

Therefore, staff recommends that BCCU establish a second escrow agreement in which it deposits all CIAC monies received, as specified in the staff analysis. BCCU should be put on notice that failure to comply with these requirements will result in the initiation of a show cause proceeding.

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ISSUE 3: Should this docket be closed?

RECOMMENDATION: No. This docket should remain open pending the resolution of the protest filed in opposition to the transfer application. (VAN LEUVEN)

STAFF ANALYSIS: This docket should remain open pending the resolution of the protest filed in opposition to the transfer application for the resolution of the transfer application.

Wastewater Treatment Plant and related facilities:		Estimated Costs	Severn Trent's Rankings #1 #2 #3	Staff's Comments	NARUC for Class B Waste water utility
1	Blower belts (6)	\$300	#1	Done	720.5
2	Blower filter (2)	200	#1	Done	720.5
3	Generator	8,000	#1	According to DEP not required for this size plant. The generator has been refurbished for a cost of \$5,068.75.	720.5
4	Pressure gauges (2)	150	#2		720.5
5	Voltage Monitor	500	#1	Done	720.5
6	Photo Cell for lighting	150	#2		720.6
7	2" ball valves	300	#3		720.5
8	Boom #1 tracking	500	#2	US filter is working on part and is believed to be covered under the warranty.	
9	Boom instrument bulbs	50	#3		720.6

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10	Winch (2) for digester	300	#3		720.5
11	Solids in chlorine contact tank	1,000	#1	Removed	711.6
12	Bar screen	5,000	#3	DEP required a lid to be placed on the Bar screen due to complaints of nearby residents. The lid was missing.	720.5
13	Pressure wash, prime and paint new wastewater plant.	7,000	#3	Will be needed, but not an immediate concern.	720.5
14	Sandblast, prime and paint Chlorine Contact Tank (CCT)	2,000	#3	Staff believes this is needed immediately, or a new CCT will be required.	720.5
15	Diesel containment - containment area	2,000	#1	The staff recognizes this need to be done, but this costs would be capitalized.	355.4
16	Drying bed drainage and controls	5,000	#2	DEP has requested this item previously, and DEP would like this to be completed shortly. The cost be capitalized.	380-12 Sludge System

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17	Pond berm restructuring, cleaning and hydraulics	40,000	#2	Staff and DEP believe that the ponds should be cleaned. However, if major plant work is needed, staff recommends the cost be capitalized.	380-8 720.6
18	Backflow preventor	350	#1	Needed	720.5
19	Solids Removed	3,000	#2	There is a large amount of solids that need to be removed.	711.5
		70,800			

Collection System	Estimated Cost	Severn Trent's Rankings #1 #2 #3	Staff's Comments	NARUC for Class B Waste water utility
1 Cleaning, televising and smoke testing	20,000	#3	#3	
2 Manhole rehabilitation	5,000	#3	#3	
3 Lift station coating and rehabilitation	8,000	#3	#3	

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4	Wild turkey lift station	4,000	#1	Pump missing. Need to fix quickly.	371 720
5	Enoch Lane lift station	1,500	#3	#3	371 720
6	Wood Ibis lift station	6,500	#1	Pump is missing. Needs to be fixed quickly.	371 720
7	Carnie Circle lift station	1,500	#3	#3	720
8	Fenner Circle lift station	8,500	#1	Pump is missing.	371 720
9	Cypress Planation lift station	2,000	#2	#2	371 720
10	Bonita Pines lift station	10,000	#2	#2	371 720
11	Eagle Point lift station	4000	#3	#3	371 720
12	Sandy Hollow lift station	12,000	#1	Pump is missing. Floods in the area.	371 720
13	Carnutsie Court lift station	1,500	#3	#3	371 720
		84,500			