

Jacob Veaughn

From: Jacob Veaughn on behalf of Records Clerk
Sent: Thursday, January 14, 2021 10:33 AM
To: 'bdwyer31@yahoo.com'
Cc: Consumer Contact
Subject: RE: Docket 20200226-SU

Good Morning, Barbara Dwyer

We will be placing your comments below in consumer correspondence in Docket No. 20200226 and forwarding your comments to the Office of Consumer Assistance and Outreach.

Jacob Veaughn

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From: bdwyer31@yahoo.com <bdwyer31@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 14, 2021 10:30 AM
To: Records Clerk <CLERK@PSC.STATE.FL.US>
Subject: Docket 20200226-SU

My name is Barbara Dwyer. I am a full time Florida resident living at the Hideaway Bay Beach Condos(HBBC) on Little Gasparilla Island(LGI). I am submitting this letter as a follow up to my letter dated 11/22/2020 to the PSC for consideration before a ruling is made to issue a certificate to Environmental Utilities (EU) for the installation of a wastewater system to the area. Docket 20200226-SU.

Little Gasparilla Island (LGI) & its surrounding waterways are an environmentally sensitive area and ecologically important to many endangered species including nesting sea turtles, manatees, gopher tortoises & bald eagles. LGI is a bridgeless barrier island that can only be accessed by boats. It is a unique place unlike anything you will find on the mainland. It is an island of dirt & sand winding 'roads', modest houses & raised septic beds. Golf carts are used almost exclusively to get around on the island roads.

Has anyone on the PSC been to LGI to see first hand the place about which this decision will be rendered? Having first hand knowledge of the nature of the island would help when assessing the complexity of this issue to make a better informed decision. Attached are a couple of pictures to give you a glimpse of what LGI looks like. I would be happy to host a delegation from the PSC if anyone would like to visit LGI to see the area for yourselves.







Because LGI is bridgeless, we are considered a 'no man's land'. Many of the areas & issues where oversight is required have been largely ignored. And, if I'm honest, many people living on the island are ok with the lack of attention. But lack of attention with a project as large and as critical to the environment as this wastewater project should not be ignored.

If cleaner water is the intent for installing a sewer system, it is important that the job is done properly with the best system at a reasonable cost to achieve the long term goals. I share the concerns of our island neighbors on Don Pedro & Knight Island (Palm Island) and our mainland counterparts in Cape Haze regarding the lack of experience & the financial stability of EU. Without any wastewater experience, should their first job be one that has a major environmental impact?

Mr Friedman - EU's lawyer, at the Jan 5th PSC meeting for Docket 20200226 cited the Charlotte County 2017 Sewer Master Plan (SMP) and stated that EU will be implementing said plan. EU is not planning on following the recommendations from the 2017 SMP per conversations EU has had with a few of the local POA's he has met with regarding the wastewater system project. I have attended 2 of these meetings and at both meetings he referred to planning a different system which had lower installation costs but higher operation & maintenance costs. It appears to be a good way to ensure guaranteed profits for EU. This system will also add a burden to the electric grid on LGI. (FYI - We have lost power on the island 4 times since October.) Has any consideration been made as to what the increased power demand (or failure) will have on our island and on the wastewater system?

Mr Friedman also stated EU has not made a substantial financial investment before getting the certificate. He said they have a preliminary engineering report without any budget associated with the report. Has this preliminary engineering report been filed with the PSC? I have not seen this report in the Docket Filings. In his final comments at the Jan 5th meeting, Mr Friedman said EU would start to design the system after the certificate is issued. I am concerned by this lack of financial commitment from EU for a project of this magnitude.

I have also reviewed EU's application for this certificate. On the system maps, all of LGI is included in the scope of this plan. HBBC and Placida Bay Condos are contained in the area of EU's scope. HBBC & Placida Bay Condos share the septic plant known as HBBC Utilities. It is my understanding that HBBC Utilities are excluded from the EU plan because we have a DEP permitted septic plant and are considered our own utility. HBBC was told at a meeting on December 5, 2020 that we would be excluded from this project, but would be given the option to hook up with a bulk connection fee if we chose. If we are to be excluded from the scope of this project, the maps should reflect HBBC Utilities as a separate utility as was done with Knight Island Utilities. If the condos are to be included in the scope of this project, why were the condo homeowners not officially notified by mail as required?

I ask that Charlotte County Utilities(CCU) be required to take over this project. They have the expertise with running a wastewater utility. They have access to the resources needed to ensure the job is done properly. They have contacts with other government agencies to help get the permitting done. They will be able to allow the homeowner to pay over time on our tax bills. They have the knowledge & resources in place to get federal grants to help defer some of the costs. They will not be able to bail if the project runs into problems. This project must be handled by an entity that has a vested interest in the long term environmental goal, not just a financial goal.

Also, has any consideration been given to the problems associated with removal or destruction of old septic systems? There are metal, concrete and plastic septic tanks in raised beds on most properties. Each type of septic tank will have to be handled differently. In some of the older, more dense areas of the island, it will be hard to access the septic tanks. Leaving old tanks in place will defeat the purpose of installing a wastewater system. Septic pump trucks & heavy equipment will have to be brought back & forth across the bay by a barge for each homeowner. LGI has one option for the barge, which is run by a private concern that is charging between \$1200-\$1400 per trip.

If CCU will not take over this project & a certificate is issued to EU, I would like assurance that someone - the PSC, the Office of Public Counsel, Charlotte County will actively be monitoring every step of this project from start to finish to ensure the sewer system will be constructed & installed properly. Consideration of cost to the homeowner without sacrificing quality for short term savings & long term profits must be a part of this oversight.

The end goal is improved water quality without destruction of our delicate island ecosystem.

Thank You,
Barbara Dwyer

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Sent from my iPad