

**Antonia Hover**

**From:** Antonia Hover on behalf of Records Clerk  
**Sent:** Monday, April 22, 2024 9:19 AM  
**To:** 'Debbie Daugherty'  
**Cc:** Consumer Contact  
**Subject:** RE: RE. Docket #20240032-SU

Good Morning, Debbie Daugherty.

We will be placing your comments below in consumer correspondence in Docket No. 20240032, and forwarding them to the Office of Consumer Assistance and Outreach.

Thank you!

*Toni Hover*

*Commission Deputy Clerk I  
Florida Public Service Commission  
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard  
Tallahassee, FL 32399  
Phone: (850) 413-6467*

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**From:** Debbie Daugherty <ufdaugherty@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 19, 2024 11:41 PM  
**To:** Records Clerk <CLERK@PSC.STATE.FL.US>; Office of Chairman La Rosa <Commissioner.LaRosa@psc.state.fl.us>; Office of Commissioner Clark <Commissioner.Clark@psc.state.fl.us>; Office of Commissioner Passidomo <Commissioner.Passidomo@psc.state.fl.us>; Office of Commissioner Graham <Commissioner.Graham@PSC.STATE.FL.US>; Office of Commissioner Fay <Commissioner.Fay@psc.state.fl.us>  
**Subject:** RE. Docket #20240032-SU

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To Commissioner Larosa, Commissioner Clark, Commissioner Passidomo, Commissioner Graham, Commissioner Fay and Clerk of the Commission:

My name is Debbie Daugherty and I own 9850 Little Gasparilla Island, which is within the proposed sewer service area for Little Gasparilla Island. **I am formally objecting to the sewer proposal and request that the PSC deny the Application for Original Certificate of Authorization for Environmental Utilities, LLC (EU) for a central sewer system for Little Gasparilla Island.**

I have over 25 years experience in water and wastewater utilities and a Bachelors and Masters in Environmental Engineering from the University of Florida. I am currently the Water/Wastewater Officer for Gainesville Regional Utilities, responsible for all aspects of the water and wastewater system for the utility. There is no doubt in my mind that proceeding with this particular party EU for providing private central sewer is the wrong move for Little Gasparilla Island. EU does not have the technical expertise to properly construct, operate and maintain a sewer system. Allowing EU to move forward with a central sewer system will result in situations that will be more damaging to the environment. While a central sewer system has its merits for improving the environment in the future, selecting the appropriate party and technology is essential for success of the project. From the information presented, EU is proposing a low pressure sewer system, that will only remove the clear water from the tank and leave the solids behind, similar to a septic tank. There are very few letters of support compared to the long list of homeowners that do NOT support this project. The support letters provided from Little Gasparilla Island residents mention times of flooding with sewage on the island. The currently proposed sewer system will cost millions of dollars to construct and will not change the situation in times of flooding having solids from inground sewage tanks overflowing on the island. Many current septic to sewer conversions are installed across the State of Florida using small grinder pump stations at the home to transport the solids and water from the home to the treatment facility. A sewage grinder pump station would provide more effective design and provide better environmental benefits to have a central sewer system that removed all of the wastewater to be treated.

We are currently customers of Little Gasparilla Water Utility, which is owned and operated by the same parties that are applying as Environmental Utilities, LLC. The owners have minimal experience operating a water system and no experience operating a wastewater system. The water system on Little Gasparilla Island is constructed poorly and not operated responsibly by these parties. The owners of the water system do not respect owners property rights and place water lines wherever they want without proper communication with the homeowner nor obtaining proper easements for their water lines. While the project to bring sewer services to the island has merit, Environmental Utilities is not the appropriate party to complete a project of this nature. Part of EU's proposal for the central sewer system is "claiming ownership" of a utility easement on private property without compensating the homeowner. Charlotte County should continue to seek other experienced parties to provide sewer service to Little Gasparilla Island or pursue funding to extend County sewer service to our residents. Septic to Sewer conversion projects are being successfully completed across the State of Florida. Converting these barrier islands to a central sewer system would be a strong potential project for Charlotte County to propose for infrastructure grants and funding. Millions of dollars are going to be available for these types of projects in the coming years, which would reduce the financial burden for connection charges for the residents of Little Gasparilla Island.

The costs of owning a home on Little Gasparilla Island have increased dramatically over the last 4 years since EUs first petition to provide sewer. With the devastation from Ian, many homeowners have significant repairs or complete rebuilds of their homes. Construction prices have tripled in the last 2 years to get any work done on our home, no matter how small or big the project is. We continue to experience rising costs in every aspect of home ownership on Little Gasparilla Island. The insurance and property taxes alone have increased dramatically. This is NOT the time for an additional expense for the homeowners of Little Gasparilla Island, especially when the proposed project will not offer environmental benefits as currently proposed.

The proposed connection charges for the sewer system are listed from \$11,000 to \$20,000 and it does not appear the pricing provided for connection has changed since the 2020 petition to provide sewer service. Today a typical septic to sewer project is costing utilities between \$30,000 to \$40,000 per property to provide sewer service. It does not appear he has updated the construction costs for this project nor reflected that in his connection charges submitted. Many utilities performing septic-to-sewer conversions are doing so with grant funding and SRF loans to lessen the burden on the homeowner. Because EU is a private utility, they are not able to access any of the infrastructure funding being provided in the state of Florida. This area is currently designated in the Charlotte County Utility District and should stay that way to allow for funding dollars to assist with installation of a central sewer system.

On top of the significant connection charges, the proposed monthly sewer charges are VERY high compared to other utility rates. For the residents of Little Gasparilla Island, we already pay high monthly rates for the water system to the same entity. I currently pay \$83 per month as the base meter facility charge then the water usage is added on top of that fee. Adding the proposed monthly sewer charges would bring the monthly water and sewer charges to over \$250 a month which is a ridiculous monthly charge for water and sewer compared to other local utilities.

Mr. Boyer, the owner of Environmental Utilities, has been very vocal as a resident on Little Gasparilla Island that he has no intentions of completing this project, nor does he care about improving the environment on our island, he is solely making the petition to be granted the sewer service rights then sell them for his own financial gain. He has told other island residents that he is "locking in his retirement" expecting to make millions and retire. I personally want someone who cares about the future of our island to be involved in such an important public health and safety project for Charlotte County and Little Gasparilla Island. The residents and property owners in Charlotte County deserve fair and equitable rates and monthly charges for sewer service, not to be a private individual's retirement plan.

**In conclusion, due to the lack of technical expertise of the applicant, lack of respect for homeowner property rights of the applicant, and inability to provide fair and equitable rates, I formally request that Environmental Utilities, LLC Application to provide sewer service to Little Gasparilla Island be denied.**

Sincerely,

Debbie Daugherty

Water/Wastewater Officer

Gainesville Regional Utilities

[ufdaugherty@yahoo.com](mailto:ufdaugherty@yahoo.com)