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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
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Governor

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Secretary

December 13, 2002

Ms. Blanca Bayo, Director
Commission Clerk and Administrative Services
Public Services Commission
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850

RE: PSC Docket No. 020745-SU, Application by Island Environmental Utilities, Inc.,
for an Original Wastewater Certificate in Charlotte County

Dear Ms. Bayo:

The Department has completed its review of the Island Environmental Utilities application to the Public Service Commission for an Original Certificate in Charlotte County. A copy of our staff memorandum is enclosed for your information.

Expanding sanitary sewer service outside of the County's Infill Area boundaries would be inconsistent with Infrastructure Policy 9.1.4, in the Charlotte County Comprehensive Plan. We are also concerned that additional wastewater service on the barrier islands has the potential for creating a demand for additional residential development on the islands with subsequent environmental and natural hazard risks. In addition, we recognize that there are environmental benefits to be obtained from utilizing centralized sewer service instead of continuing the use of septic systems.

Department staff has been working with the Charlotte County Planning staff to allow the expansion of the wastewater facilities in a way that would be consistent with the comprehensive plan in order to achieve the environmental benefits that sewer service will provide without increasing population concentrations on the islands. To achieve this goal, the County has proposed a new policy that would prohibit residential density on the islands to exceed existing densities. In addition, Infrastructure Policy 9.1.4 would be revised to allow the expansion of certificated areas "where provision of sanitary sewer service is to be provided to areas already certificated to receive central potable water service". It is anticipated that these new provisions will be presented to the Charlotte County Commission for adoption in 2003.

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The Department recommends that the Public Service Commission either delay approval of the Island Environmental Utilities's certificate request until the County has adopted the new policy provisions into its comprehensive plan or approve the certificate request with the condition that the provisions be adopted into the comprehensive plan.

We very much appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on this application. If you have any questions or need additional information, please call Bob Dennis, Senior Planner, or Mike McDaniel, Administrator, State Planning Initiatives, at (850) 487-4545 for assistance.

Sincerely,



CG Charles Gauthier, AICP
Chief, Comprehensive Planning

Enclosure

CG/bd

cc: Elliot Kampert, Planning Services Manager, Charlotte County
David Y. Burr, Executive Director, Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council
Richard Redemann, Division of Economic Regulation, Public Service Commission



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MEMORANDUM

To: Charlie Gauthier, Chief, Comprehensive Planning

Through: Mike McDaniel, Administrator, State Planning Initiatives *MDM*

From: Bob Dennis *RD*, Senior Planner

Date: December 11, 2002

Subject: **Public Service Commission Utilities Certification Application
Island Environmental Utility, Inc.; Charlotte County
PSC Docket No. 020745-SU**

Summary

Island Environmental Utilities, Inc. has applied to the Public Service Commission for a certificate to provide wastewater facilities on three unbridged barrier islands in Charlotte County (Don Pedro, Knight and Little Gasparilla Islands).

Background

This application is for wastewater certification. Island Environmental Utilities, Inc., intends to serve Don Pedro, Knight and Little Gasparilla Islands, three bridgeless islands in Charlotte County. A portion of the service area has been served by Knight Island Utility, Inc., but this provider is no longer interested in continuing its wastewater service.

The proposed service area contains 1,920 platted lots of which 1,030 are vacant. Land uses on the islands are Low Density Residential (up to 5 units per acre), Medium Density Residential (up to 10 units per acre) and Parks/Recreation. Residential density on the islands is limited to one unit per gross acre by the Bridgeless Barrier Island Overlay District applied to these islands. Residential lots created through the County's subdivision regulations prior to the Overlay are allowed one unit per subdivided lot (Policy 2.5.3, Future Land Use).

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A certification request submitted by Knight Water Utility regarding water service on the islands was previously reviewed by the Department. The Department did not have any concerns with that request.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Expanding sanitary sewer service outside of Infill Area boundaries in the County would be inconsistent with Infrastructure Policy 9.1.4, in the Charlotte County Comprehensive Plan. Providing wastewater service on the barrier islands could create a demand to increase residential density on the islands with subsequent environmental and natural hazard risks. Providing sewer service would have obvious environmental benefits over the continued use of septic systems.

Department staff has been working with the Charlotte County Planning staff to achieve the environmental benefits that sewer service will provide without increasing population concentrations on the islands. The County has proposed a new policy that would prohibit residential density on the islands to exceed the density established in Policy 2.5.3. Infrastructure Policy 9.1.4 would be revised to allow the expansion of certificated areas "where provision of sanitary sewer service is to be provided to areas already certificated to receive central potable water service". It is anticipated that these new provisions will be presented to the Charlotte County Commission for adoption in 2003.

Staff recommends that a letter be sent to the Public Service Commission recommending that the Commission either delay approval of the Island Environmental Utilities certificate request until the County has adopted the new provisions into its comprehensive plan or approve the request with the condition that the provisions be adopted into the comprehensive plan.