

Collin Roehner

From: Collin Roehner on behalf of Records Clerk
Sent: Wednesday, January 04, 2017 9:13 AM
To: 'Bill Shallcross'
Subject: FW: "Customers of for-profit water, sewer utilities: Rate shock ahead"
Attachments: Money for nothing.docx; Recycling confusion.docx

Good morning Mr. Shallcross,

We will be placing your comments below in consumer correspondence in Docket No. 160101-WS and forwarding your comments to the Office of Consumer Assistance and Outreach.

Sincerely,

Collin D. Roehner
Commission Deputy Clerk I
Office of Commission Clerk
Florida Public Service Commission
2540 Shumard Oak Blvd.
Tallahassee, Florida, 32301
(850) 413-7123

From: Bill Shallcross [<mailto:wshallcross@cfl.rr.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, January 03, 2017 8:10 PM
To: Office of Commissioner Brisé; Office of Commissioner Brown; Office Of Commissioner Graham; Office of Commissioner Patronis; Office of Commissioner Polmann
Cc: kelly.jr@leg.state.fl.us; Records Clerk; lconstantine@seminolecountyfl.gov; sayler.erik@leg.state.fl.us; jmariano@pascocountyfl.net; Walter Trierweiler; governorrick.scott@eog.myflorida.com; sunburst@eog.myflorida.com; Braulio Baez
Subject: "Customers of for-profit water, sewer utilities: Rate shock ahead"

Dear All:

Attached is an opinion I wrote for – and published 1/3/17 - in the Orlando Sentinel variously titled, depending on the editor/format:

“Customers of for-profit water, sewer utilities: Rate shock ahead”

“Customers of for-profit water utilities can expect soaring bills” and

“For-profit water, sewer: Florida customers, beware”

Really lit up the switchboards - not - though I think that covers it.

Interesting and instructive is a letter to the editor, also published in the Sentinel (on 1/2/17), titled Recycling Confusion – also attached and excerpted below.

“A media blitz — internet, TV, radio — to illustrate proper recycling methods might help. Printed materials are not read. Good luck!”

This is a point I made recently to you all and is reinforced by that LTE writer: If people can't figure out (and/or don't care) how to handle their recycling – and God bless them for at least trying – then a new informative approach is necessary.

There is no HOA/POA in the UIF Altamonte Springs franchise area - comprising close to 1,000 customers? - and consequently no publicly available email contact list. This is why I had to go door to door to nearly 750 homes – instead of ineffectively mailing my missive to them - informing people about the current *proposed* rate hike. What I learned is that very few customers were aware of the proposed increase because they either didn't read the mailing or didn't understand it. I know I stand over my recycling bin with my daily mail and immediately discard, unopened, most if not all many mass mailings I receive.

When the City of Altamonte Springs wants to advertise some periodic event to increase attendance, they place a temporary marquee sign – almost in UIF's front yard (though really in front of the next-door funeral home) - to inform residents in addition to various conventional printed communications (e.g., their quarterly magazine and newspaper ads); holistically a true outreach to inform as many folks as possible to assure a big turnout.

I assert if you keep mailing legal (looking) notifications in plain white envelopes as the primary means of communication to stakeholders – following the letter of the law – and solely in English, then that reinforces to me – and many others - that you don't really want to inform people.

Hoping that I'm making a difference – and not just being a pest.

Bill

William Shallcross
551 Carlisle Ave.
Altamonte Springs, Florida 32714
wshallcross@cfl.rr.com
(M) 321-356-6400

Customers of for-profit water, sewer utilities: Rate shock ahead - Customers of for-profit water utilities can expect soaring bills

William Shallcross
My Word columnist

Published January 3, 2017 – Orlando Sentinel

Something nefarious is taking place regarding the funding of utility infrastructure while the public remains blissfully ignorant that it will be footing the bill. Moreover, this latest Wall Street investment scheme may well just be the tip of the iceberg if it is expanded to finance public roads and other infrastructure.

Wall Street investors have been buying up for-profit utility companies having discovered (in Florida, particularly) that they are entitled to a statutory guaranteed return on investment. This is a double-edged sword as some municipalities are only now learning — too late — the negative consequences of getting into bed with these investors, as recently reported in *The New York Times*.

These investors pump money into their acquisitions to upgrade long-neglected capital systems, but not altruistically, as the strategy is to recover their costs at a guaranteed profit, while some people question the valuations supporting rate increase requests. The downside is that that profit comes from commensurately increased consumer billing rates that in some instances exceed 300 percent, an amount most folks simply can't afford, particularly retirees and low-income households.

Furthermore, the way water and sewer rates are structured in Florida — ostensibly to promote water conservation by punishing large residential users — disproportionately burden large and

The Altamonte Springs-based subsidiary of a national conglomerate is pursuing a request to markedly increase rates around the state for its 66,000-plus customers. The proposed rates being considered by the Florida Public Service Commission range in Lake County from a relatively modest 0.8 percent (for water) and 23.5 percent (for sewer) to, in Orange County, a whopping 221.2 percent for water.

I can't attest to it, but from what I read in the media, the PSC under Gov. Rick Scott has been accused of being a lap dog of Florida utility companies, including and specifically electric utilities.

The PSC was to hold a hearing on this rate request in Tallahassee on Jan. 3, the first business day of the new year. That date (and always the location) was concerning to me. My belief is that the

PSC was intentionally discouraging public attendance by scheduling the hearing immediately after the holidays.

However, after members of the Florida Consumer Water and Wastewater Alliance arranged to travel to Tallahassee for this hearing, it was rescheduled on Dec. 29 — without explanation — to Jan. 17. I think the change was to allow the players in this contentious rate increase to regroup for a potential onslaught of unexpected and irate consumers.

Concurrently, the PSC will hold "customer-service hearings" around the state, half of them scheduled at 9:30 a.m. on weekdays. By scheduling the hearings during their workday, again, it appears the PSC doesn't want a lot of people to attend.

My plea is to stop this trend before it grows too big to fail. I urge everyone to contact the PSC, as well as state legislators and county officials, to put a halt to this before it's too late.

William Shallcross lives in Winter Park.

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/opinion/os-ed-for-profit-utilities-will-gogue-water-users-my-word-010317-20170102-story.html>

Recycling confusion

I was disturbed to read of a continuing problem in the recycling program. For some reason this does not surprise me:

I have observed my neighbors' use of the bins. When the green bin is full, they put trash into the recycling bin. It was my understanding that recycling items were to be placed loose into the blue bins.

Perhaps when the hauler notices blue bins are overflowing with black garbage bags he should pass them by. Before I start throwing my recycling into the green bin, I pray there will be a solution for this problem.

A media blitz — internet, TV, radio — to illustrate proper recycling methods might help. **Printed materials are not read.** Good luck!

Joan Ricketts *Orlando*

LTE in 1/2/17 Orlando Sentinel <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/opinion/os-ed-letters-obama-betrays-israel-010217-20170102-story.html>