

Lisa Smith

From: Lisa Smith on behalf of Records Clerk
Sent: Thursday, January 20, 2022 1:02 PM
To: 'Angie Ridings'
Cc: Consumer Contact
Subject: RE: Docket #20200226-SU

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

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.

-----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

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:

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?

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?

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.

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?

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.

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