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BEFORE THE
FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of:

DOCKET NO. 20240032-SU

Application for certificate to provide
wastewater service in Charlotte County
by Environmental Utilities, LLC.

PROCEEDINGS: SERVICE HEARING

COMMISSIONERS
PARTICIPATING: CHAIRMAN ART GRAHAM
COMMISSIONER GARY F. CLARK
COMMISSIONER GABRIELLA PASSIDOMO SMITH

DATE: Tuesday, January 28, 2025

TIME: Commenced: 5:31 p.m.
Concluded: 8:55 p.m.

PLACE: Tringali Park Recreation Center
3460 North Access Road
Englewood, Florida

REPORTED BY: DEBRA R. KRICK
Court Reporter

PREMIER REPORTING
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA
(850) 894-0828

1 APPEARANCES:

2 MARTIN S. FRIEDMAN, ESQUIRE, Dean Law Firm,
3 420 S. Orange Avenue, Suite 700, Orlando, Florida;
4 appearing on behalf of Environmental Utilities, LLC
5 (EU).

6 BRAD E. KELSKY, ESQUIRE, Kelsky Law, P.A., 150
7 South Pine Island Road, Suite 300, Plantation, Florida
8 33324, appearing on behalf of Palm Island Estates
9 Association, Inc. (PIE).

10 ROBERT VOLPE and VALERIE CHARTIER-HOGANCAMP,
11 ESQUIRES, Holtzman Vogel, PLLC, 119 South Monroe Street,
12 Suite 500, Tallahassee, Florida 32301, appearing on
13 behalf of Little Gasparilla Island Preservation
14 Alliance, Inc. (LGIPA).

15 LINDA COTHERMAN, Post Office Box 881, Placida,
16 Florida 33946, Pro Se.

17 MAJOR THOMPSON and DANIEL DOSE, ESQUIRES, FPSC
18 General Counsel's Office, 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard,
19 Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850, appearing on behalf of
20 the Florida Public Service Commission (Staff).

21 MARY ANNE HELTON, DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL,
22 Florida Public Service Commission, 2540 Shumard Oak
23 Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850, Advisor to
24 the Florida Public Service Commission.

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EXHIBITS

NUMBER:

MARKED

74 Charlotte County Utilities quarterly
update

40

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay. Good afternoon,
3 everyone. I want to welcome everybody here for the
4 service hearing part for Environmental Utilities'
5 application for a wastewater certificate in
6 Charlotte County. This is a very important part of
7 our process. This is the service hearing. This is
8 when we get to hear from you, the customer.

9 My name is Art Graham. I am bookend by my
10 right by Commissioner Clark, and by my left by
11 Commissioner Passidomo Smith. We are excited about
12 what it is you have to say.

13 Before I dig any deeper into this, I want for
14 staff to read the notice.

15 MR. DOSE: By notice issued on December 30th,
16 2024, this time and place has been set for a
17 customer service hearing in Docket No. 20240032-SU.
18 The purpose of the hearing is set out more fully in
19 the notice.

20 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Let's take appearances.

21 MR. FRIEDMAN: Martin Friedman on behalf of
22 Environmental Utilities.

23 MR. KELSKY: Brad Kelsky on behalf of Palm
24 Island Estates Association, Inc.

25 MS. COTHERMAN: Linda Cotherman, Pro Se.

1 MR. VOLPE: Robert Volpe on behalf of Little
2 Gasparilla Island Preservation Alliance, Inc.

3 MS. CHARTIER-HOGANCAMP: Valerie
4 Charier-Hogancamp on behalf of Little Gasparilla
5 Island Preservation Alliance, Inc.

6 MR. DOSE: For Commission staff, Daniel Dose
7 and Major Thompson.

8 MS. HELTON: And Mary Anne Helton here as your
9 Advisor.

10 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay. So we are going to
11 start this of a little early. We are supposed to
12 -- scheduled to start at 6:00, but I figured there
13 is no reason why we all need to sit around here and
14 wait another half-an-hour for that to start. We
15 will make another announcement at six o'clock, but
16 let's just get started with the people we have here
17 now.

18 Since we have so many people, we want to limit
19 everybody to three minutes. We have the light box
20 that's here. When you start, the green light will
21 be. On, when the yellow light comes on, you know
22 you have one minute left. And when the red light
23 is on, you know you are done.

24 Now, please respect each other's time, because
25 so far, we got, like, 30 people signed up, and I

1 know there is more coming. That's literally an
2 hour-and-a-half if everybody takes exactly three
3 minutes. So sit back and think about your
4 neighbors, think about everyone else that's here.

5 Also take into account -- I know this is kind
6 of strenuous for a lot of people. A lot of people
7 aren't used to coming to the microphone and
8 speaking in public. Take a deep breath. There is
9 no judgment here. Just tell us what you think
10 about the utility. Tell us they are doing a
11 fantastic job. Tell us they are doing a lousy job.
12 Tell us, you know, they provide great service.
13 Tell us they don't provide great service. Give us
14 some details.

15 And I know there is going to be a lot of
16 duplicate, but it's not necessary to say that. You
17 can say, I agree with what everybody else has said,
18 but specifically for me, this is the case. It's
19 also -- it's great to say ditto. It's great to say
20 all those other things.

21 As Commissioner Passidomo Clark loves to say
22 all the time, always feel free to send us an email,
23 send us that snail mail, or you can just call, I
24 mean, but it's not just all the three minutes where
25 you here at the podium. And at the end of all of

1 this, if you are still here and you want to speak
2 after everybody else has spoken, I will sit here
3 and listen to you speak another three minutes if
4 you feel like there is something you haven't gotten
5 off your chest.

6 This is part of the official record, so know
7 that this is all going to be part of what we use to
8 make the determination.

9 There is not going to be any clapping. There
10 is not going to be any booing, or any of that kind
11 of stuff, because it doesn't add a thing to the
12 process but just drag things out. And I just hope
13 that you would keep the professionalism and stick
14 with that, because I know the tendency is going to
15 be there, and I have been through 100 of these
16 things. Just please refrain from doing that.

17 If you want to send an email, the email
18 address is clerk@psc.state.fl.us., and that's in
19 the handouts in the front if you don't have that.
20 And refer to Docket No. 20240032-SU.

21 I think I got everything covered in that. Oh,
22 after you give your three minutes, you will be
23 subject to cross-examination, so any one of the
24 parties here can ask you a question. There is no
25 friendly cross, so remember that. I will cut you

1 off if you are trying to get someone to perpetuate
2 whatever that point of view is. Just try to
3 understand what the question is, and let's stay
4 away from the friendly cross.

5 This can be a very efficient method we are
6 going through now. And if for some reason we run
7 out of time and the ferry leaves, we are going to
8 do the same thing again tomorrow morning at 9:30.
9 You can feel free to come tomorrow at 9:30.

10 That all being said, let's do opening
11 statements. Everybody has got three minutes. Mr.
12 Friedman.

13 MR. FRIEDMAN: As I said -- as I said earlier,
14 and I won't reiterate a lot of it, but if you look
15 at the aerials of the service area, you will see
16 that it's surrounded by water, and there is water
17 inside. The science is telling us that septic
18 tanks pollute. They don't treat anything. They
19 pollute, and the nutrients that come out of the
20 septic tank are damaging to the environment. You
21 heard that from Dr. Lapointe, who is probably the
22 foremost expert on that subject in the state of
23 Florida.

24 Mr. Cole, who is a professional engineer --
25 the nature of this kind of proceeding, we have --

1 there is no system built, so we work off of
2 estimates and preliminary design plans, and that is
3 what Mr. Cole has done, which he has done a
4 preliminary design. He does work in this area, as
5 he testified, and he gave us estimates of what
6 those construction costs are. And I think his
7 arguments are more compelling than maybe others
8 that you heard.

9 You are going to hear a lot of customers
10 complain. And as I brought up earlier, you can't
11 rely on looking at the docket to know how many
12 people -- or how many properties are actually
13 represented by people who are objecting. Our
14 analysis of what's in the PSC docket is that, you
15 know, there is about 14 percent of the people on
16 the -- 14 percent of the proposed customers who
17 actually are objecting. They are just filing -- as
18 you heard from the witness this morning, she and
19 her husband sent 12 objections to the Commission.
20 So it looks like -- and that's her and her husband
21 both. So that one lot is represented by 12
22 objections. And I think you will see that is very
23 prevalent when these people testify and I asked ask
24 them about that.

25 So, you know, the hope is to understand that

1 this is a very vocal minority, and they should not
2 be allowed to dictate what's contrary to good
3 science and good environmental practice.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Little Gasparilla.

6 MR. VOLPE: Thank you, Commissioner.

7 As we mentioned in our opening statement
8 earlier, that EU did this application has not met
9 the requirements for this certificate, specifically
10 there is no demonstration of need. And one of the
11 criteria for demonstration of need is requests.
12 There has been a handful of requests, and that is
13 overwhelmingly contradicted by the customers, or
14 the people that would be customers in the proposed
15 service territory who have been in opposition to
16 this proposed utility.

17 Little Gasparilla Island Preservation
18 Alliance, Inc., has, as we heard earlier, over 200
19 members. It's -- for a young organization, there
20 is only 300 and something residents on Little
21 Gasparilla Island. So the assertion that it's
22 14 percent of the customers is just not true. I
23 mean, we represent at least 50 percent of the
24 properties on Little Gasparilla Island alone. And
25 as you heard earlier from our Chair, the position

1 of the members is overwhelmingly opposed to this.
2 Not a single member responded to our survey in
3 support of this system.

4 And as we heard earlier, and I believe that
5 some residents will probably speak to, is that the
6 cost to the customer of this system is a huge --
7 will be a huge financial burden. This is an area
8 that went through two major hurricanes, had seven
9 or eight feet of storm surge. People are
10 rebuilding their houses. People are recovering
11 from that, and the idea of having to pay an
12 up-front fee of -- we estimate to be close to
13 40,000. Even if you use the numbers provided by
14 the utility it would be over \$20,000 per household,
15 in addition to what they are looking at for harm
16 from the storms is just an overwhelming financial
17 burden and would be unjust.

18 The rates that are calculated are not fair and
19 reasonable, and for that -- those reasons, we
20 oppose the proposed utility.

21 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

22 Palm Island.

23 MR. KELSKY: Thank you.

24 I won't reiterate what I said earlier today
25 because it's going to be the same, and I imagine

1 it's going to be the same for what you hear from
2 the rest of -- or at least the overwhelming
3 majority of the people that are here.

4 The testimony in the record that was admitted,
5 prefiled testimony, PIE consists of about 240
6 households, represented by 390 individuals, the
7 overwhelming majority of which are opposed to
8 sewer. Coupled with the fact that there has been
9 no testing, and the major concession on, that I
10 believe, is seven percent full-time resident rate,
11 along with the fact that there has never been an
12 extrapolation based upon that low percentage of
13 full-time residents, renders the underlying science
14 unreliable and not believable.

15 And, again, there is no need. The PSC heard
16 this in 2022, and came up with that same
17 conclusion, that it's the same application, and
18 they had the same opportunities as they did then
19 that they didn't take advantage of now. No
20 testing. There is no need, and I think you will
21 here that over and over again and I don't need to
22 say anything else.

23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you.

25 MS. COTHERMAN: I just -- I think you will be

1 hearing some more detail from the residents, but
2 other than that, ditto for me.

3 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you.

4 Okay. Are there any elected officials that
5 wish to speak that are here?

6 Okay. So, now, Commissioner Passidomo Smith
7 is going to call three at a time. As you notice,
8 there is two seats right here by the podium. That
9 way so we are not always waiting for somebody to
10 get up and make their way up here.

11 The first person she calls will be at the mic,
12 the next person will be the first chair, and the
13 next person will be the next chair. And so we will
14 try to run this efficiently as possibly so we can
15 just kind of click along. I am doing this for your
16 good as much as our good, and we make sure we hear
17 as much as we can from everybody that's here, as
18 efficiently as we possibly can.

19 So before we do all of that, we need to swear
20 you all in. So anybody that plans on speaking
21 today, if I can get you to stand up, hold up your
22 right hand.

23 (Applause.)

24 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Once again, we will not have
25 any clapping.

1 (Whereupon, Chairman Graham administered the
2 oath.)

3 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you.

4 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: All right. So
5 the -- and I am going to just apologize up front.
6 My maiden name is Passidomo, so I understand about
7 butchering last names. I am so sorry if I say it
8 wrong, so correct me when you get to the podium if
9 I pronounce your name wrong.

10 So we have got -- our first time names are
11 going to be Guy Batsel, Art Flatau, and then Guy
12 Hurst.

13 So Mr. Batsel, you are first.

14 PUBLIC COMMENT

15 MR. BATSEL: Members of the Commission, my
16 name is Guy Batsel. I am a lifelong resident of
17 Florida, and I moved to Charlotte County in 1971.
18 At that time, there were 27,000 people in this
19 county, and most of them used septic tanks. There
20 were very few central utilities, developed
21 utilities, Englewood and Punta Gorda had sewage
22 treatment plants.

23 In the 1970s, as you know, those of you who
24 are old enough, a truth about septic tanks became
25 public knowledge. Septic tanks leach into the

1 aquifer and into the adjoining waters that surround
2 them, causing a degradation of those waters.

3 That truth has been known since the 1970s. In
4 fact, in 1980, when the committee to draft the
5 first comprehensive plan in Charlotte County was
6 appointed, of which I was a member, there was
7 specific language in the comprehensive plan which
8 discouraged the proliferation of septic tanks in
9 Charlotte County, and that language remains.

10 My wife and I have owned properties on the
11 barrier islands on Boca Grande, Little Gasparilla,
12 Don Pedro and Knight Islands, from 1979 to 2011.
13 We currently are the current owner of a beach front
14 lot on Little Gasparilla. So we are familiar with
15 the issues of these barrier islands.

16 It seems to me it's a matter of common sense.
17 Your septic tanks do what they are supposed -- what
18 they are set to do, there is a need for a central
19 sewage service on the island.

20 Now, in the recent years, there have been two
21 bills passed by the Legislature, I believe it's
22 Senate Bill 712 and House Bill 1379. Those two
23 bills discourage septic tanks on the barrier
24 islands, provide \$100 million for the acquisition
25 of lands and for the support of barrier island

1 utilities. And as I recall, Governor DeSantis has
2 approp -- has given \$30 million in grants and loans
3 to barrier island utilities to centralize sewer
4 service.

5 I have known Jack and Dianne Boyer for 40
6 years. Jack has operated Little Gasparilla Water
7 Company for that period of time. So he has the
8 experience to operate this utility as well.

9 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Mr. Batsel, thank you for
10 your many. Hold on for any cross-examination.

11 MR. FRIEDMAN: No.

12 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Any questions?

13 Sir, thank you very.

14 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: All right. So
15 Mr. Flatau, and then Mr. Guy Hurst. And then
16 Andrew Hagelin, you are on third.

17 PUBLIC COMMENT

18 MR. FLATAU: Hello. My name is Art Flatau. I
19 have been a homeowner on LGI since 1987. We
20 started coming to Charlotte Harbor from Tampa to
21 fish in the mid-'70s. Our first home was mainly
22 used on the weekends, late evening arrivals with my
23 children, walking from the bayside to the beach
24 house through ankle deep water with a smell of
25 sewage was not unusual during the summer rainy

1 season. The septic tanks for that home was
2 partially exposed, the one that we bought, and
3 required replacing a decade later when we sold the
4 house so we can build our final resting place. I
5 did not recognize this as a problem during
6 ownership as there is no smell or sign of leakage,
7 but realized at the time that we sold, I should
8 probably have fixed it sooner.

9 Our new home was built in 2010 and required
10 installation of an aerated septic system, which
11 cost, at that time, \$25,000. That's in \$2,010. It
12 could be twice that much now. Who knows? And
13 requires yearly state inspection at a cost of \$400.
14 Maintenance issues have not been unusual, requiring
15 repair primarily of the aerator system.

16 Recent hurricanes exposed the drain field
17 floating the cover off. The cement take allowed
18 seawater and sand into the tank, requiring removal
19 of the same. Our current home is built on one of
20 the highest elevations on LGIPA, four feet above
21 sea level. If I did two to three feet in my
22 property with a posthole digger, I hit water, I hit
23 the water table.

24 We heard today from an expert witness that you
25 need two feet of unsaturated soil below the drain

1 field. The pipe is four inches in diameter. It
2 needs to be buried in six to nine inches. That's a
3 total of three feet one inch. That leaves zero
4 room for error. And during the rainy season, or
5 king high tide, all of the earth is absolutely
6 saturated. I believe this is a major contributing
7 factor to septic failure on LGI.

8 It's hard to believe that septic system runoff
9 doesn't infiltrate the water table, allowing
10 harmful nutrients and bacteria into the water
11 surrounding our island. I believe the majority of
12 LGI homeowners, if honest, would admit to
13 witnessing malfunctioning septic system at some
14 point in time, either visually or olfactory sense.

15 As far as the environmentally impact of fully
16 functioning septic systems, I believe the
17 Gasparilla Sound fishery has taken a significant
18 hit. In the '80s and '90s, a trip to Bull Bay or
19 Turtle Bay would renown God's stock, more
20 frequently result in catch and release of 30 to 40
21 redfish. In fact, duration those years, Tom
22 McCune, may he rest in peace, the well-known Tampa
23 Tribune sports writer, would yearly arrange and
24 chronicle the Scott Moore Guided Redfish trip with
25 the Bucks head football coach to Bull Bay and

1 Turtle Bay.

2 A couple short stories. One night, while
3 fishing in the early '90s, I ran aground on a grass
4 flat just southeast of the intercoastal waterway in
5 the channel leading to Gasparilla Marina. I jumped
6 out of the boat and grabbed the bow line and began
7 pulling us into deeper waters. My friend shined a
8 light into the water, and what I saw amazed me.
9 Literally hundreds of pairs of gold eyes staring
10 back at me, the flat was absolutely covered in
11 shrimp.

12 Another night, I went to the phosphate dike on
13 the southern part of Boca Grande, where I watched
14 locals dip crab nets into the outgoing tide
15 catching beautiful blue crabs as fast as they could
16 dip their net. Does is anyone really think our
17 water remains as productive?

18 I met local guide Jeff Totten shortly after
19 Ian. We were neighbors at Gasparilla Marina. Jeff
20 guides here and in the Florida Keys. I asked him
21 at that time about septic-to-sewer conversion. He
22 told me the remarkable result they experienced in
23 the Keys where, in short time after their
24 septic-to-sewer conversion, the canal waters became
25 pristine. The results seen in the Keys has become

1 the poster child for septic-to-sewer conversion. I
2 strongly urge anyone not familiar with these
3 results to simply search on-line Florida Keys
4 septic-to-sewer conversion.

5 Recently, we spoke again regarding the local
6 waters --

7 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Art, thank you for your
8 testimony. Hold on for any cross-examination.

9 MR. FRIEDMAN: None.

10 MS. CHARTIER-HOGANCAMP: None.

11 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

12 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: After Mr. Hurst
13 goes, Andrew Hagelin, you are next, then Jeannie
14 James, then Brittany Essig? Essig? Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Sir, your name for the
16 record, please.

17 PUBLIC COMMENT

18 MR. HURST: Guy Hurst. I live on LGI, and I
19 am -- I don't want the new sewer system. And what
20 we didn't talk about today, all the experts talking
21 about, is the service that we are going to get. So
22 here's what we get with the water service right now
23 with these same people:

24 On the 8th of August, I get a memo going,
25 guess what, your rates are going to being

1 increasing effective July. So we get notice
2 after-the-fact. So we have already spent water and
3 they go, oh, well, we are just -- tough luck. So
4 we got -- our bill showed up. We got the higher
5 rate from July, even though we never got notice of
6 it until end of -- it's amazing.

7 It says: The rate will be approximately 2.85
8 percent more. So they don't even give you the real
9 rate. Then you get your bill, and it's not good.
10 The service with this company is bad.

11 The other thing that is annoying about the way
12 they run the place is that they are required under
13 federal law to have -- establish rules against
14 identity theft as part -- because they are a
15 utility, to have these rules, both under field law
16 and I think under Florida law too.

17 So the -- I changed my mailing address to a
18 post office box. Wallah, all of a sudden I start
19 getting -- when I entered my appearance, I only
20 left my LGI address. I didn't give them my post
21 office box. So I changed my address and told the
22 water company, here is my new address. Wallah, I
23 start getting from this other company now. They
24 gave away my address to the new company that's
25 starting. So then they are the treating us like

1 supposed to. They are not paying attention to
2 detail. That's what we are going to get. And it's
3 not good service.

4 The other thing I want to gripe about is I
5 made a special appearance for this case because I
6 think the Commission should look at its notices. I
7 mean, I was an attorney in the state of Oklahoma
8 and did a bazillion administrative hearings, and I
9 think your notice is not good enough to pass due
10 process laws. Look at it, it's mailed out -- there
11 is no certificate. It doesn't have who you are, or
12 anything on the letter that's sent to us. It looks
13 like junk mail. The first one came in a trifold
14 throwaway piece of junk mail. I think this next
15 time, it came in an envelope mailing. It doesn't
16 show a lawyer, or you are getting sued, or there is
17 \$40,000 coming out of your account because of some
18 sewer thing. It just says, good luck. There is a
19 service coming to us.

20 So I think you guys ought to look at that,
21 because if this gets -- I am going to keep still
22 appearing specially. And if it goes to where you
23 give them the right to appeal and stuff, I am going
24 to say -- ask the judge to send it back and start
25 all over, because we -- I have never been served

1 the notice, the initial notice, because LGI has no
2 -- the rule says by regular mail. There is no
3 regular mail on the LGI. We have to have it
4 somewhere else because we don't get mail.

5 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

6 Any cross-examination?

7 Thank you for your testimony.

8 MR. HURST: Thank you.

9 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Brittany Essig,
10 you are third up, so you can --

11 PUBLIC COMMENT

12 MR. HAGELIN: Commissioners. My name is
13 Andrew Hagelin. I am an LGI resident.

14 Why am I here? I just was looking for answers
15 really. I kind of wanted to know, after five years
16 of hullabaloo on the island about what -- about the
17 sewer system, what is the problem? What's the
18 proposed solution to the problem? What evidence is
19 there that the solution is going to actually solve
20 the problem? Maybe principally, who bears the cost
21 of paying for the problem? And -- I didn't even
22 touch it. Thanks.

23 Finally, what is the benefit to those of us
24 who are going to pay?

25 Unfortunately, I sat here all day and I really

1 haven't heard a lot about what the problem is. I
2 heard something about nitrates, seagrass, you know,
3 that sort of thing. But I haven't really heard
4 anything tying septic tanks for sure to those
5 issues.

6 There is a lot of science out there, you know,
7 studies, and all that that might tangentially
8 connect it, but it doesn't eliminate other
9 problems, and, you know, it's not definitive,
10 especially with the red tide, as we all know it's
11 being debated every which way.

12 As far as what is the proposed solution? It's
13 kind of a moving target. It seems pretty fuzzy for
14 me. I understand there is some reasons for that,
15 but I would sure like to know how the proposed
16 solution is going to affect me and my neighbors.

17 What evidence is there that the sewer system
18 is going to solve the problem since? We are not
19 real sure what the problem is, it's kind of hard to
20 say whether it's going to solve it or not. It
21 probably will reduce nitrates. Not that nitrates
22 are the worst thing in the world.

23 Who bears the cost of implementing it? Well,
24 we hear that, you know, the service is going to pay
25 for it, and all that, but 100 percent of the cost

1 is going to be borne by the homeowners. 100
2 percent. And that's, you know, planning,
3 operating, constructing, and installing in our
4 houses, which for me requires replacing my entire
5 electrical panel, because after the hurricane, when
6 I tried to put in another circuit, they said, nope,
7 you can't do it, so, you know, and then they wanted
8 \$3,800.

9 So what do I get for the money that I pay?
10 Whether it's \$30,000 or \$50,000, or, you know, in
11 total, I am not sure what I get to tell you the
12 truth. I don't see anything functioning any better
13 than what I have got.

14 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

15 I just want to make the announcement that it
16 is six o'clock, and this is the official time that
17 we are supposed to start. I will ask one more time
18 if there is any elected officials that are here
19 that want to speak? I normally like to bring them
20 up first, because I know there speaking for a lot
21 of people in the office. If there is none, then we
22 will continue on. Thank you.

23 Any questions? No.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We can't hear back
25 here.

1 MR. FRIEDMAN: Commissioner Graham, could you
2 maybe remind people that they need to sign in in
3 case they came in on this other side over here?

4 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: We have the sign-in just
5 inside the door over here if you need to sign in,
6 if you haven't so far.

7 Ma'am, if you can just get a little closer to
8 the microphone when you speak.

9 PUBLIC COMMENT

10 MS. JAMES: Can you hear me?

11 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Yes.

12 MS. JAMES: Can you hear me?

13 Okay, my name is Jeannie James. I have been a
14 part-time resident on Don Pedro, Palm Island,
15 Knight Island for 30 years, my husband and I. We
16 have gone through the two hurricanes, three
17 hurricanes, Charley. In the morning, I am just
18 going to concur that it does take our trades over
19 an hour to get on the island, and a good island
20 forget off the island, that we are paying for their
21 time standing in line. Okay, this is not the time
22 to be putting any extra burden on the barge system.

23 This is also an extra financial burden. For
24 those of us who have flood insurance, and built to
25 code, we found out that national flood insurance

1 covers little to nothing for our repairs, and which
2 we are all -- the whole island was completely
3 flooded during Milton. And it floods frequently
4 with a heavy storm. This is not unusual for our
5 island to go under water. So we do have water
6 intrusion often.

7 Our current septic system is the old-fashioned
8 cement tank that was installed in 2018. And the
9 County required after -- before the five years time
10 period, we were sent a certified letter to have our
11 tank emptied, and we had to show proof to the
12 County. So the County is doing some maintenance or
13 management of our systems.

14 The thing that bothers me -- well, the other
15 thing is we have a very toxic environment being on
16 salt. In the six, eight -- six years, seven years
17 we have been there, I have had to replace the air
18 conditioner, my dish TV three times. And during
19 Milton, our water meter box was crushed during
20 Milton. The utility company had to come out and
21 replace it. I believe those aren't buried any
22 deeper than what these pipes that are going to be
23 installed are going to be buried. And I fear that
24 they are going to really cause a lot of damage to
25 the island, because we -- we saw -- we saw utility

1 boxes totally crumble.

2 The other thing that's real important to me is
3 that we have a performance and payment bond on this
4 project. I don't believe that has been addressed
5 today. A project -- a performance and payment bond
6 protects the citizens, the vendors, the County.

7 We were in business, we have had to, many
8 times, go after the payment bond to get paid, and
9 we have gotten paid, but we have had the
10 performance and payment bond. The County, if they
11 were doing this project, would be required by law
12 to have a performance and payment bond. Being a
13 private organization, unless the County or the
14 PCS -- PSC requires it, it's not. We feel that we
15 need is a performance and payment bond to protect
16 us.

17 I have already gone through one instance where
18 we didn't have a performance and payment bond and
19 had to pay twice to get things fixed, and this was
20 years later would found out that we had no bond.

21 This island is natural. We want to keep it
22 natural. We want to protect our island. We want
23 to do what's right, but I don't think the system is
24 what's right for us. I think we really,
25 unfortunately, need a regular sewer system.

1 Anything that is par vacuum, that's not buried
2 deep, we have to protective of, there is no doubt
3 about that. But this system, I don't believe, is
4 the proper one.

5 And let's see, I don't -- I am trying to make
6 sure if I covered everything. We don't have any
7 roads. I live on probably the only paved road on
8 that island, on the northern end of that island,
9 and we don't have a lot of roads to destroy.

10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Ms. James?

12 MS. JAMES: Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Excuse my ignorance, what is
14 a performance and payment bond?

15 MS. JAMES: A performance and payment bond is
16 a bond taken out at an insurance company, and it
17 says that the developer is going to properly
18 perform the work. And if it's found out later, it
19 could be a couple years later, that they didn't
20 perform, or something wasn't done right, we, the
21 payers, will not have to come out of pocket again.
22 The insurance company will cover it.

23 Also, if they don't pay their vendors, and,
24 you know, there is no dispute that they are owed
25 the money, they also help pay the vendors; or they,

1 you know, pay the vendors, make sure the payer --
2 the vendors are paid. Because the contractors
3 can't get performance and payment bonds if they
4 have a bad record. If you have a lot of people
5 going after it and they have to pay out, you know
6 how insurance companies are, they are going to drop
7 you. You are not going to get the insurance. But
8 the performance and payment bond in particular will
9 protect the citizen that they only have to pay once
10 for this project and not twice. So to me, it's
11 very important that we have one.

12 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you.

13 Any questions of Ms. James?

14 Thank you, ma'am.

15 MR. FRIEDMAN: I have one quick question, are
16 you a member of PIE or LGIPA?

17 MS. JAMES: I just became a member of PIE.

18 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay. Thank you.

19 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Beverly
20 Williams, you are on deck, and then Julie Imig,
21 your after her. So you can --

22 PUBLIC COMMENT

23 MS. ESSIG: Okay, and you did say my last name
24 right. Good job.

25 So this is Brittany Essig. I was not going to

1 share, I was just going to read a letter, which I
2 am still going to read. But just sitting here
3 today, I felt I had to share a few thoughts.

4 I know many of the people in this room, they
5 watched me grow up. I grew up on Palm Island,
6 since 1987, and actually lived there with my kids,
7 my three kids for quite a few years. I live on the
8 mainland now, and my husband works on Palm Island
9 every single day.

10 We have experienced, and we have seen
11 firsthand, what the septic system, especially
12 through these storms, I got to travel the island
13 after both storms, and there was just septic
14 everywhere. There was poop everywhere. It's
15 disgusting.

16 After listening to today, and the testimonies
17 that were had, and the conversations, it feels like
18 it comes down to the money, not the environment. I
19 feel like the environment is the most -- and the
20 state is in charge of, you know, I feel like PIE is
21 really a big part of the environment out there, and
22 I feel like it's coming down to the money.

23 And then my thought was, is that if, when the
24 time comes, when a homeowner has to replace their
25 septic system and/or drainage field, that's going

1 to cost more than if they actually were to connect
2 to sewer. So that, to me, goes back to common
3 sense.

4 Those are my thoughts. Thank you. I am now
5 going to read a letter from the Executive Director,
6 Jennifer Hecker, from Coastal & Heartland National
7 Estuary Partnership.

8 I am writing only behalf of the Coastal &
9 Heartland National Estuary Partnership, the CHNEP,
10 to express our support for the proposed
11 septic-to-sewer upgrade on the barrier islands of
12 Charlotte County, Florida.

13 The SHNEP is an entity of, in the U.A.,
14 Environmental Protection Agency National Estuary
15 Program created by Section 320 of the Clean Water
16 Act. The CHNEP is of a partnership of local, state
17 and federal governmental entities, including
18 Charlotte County, as well as nongovernmental and
19 natural resource stakeholders.

20 Our mission to is to unite central and
21 southwest Florida to protect and restore water and
22 wildlife, and the congressionally designated
23 estuaries of national significance and their
24 watersheds in central and southwest Florida.

25 Natural resource management preservation and

1 restoration activities undertaken by the CHNEP are
2 guided by our comprehensive conservation and
3 management plan, CCMP, developed and implemented
4 together with our partners.

5 The CCMP discusses the objective action to
6 reduce water -- wastewater pollution, including
7 specifically to continue to inventory and map
8 septic systems in the CHNEP area; support
9 conversion of septic systems to centralized
10 sanitary sewer systems; support and increase
11 sanitary sewer capacity to handle new inflows from
12 conversions; encourage regular maintenance and
13 inspections of septic systems; encourage evaluation
14 and adoption of new nitrogen reducing septic system
15 technology. The proposed septic-to-sewer upgrade
16 on the barrier islands of Charlotte County would be
17 to implementing this collectively goal -- this
18 collective goal.

19 Recent dramatic seagrass declines -- oh, my
20 time is up. My time is up. My time is up.

21 That was from Jennifer Hecker, the Executive
22 Director of Coastal & Heartland National Estuary
23 Program.

24 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Ma'am, if you would like to
25 submit that letter to part of the record, we can do

1 that.

2 MS. ESSIG: Yeah, I think it's been submitted.

3 Yeah.

4 MR. THOMPSON: It is part of the record
5 already.

6 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay. Thank you very much.

7 MS. ESSIG: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Any questions on
9 cross-examination?

10 Thank you very much for your testimony.

11 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Dr. Jim Daniel,
12 you are third up, so you can move up here.

13 PUBLIC COMMENT

14 MS. WILLIAMS: I have a handout, there is
15 actually two pages to it.

16 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Hand it to staff over here.
17 Thank you.

18 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

19 My name is Beverly Williams. I stand before
20 you today as a homeowner of Little Gasparilla
21 Island. I have been there since 2004, and I would
22 like to voice my strong disapproval for the
23 proposed low pressure central sewer system. I
24 would like to make four points.

25 First, the low pressure system is considered

1 by County officials as a system of last resort.
2 The 2024 quarterly reports from Charlotte County
3 Utilities indicate that these systems are
4 responsible for over 51 percent of the sewer
5 spills, serving just 25 percent of the customer
6 base. This is a significant concern for an island
7 like ours, which is prone to natural disasters such
8 as Hurricanes Helene and Milton, tightening the
9 risk for environmental damage.

10 Second, there is no evidence been provided in
11 the application to indicate the water quality in
12 lower Lemon Bay, which surrounds Don Pedro, Palm
13 and Little Gasparilla Islands is degraded. In
14 fact, I possess a report from the Florida
15 Department of Environmental Protection from their
16 final study released August 2024, which concludes
17 the waters are not classified as impaired within
18 the South Basin area. Our waters are not impaired.

19 And within the BMAP area, this proposal seems
20 to ignore the Senate Bill 712 and the House Bill
21 1379, which mandates the resources be directed
22 towards enhancing water quality in the designated
23 BMAP areas, where improvements are critically
24 needed. Given that lower Lemon Bay does not
25 require such interventions, this project is

1 unnecessary.

2 Earlier today, we were talking about the areas
3 that were tested that were not in our areas. These
4 handouts that I gave you today were actually
5 testing in our area.

6 Third, there is no utility easement on my
7 property. My deed clearly states my property
8 extends the entire width of the utility, with no
9 rights granted -- the entire width of the island, I
10 am sorry, with no utility rights granted. And I
11 hand you out my deed, which clearly states that.

12 I have seen a map from the EU that shows an
13 easement on my property. That easement is only for
14 a road that has never been claimed. That easement
15 does not include any other use. I suspect that
16 EU's claim of other easements are the same. I have
17 brought my deed to show you the easement is only
18 for the road. I strongly oppose any attempt to
19 appropriate my land for this system, as it would
20 not only infringe upon my property rights, but also
21 set a troubling precedent for the property owners
22 island wide.

23 Finally, I would like to mention Florida
24 amendment code rule 18-21.4004 which discourages
25 new infrastructure on unabridged barrier islands,

1 unless established before December 18th, 1990,
2 acknowledging the inherent ecological risk and
3 potential for harm.

4 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Ms. Williams.

5 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

6 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you for your -- thank
7 you for your testimony.

8 MS. WILLIAMS: Oh, time is up. All right.
9 Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Brian Goodhead,
11 you are third up.

12 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Once again, we don't need to
13 have the clapping.

14 Ms. Williams, if you would come back up here,
15 please.

16 If we have clapping again, we are going to
17 take a 10-minute break, and if we have it again, we
18 are going to adjourn the meeting tonight.

19 Ms. Williams, would you like to submit this
20 stuff to the record?

21 MS. WILLIAMS: Sure.

22 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay. We will do that, is
23 it No. 74?

24 MR. THOMPSON: 74, yes.

25 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: The witness will be

1 Williams. The description will be warranty deed
2 and others.

3 MR. THOMPSON: I'm not sure. How would you
4 describe the chart?

5 MS. WILLIAMS: Well, it's Charlotte County
6 Utilities update to the Commissioners quarterly.
7 It's their quarterly update.

8 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay.

9 MS. WILLIAMS: To the County Commissioners.

10 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you very much.

11 Charter school are of a.

12 (Whereupon, Exhibit No. 74 was marked for
13 identification.)

14 MR. FRIEDMAN: Ms. Williams, are you a member
15 of PIE or LGIPA?

16 MS. WILLIAMS: LGIPA.

17 MR. FRIEDMAN: How do you get your electricity
18 if you don't have an easement for -- except for
19 road to your property, how do you get electricity?

20 MS. WILLIAMS: Our electricity is -- it goes
21 above.

22 MR. FRIEDMAN: It goes over your property.

23 MS. WILLIAMS: (Nods head.)

24 MR. FRIEDMAN: So if the water line was -- or
25 sewer line we are talking about went above your

1 property, it wouldn't need an easement?

2 MS. WILLIAMS: Correct.

3 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay. I have no further
4 questions. Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, Ms. Williams.
6 I am sorry. I didn't mean to cut you off.

7 PUBLIC COMMENT

8 MS. IMIG: Hi. I am Julie Imig -- I am Julie
9 Imig, and my husband George Shopp and I own the
10 property at 9866 Little Gasparilla Island.

11 I just wanted to say thank you to everybody
12 that's here today. It feels like we did this a
13 while ago, so it's good to see the faces and see
14 that the support, or lack of support actually
15 continues on this, from our island anyway.

16 I guess I don't have any, you know, data to
17 add, but I will say I have just think we need to be
18 really practical, and I think we need to be, you
19 know, working with the realities of our island.
20 You have heard many, many arguments about both of
21 those things today, but it seems to me like if --
22 you know, first of all, maybe we have a solution
23 without a problem. We haven't heard the problem
24 yet.

25 The second thing is, you know, we have a lot

1 of septic systems that are working, so it seems,
2 like, wasteful to me to take down something that's
3 working. And, you know, if we have septic system
4 that are not working, I hope that we would look at
5 a range of options and choose, you know, the one
6 that is the least disruptive, the most
7 cost-effective and so forth. So I feel like it
8 would be my preference if we were to consider a
9 wider range of options.

10 In terms of just the realities of our island,
11 and especially on our property. So we are, I don't
12 know, maybe 10 or 15 houses in from the very end of
13 the island, and our property also goes across the
14 island. So pull up in your boat, line up to the
15 dock, walk to our house over a boardwalk. And then
16 if you leave the back steps, it's dunes. There is
17 no road to it. There is no path. There is no
18 sidewalk. There is nothing. So I can't imagine
19 how disruptive it would be to dig up what we have,
20 you know, and do a whole another installation. And
21 we are far from the only house in that situation.

22 I will email you guys a picture of an FPL
23 truck that came to restore our electricity after
24 the storms, and I think they were stuck in our back
25 yard for about four hours. You know, we are just

1 not equipped for that kind of equipment. We need
2 to be practical. We need to have solutions that
3 our island can bear.

4 That's all I have. Thanks.

5 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, ma'am. Hold on a
6 second.

7 Any questions?

8 MR. FRIEDMAN: Yes. Ma'am, are you a member
9 of PIE of LGIPA?

10 MS. IMIG: LGIPA.

11 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you for your
13 testimony.

14 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Kevin Mackin,
15 you are third.

16 PUBLIC COMMENT

17 DR. DANIEL: Hi. My name is Dr. Tim Daniel.
18 I am an active practicing Florida physician. I
19 took off work today to be here because this is
20 important to me.

21 My family is -- my wife was -- graduated
22 Venice High School. We are local. We have been on
23 the island for 30 years, homeowners for 10. So I
24 don't know about sewage. I'm not an expert, but I
25 deal with a lot of data in my work, procedures,

1 drugs, devices that have to be proven to be
2 effective before there are approved. What I heard
3 today, and I have been here all day, is I have
4 heard everybody is biased here. They are biased.
5 They are biased. The scientific experts are
6 biased. I am confused.

7 I am an environmentalist, and I would ask each
8 of you making these decisions to make this decision
9 on what you think is best for the environment. And
10 it's confusing, because I heard one guy who seemed
11 very credible, and has been the field a long time
12 say there is irrefutable evidence, and I heard
13 another guy who is equally credible, in my view,
14 say that there is not. That somebody has got to be
15 right and somebody has got to be wrong.

16 What I do know is, if you don't have the
17 evidence, you cannot not act on this. That's like
18 approving a device for surgery that nobody is quite
19 sure if they know it's going to work or not. You
20 don't make that decision.

21 What I do know is that no data has been
22 collected on this island. I would urge you to not
23 approve this until data has been collected from an
24 unbiased source, an unpaid expert, then make a
25 decision. Not now. This is all biased.

1 The second point I want to make is that I was
2 raised in Clearwater. And over my youth, I saw
3 what happened to Clearwater Beach and Sand Key
4 Beach, okay. If you are not familiar with those,
5 there used to be pristine beaches, unspoiled, just
6 natural beautiful. And now if you go to Clearwater
7 Beach and Sand Key Beach, there is nothing but
8 condos.

9 A lot has been discussed about the
10 environment, and I urge you to do what's right for
11 the environment. I know that if we get central
12 sewer, there is going to be condos. That is a
13 beautiful island. There will be foreign investors
14 who come in and buy up properties, wipe them out
15 and build condos. It will be good for the County
16 and terrible for the island.

17 This is a very special island. There is
18 nothing like it in the state of Florida. My wife
19 and I looked all around, we found this island, we
20 bought. It's very pristine. It's very fragile.
21 We just got slammed with hurricanes. I can't
22 afford this, even the \$20,000, which I don't
23 believe.

24 And the last thing I will say is, I am a
25 surgeon and I just had major surgery. If I am

1 going to have surgery, I am not going to let a
2 surgeon who hasn't done this procedure before do my
3 surgery. I will leave did at that.

4 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, Dr. Daniel. Hold
5 on a second for a question.

6 MR. FRIEDMAN: ARE YOU A member of PIE or
7 LGIPA?

8 DR. DANIEL: Yes.

9 MR. FRIEDMAN: Which one?

10 DR. DANIEL: PIE.

11 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay. Did you file written
12 objections?

13 DR. DANIEL: Yes, I did.

14 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay. And did you send your
15 objections, as PIE indicated, to all five
16 Commissioners?

17 DR. DANIEL: You bet I did. And I will say
18 one thing to add to that. Using the numbers that
19 EU provided today, there is 810 homes on the
20 island. Okay, if you average two adults per home,
21 that's over 1,600 people. He got 79 letters. I
22 wouldn't be bragging about that.

23 MR. FRIEDMAN: All right. So you are saying
24 there is only 79 letters in the PSC docket?

25 DR. DANIEL: I am saying, from what I heard

1 today, he said there was less than 100 letters that
2 he had in his hand that he produced for evidentiary
3 -- evidence here today.

4 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay.

5 DR. DANIEL: There is over -- that's from over
6 1,600 on average, that's not good statistics.

7 MR. FRIEDMAN: Well, that's not what we are
8 talking about, but thank you.

9 DR. DANIEL: You bet.

10 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

11 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: David Cohen,
12 you are third.

13 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Sir, welcome.

14 PUBLIC COMMENT

15 MR. GOODHEAD: Hello. Can I start?

16 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Yes, sorry.

17 MR. GOODHEAD: Sorry, I got an ear infection
18 and I can't hardly hear myself talk, and I can't
19 hear well, so my voice is a little scratchy.

20 My name is Brian Goodhead. I am a full-time
21 resident on Don Pedro Island, 53 Palm. I have been
22 here for about four years full time, and I have
23 been coming to the island since the mid-1980s.

24 So I guess the main question I really want to
25 ask is why are we all here again wasting

1 everybody's time and resources on this issue? The
2 issue has already been analyzed and evaluated by
3 everyone, and a simple conclusion was already
4 reached. There is absolutely no need whatsoever
5 for this. None of the residents want it, and have
6 already voiced our opinions indicating such because
7 there is no hard data that indicates there is any
8 reason to have it. So again, why are we doing
9 here? Why is this being pushed on us, when the
10 people have made their voices clear that this is
11 not wanted, and science has established that there
12 is no need. Perhaps somebody here is tell
13 everybody here, why are we here again, and why is
14 this coming up again? We would -- I would really
15 like to me know myself.

16 So secondly, if there was any empirical data
17 suggesting that there are environmental risks
18 regarding sewage, then why wouldn't the County be
19 providing this considering because there is extreme
20 tax money we pay out there on the island.

21 Taxpayers on the mainland are getting sewage and
22 many other services for their money, services that
23 are not made available to us on the island, water
24 service is just one example of a County service
25 that was already privatized for us. So now we are

1 supposed to want yet another service that is
2 privatized? Again where are our tax dollars going?
3 That's a whole other.

4 Besides no one wanting or needing this, there
5 is still a glaring lack of any comprehensive
6 business plan, any consistent or accurate costing
7 details, especially any industry experience, which
8 are all a disaster waiting to happen.

9 The inexperience alone with the construction
10 aspects of such an undertaking would be devastating
11 to our pristine island environment. Not to
12 mention, the County is going to allow this
13 inexperienced company to install a low pressure
14 system, which are synonymous with epic failures and
15 maintenance nightmares. The County itself does not
16 install these systems any longer because of these
17 inherent and well-known design flaws. However,
18 it's good enough for the people on Don Pedro and
19 Little Gasparilla to deal with? This is the
20 message that we are getting here.

21 So once again, not wasting any more words, we
22 have already beaten this horse to death the last
23 time we did this, everyone here seen and has access
24 to all the documentation and data provided the
25 first time around, so I am not going to rehash

1 every reason why this was found to be something
2 that is not needed or viable. Our attorneys here
3 have already had to rehash all the details today
4 with all of you again, so I know all of you
5 understand these reasons clearly.

6 So people please, let's use some common sense
7 and reasonability here and put this house -- horse
8 out of its misery. It was denied the first time,
9 so we deny it again, and let the people on the
10 island enjoy our limes and not have to keep wasting
11 our time and money fighting against such exploitive
12 and money-grabbing agendas.

13 Thank you very much for your time.

14 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 Any questions?

17 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or
18 LGIPA?

19 MR. GOODHEAD: Yes.

20 MR. FRIEDMAN: All right. Thank you.

21 MR. GOODHEAD: That you, sir.

22 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Joseph Kroslak,
23 you are third.

24 PUBLIC COMMENT

25 MR. MACKIN: Hi there. Can you hear me okay?

1 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Yes.

2 MR. MACKIN: Good. My name is Kevin Mackin.
3 I have been a resident of Palm Island since 1999.
4 I have also been -- okay. I have been a resident
5 of Palm Island, actually Don Pedro, for -- since
6 1999. I have also been a real estate agent there
7 for the full 25 years.

8 Every one of the homes that I have sold, which
9 have been in the hundreds, was one of the mandatory
10 things that I did was to have septic inspections as
11 often as I did home inspections. I was always
12 on-site doing all my inspections on behalf of my
13 customer. So when the truck arrived, I was there.
14 When they opened it up, I was there. When they
15 left, I was there. And we found that they are a
16 state certified company, which very good standing,
17 and their reports, 90 plus percent of the time, is
18 functioning as designed. So they are working.

19 Thank you very much.

20 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir. Hold on for
21 a question.

22 MR. FRIEDMAN: Where did you get your
23 statistics that 90 percent are operating just fine?

24 COURT REPORTER: I'm sorry, I can't hear you.

25 MR. MACKIN: I'm sorry. I'm used to looking

1 at people when they are talking.

2 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or
3 LGIPA?

4 MR. MACKIN: PIE.

5 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Sir, if I can get you to
7 repeat the answer you gave in the first one.

8 MR. MACKIN: What was that, to the question
9 how I did find those statistics?

10 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Yes.

11 MR. MACKIN: Through my own practices from
12 being on location, and being aware of how many
13 problems we have and don't have personally.

14 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you.

15 The court reporter didn't get it the first
16 time. I just wanted to make sure she got it.

17 MR. MACKIN: Okay.

18 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you.

19 MR. MACKIN: Thank you.

20 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Don Schultz,
21 you are third.

22 PUBLIC COMMENT

23 MR. COHEN: Okay, can you hear me okay?

24 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Yes.

25 MR. COHEN: My name is David Cohen. I have

1 had a residence on the island since 1990, and
2 became a full-time resident in '95.

3 I received a letter from EU earlier this
4 month, and I disagree request several items. It
5 states that the cost per home estimated at 18,000.
6 Very good. We have heard a lot of testimony about
7 how much it's going to cost from their point of
8 view. The only thing that's important to us here
9 in the audience is how much it's going to come out
10 of my pocket. It doesn't matter if I am paying the
11 County or I am paying EU, the estimated costs are
12 approaching \$40,000, which is a ridiculous amount
13 of money.

14 Is EU willing to guarantee the total cost of
15 homeownership of the total cost to homeowners is
16 limited to 18,000, and to absorb any of these
17 additional costs that they are not including in the
18 total cost? No.

19 It states minimal disruption due to virtual
20 boring. Maybe compared to other methods, but in no
21 way will it be minimal. Many roads are single lane
22 with no defined right-of-way, and the roads are
23 sand, not asphalt or even dirt.

24 The EU mission statement of protecting the
25 environment is in stark contrast to the proposed

1 system. Charlotte County no longer promotes low
2 pressure systems. It is a measure of last resort
3 in completing existing projects only. This is due
4 to high maintenance costs and disproportionate
5 spillage that our waterways. Even leaks that do
6 not make it into the waterway will impact local
7 wildlife. There are safer and more economical
8 methods, which you heard many times.

9 One of the testimonies I heard today was now
10 would be a great time for the utility to come in
11 and come due to damage from the hurricane. I found
12 this extremely disturbing. Westra, a utility
13 company that has decades of sewer system experience
14 in Florida, is in the midst of a \$30 million
15 project to remove a low pressure water system in
16 Manatee County due to its complete failure due to
17 those surges we just experienced in our last two
18 hurricanes.

19 We heard testimony that the canisters that
20 will hold the grinder should be fine in the
21 saltwater environment if they don't get saltwater
22 in them. You probably heard everyone laugh in the
23 audience. The island was under water. There is no
24 reason to believe that the entire system wouldn't
25 be exposed to a saltwater environment.

1 Septic tanks on the island are not the issue.
2 Even an event that leads to many septic system
3 failures pales in comparison to the huge potential
4 for a central sewer spillage.

5 EU's letter further stated that prohibits
6 high-rise development. This is laughable given the
7 history of development on the islands in Florida.
8 Zoning changes are a political fact, build it and
9 they will come. Speaking of zoning, the entire
10 project is of latent effort to circumvent the
11 existing restrictions on seaward islands.

12 Through the use of a legal loophole, the
13 County says they can't do it but a private utility
14 can. Nudge. Nudge. Wink. Wink. All compared by
15 saying it's not a local minority fighting this
16 effort. You have seen the audience here, the vast
17 majority are wearing these little symbols here.
18 This is a broad-based desire for a different
19 solution when and if a problem has been
20 scientifically proven to exist.

21 The use approach is a bad solution, and puts
22 the entire burden on citizens without providing
23 guaranteed financial assistance, project completion
24 or project oversight, the granting of EU's request
25 would be a public disservice.

1 I am a member of PIE, and I wrote proudly all
2 of the letters to the Clerk and the commissioners.

3 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Mr. Cohen, I need for you to
4 repeat that so that --

5 MR. COHEN: I am a member of PIE. I did write
6 to the Commission and to each one of the
7 Commissioners.

8 MR. FRIEDMAN: And you sent about seven or
9 eight are separate letters.

10 MR. COHEN: I sent to each Commissioner and to
11 the Clerk, I sent two different letters, to my
12 recollection, or maybe three.

13 MR. FRIEDMAN: All right. So if the number
14 was seven, you wouldn't be surprised?

15 MR. COHEN: Yes.

16 MR. FRIEDMAN: All right. But you sent one to
17 everybody?

18 MR. COHEN: I am sorry?

19 MR. FRIEDMAN: You sent one to each
20 Commissioner and to the Clerk, and you did that how
21 many times?

22 MR. COHEN: It's either two or three. I don't
23 recall.

24 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

1 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Joe Comer, you
2 are third.

3 PUBLIC COMMENT

4 MR. KROSLAK: Good evening. It's an honor to
5 be here. Thank you for this opportunity. I am
6 here to represent my family. My name is Joe
7 Kroslak. We own a home on LGI, and also property
8 there.

9 It takes a special breed to live out on this
10 island. And also with that comes a drive, and a
11 passion, and a fire within us to protect our
12 lifestyle, protect our way of life and our
13 surroundings.

14 So I have been here with you guys today, bear
15 with me, and being here with you guys, and
16 listening for all the things I have listened to, I
17 have lost my voice. But, you know, I was also
18 thinking, when we do any projects on our own
19 personal level, we like to know how much it costs
20 us. That's one of the things we check into to see
21 what's it going -- can we afford it? What's it
22 going to cost us? This we don't know. We have no
23 idea in listening to all the input today. But I do
24 know it's going to be a lot of money.

25 And I started to think, and I was kind of

1 worried because I'm worried about my children's and
2 my grandchildren's inheritance. What I don't want
3 to do is I don't want to flush it down the toilet
4 and into the sewer system. That's -- I don't want
5 to.

6 So I am asking you, you have a lot of --
7 Commissioners, you have a lot of weight resting on
8 you have shoulders, and I just humbly ask that you
9 put yourselves in our shoes and just consider where
10 we are at right now.

11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you for your
13 testimony. Hold on for --

14 MR. FRIEDMAN: Yeah, I just want to ask that
15 question, the same question. Are you a member of
16 PIE or LGIPA?

17 MR. KROSLAK: Yes, sir, both.

18 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay. Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

20 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Pete Stimmel,
21 you are third.

22 PUBLIC COMMENT

23 MR. SCHULTZ: Hi, my name is Don Schultz. Me
24 and my wife bought a house at 80 Palm Drive on
25 Knight Island, and we have spent now nine years

1 with that house, two hurricanes. My wife is a CPA.
2 She worked for Pfizer for 35 years. I am an
3 accountant, Western Michigan University, and I had
4 real state brokers license, builders license, I
5 owned a Christmas tree farm, and I also finished my
6 career as Climax Township supervisor in Michigan.
7 Now, being the supervisor of Climax Township
8 automatically made my wife the First Lady of Climax
9 Township.

10 We have been through this before, and I was
11 pretty happy with the outcome. I haven't seen any
12 data or the need for a sewer system. One of the
13 gentlemen who spoke before me said that all of the
14 parties who are expert witnesses were paid. I find
15 that's not true. The one for PIE, with a Ph.D.
16 from the University of Miami was not paid.

17 The letter I saw in a newsletter from PIE this
18 summer was a letter from that gentleman and his
19 wife. I think she's an attorney for the EPA. I
20 have was so impressed, and I wish I had that
21 letter, and I am sure you do somewhere.

22 The sewer system proposed by EU is wrong.
23 It's a wrong system for the islands. And a vacuum
24 system, rather than a low pressure system, would
25 pull water from the intercoastal as opposed to us

1 pushing raw sewage into the intercoastal. We like
2 it here. We would like to stay here. But having a
3 hurricane and a sewer proposed every two years is
4 discomfoting.

5 Thank you.

6 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or
7 LGIPA?

8 MR. SCHULTZ: I am a member of PIE and glad of
9 it.

10 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

11 MR. SCHULTZ: You're welcome.

12 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

13 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Frank
14 Campoamor, you are on third.

15 PUBLIC COMMENT

16 MR. COMER: Good evening. My name is Joe
17 Comer. Marshall Franklin and I have a place at
18 8934 Gulf stream on LGI.

19 We appreciate you all taking the time to come
20 down to hear about our island and our concerns.
21 The main concern is we do not want a central sewer
22 system follow LGI. You have our two-page letter,
23 dated April 23rd last year, enumerating in details
24 our concern regarding this application, which is
25 too long to be repeated here.

1 LGI is very special. The only way to get to
2 LGI is by boat. We like it that way. There are no
3 public docks, and we like it that way. There are
4 no roads, only sandy paths just wide enough for the
5 empty ole truck. We like it that way. There are
6 no commercial establishments. We like it that way.
7 We pay a lot of taxes with minimal services in
8 return. We like it that way. Everyone has a
9 septic system that works. We like it that way, and
10 we do not want to see it change. It works. Why
11 try to fix it? Often, when this happens, things
12 get worse.

13 From all the technical testimony you have
14 heard, it seems there has been no established need
15 to replace the septic systems. What are we
16 polluting? Where is the smell? Where do you see
17 the solids floating in the bay? I haven't. Have
18 you been to LGI to see for yourselves? I would be
19 happy to give you a lift in my boat.

20 Then it's the money, or should I say follow
21 the money? \$17,000 to \$50,000 is on the table for
22 what each customer would pay for a new sewer
23 system, plus who knows what per month afterwards.
24 After Ian, Helene and the final blow, Milton, we
25 are all tapped out. We have spent thousands of

1 dollars on cleanup and repairs that are ongoing and
2 seem never ending. More than two dozen homes were
3 totally destroyed, and our landscape totally
4 changed.

5 I don't understand the economics model, where
6 a business collects its capital from the customer
7 in order to make a profit. No competition. No
8 customer choices. I think Charlotte County has
9 abdicated their responsibility to the citizens of
10 LGI, and hope you will agree that to change out the
11 sewer system on LGI is not needed, or suggest that
12 scientists and experts study the situation and
13 decide if necessary, to come up with an engineered
14 economic solution, not just an unvetted company
15 solution. Follow the money.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Sir, what's your profession?

18 MR. COMER: I am a navel architect and marine
19 engineer.

20 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: When you speak in the
21 microphone, I can visualize what you are saying,
22 and I like it that way.

23 Any questions?

24 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or
25 LGIPA?

1 MR. COMER: I am a member of LGIPA, and I
2 support it.

3 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

4 MR. COMER: And I wrote letters.

5 MR. FRIEDMAN: Yep, how many did you write?

6 MR. COMER: I wrote one letter.

7 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay. Thank you.

8 MR. COMER: And I sent it to every one of the
9 Commissioners.

10 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay. Thank you.

11 MR. COMER: Just like I would do for Congress.
12 I don't send it to just my representative. I send
13 it to every representative in Congress, because
14 they need to hear from me personally, not through
15 some clerk.

16 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

17 MR. COMER: Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir, for your
19 testimony.

20 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: All right.
21 Frank Campoamor, you are on deck, and Karyn Flatau,
22 you are third.

23 PUBLIC COMMENT

24 MR. STIMMEL: Hello, everyone.

25 Capitalism and we the people. What's more

1 person than that? EU, despite having environmental
2 in its name is not an environmental group. They
3 are a for-profit -- they are a for-profit,
4 investing hundreds of thousands of dollars to
5 obtain a private utility with the hopes of making
6 millions. That's okay. That's capitalism.

7 We the people, the small group of islanders
8 are being asked to spend tens of millions of
9 dollars on a sewage project, a solution looking for
10 a problem. If you want to force us to fund this
11 endeavor, I think we should have the right to ask
12 for proper testing to prove its need. If we need
13 to, then let's find a solution together.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

16 COURT REPORTER: I can't hear you, sir.

17 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Sir, we need for you to
18 face --

19 MR. STIMMEL: I am a member of PIE, and I did
20 send out letters.

21 MR. FRIEDMAN: How many letters?

22 MR. STIMMEL: One to everyone.

23 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: What's the name?

25 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: That was Joe

1 Comer, correct?

2 UNIDENDIFIED SPEAKER: No. That wasn't Joe
3 Comer.

4 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: I'm sorry. We
5 are good. We are okay.

6 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Please.

7 PUBLIC COMMENT

8 MR. CAMPOAMOR: Hi, can you hear me okay?

9 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Yes.

10 MR. CAMPOAMOR: Okay. Good evening. My name
11 is Frank Campoamor. I have two properties on
12 Little Gasparilla Island, so I am making two
13 requests for wastewater service to my properties.

14 So I have been coming to the island since
15 1978, so over 46 years. And I come all year long.
16 I was, you know, talking to my wife probably about
17 a year ago, and I have literally probably been to
18 the island 900 times. So I have seen the
19 progression of stuff for the last 46 years, so I
20 think, you know, not getting into a scientific
21 portion, I am just going to tell you what my eyes
22 and, you know, what I see.

23 So, you know, there has been a significant
24 deterioration in the water quality out there, and,
25 you know, I do believe it's probably some from the

1 septics on the island, probably some from the
2 mainland. But, you know, my issue is that, you
3 know, I know every square inch of that island. I
4 know where all the houses are. I know who they
5 are, and so forth. And I can, you know, I can
6 guarantee it that a lot of the septic systems have not
7 been properly maintained.

8 So maybe there were experts to hear. I drove
9 up from Naples, you know, I didn't have a chance to
10 hear them, but, you know, I don't think there is
11 going to be a lot of properly functioning septic
12 systems on the island, which, you know, so any
13 expert who was saying, you know, these septic
14 systems aren't creating a problem, you know, maybe their
15 conclusion isn't necessarily accurate, because
16 there are a lot more sewage getting into the system
17 than to have those systems functioning properly.

18 And, you know, one thing I have seen over the
19 last probably eight to 10 years, where it's really
20 gotten worse, is the island was showcased on a
21 couple of HGTV shows, which just brought a lot of
22 interest here. So these houses and the septic
23 systems are getting a lot of use, and, you know,
24 that's just something where the water quality has
25 really gotten even worse over the last seven to

1 eight, nine, 10 years and stuff.

2 So, you know, if people are worried about the
3 environment, which I am, and I think everybody
4 here, you know, if there isn't wastewater done,
5 these septic systems are going to have to be
6 surveyed by the County to see what's working and
7 stuff, because, you know, I feel that it is a
8 problem. Of course, the storm surges certainly did
9 not, you know, help with that.

10 And, you know, I know cost is a big item here.
11 I get it. You know, I don't want to have to spend
12 extra money, but if you do have to have your septic
13 system replaced, I have talked to a couple of
14 contractors, it's going to be 30,000 or more, which
15 is, you know, likely going to be more expensive
16 than to hook up to this wastewater plant.

17 And, you know, a lot has been talked about
18 Jack, and the water he brought to the island. I
19 was on the against for that. Okay. I did not want
20 it, mainly because of cost, but I was making the
21 same arguments that you are hearing here today's.
22 And, you know, I ended up having my home remodeled,
23 and I was grandfathered in with my water, the well
24 water. And so I actually hooked up sooner than I
25 was supposed to with the grandfathering. And I can

1 tell you, it's been the best thing ever. I thought
2 Jack did a wonderful job. I even admitted to him a
3 time after that, because we sparred, Jack, me and
4 his family, we sparred after one of the County
5 Commission hearings outside of the hearing room.
6 And I admitted to him that I was wrong, that it's
7 been a very good thing, positive thing for the
8 island. And I feel that the wastewater thing will
9 be a similar positive, you know, thing for the
10 island.

11 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Sir -- sir, thank you for
12 your testimony. Hold on see if there is any
13 questions.

14 MR. FRIEDMAN: No.

15 MR. CAMPOAMOR: Since I have two properties do
16 I get more --

17 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: No, sir.

18 MR. CAMPOAMOR: I don't? Okay. All right.

19 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you.

20 MR. CAMPOAMOR: Worth a shot.

21 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you very.

22 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Art Knighten,
23 you are on deck. John Baird, you are after.

24 PUBLIC COMMENT

25 MS. FLATAU: My name is Karyn Flatau, and I

1 live on Little Gasparilla Island. We --

2 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Quick question for you.

3 Have you been sworn already?

4 MS. FLATAU: Yeah.

5 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay. I am just trying to
6 figure out where that line was of people who have
7 been sworn.

8 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Nobody is
9 marked. I might, just as a future reference, at
10 the bottom of the sheet, there is a box to mark
11 that that will swear you in so, we will, yeah.

12 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay. Sorry.

13 MS. FLATAU: Did you restart my time?

14 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Yes.

15 MS. FLATAU: I live on Little Gasparilla
16 Island, and I have lived there for 15 years full
17 time. Only home all year long. And I -- we --
18 when we built our houses, we had put in an aerator
19 system. The first three years, the County did come
20 out and inspect it. We have to get it inspected by
21 Martin Septic, and we have to get it inspected by
22 the County. We pay for those services.

23 The first three years, the County came out.

24 They have not been out since. My septic system --
25 and I get that a lot of people don't smell the

1 sewer and stuff like that. The island is long and
2 thing. We have some areas that don't get flooded.
3 We have other areas that get really flooded.

4 I live in an area, when it rains, my whole
5 yard is full of grass. We get rain where golf
6 carts can't go down the road. But a lot of people
7 that live on the island, that say that they live on
8 the island are not there in the summer in the rainy
9 season.

10 So anyway, with our aerator system, it goes
11 out into the ground and I have been told that. But
12 the one thing I don't understand when I heard we
13 were going to get wastewater, I smell the sewer,
14 and my septic system was taken out really bad from
15 Helene, and then worse from Milton. I lost my
16 tubes.

17 What they do is they come and they cover it
18 up, and my septic still isn't working. How many
19 months has it been? Four months, because we are
20 waiting for parts. So where is that stuff going?
21 It's going right in my front yard. It's
22 disgusting. It happens every time we get rain.

23 Our water table where we live is, like, if you
24 dig down maybe two feet, you hit water. So I have
25 pictures of my aerator septic system sitting in

1 water, so -- I mean, I was glad that we were going
2 to get wastewater, and I hope you guys really
3 consider, because we can't kick this can down the
4 road.

5 I know it costs a lot of money. I don't want
6 to spend a lot of money, but I also want my kids to
7 be able, and my grandkids to be able to come down
8 and enjoy the island.

9 Thank you for your testimony.

10 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you for your
11 testimony, ma'am.

12 Any questions?

13 MR. FRIEDMAN: No.

14 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you.

15 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Kelly Lube, you
16 are third.

17 PUBLIC COMMENT

18 MR. KNIGHTEN: I want to apologize for wearing
19 sunglasses. I don't have my prescription glasses
20 with me, and I got to have them. Sorry.

21 I do want to thank y'all for coming and
22 spending a couple days down here with us. I know
23 it's a big decision y'all have to make, and I am
24 glad I don't have to make it.

25 My wife and I searched Florida for years and

1 years before we found Don Pedro Island. We looked
2 all over the place. We love it, love it down here,
3 safe, quiet community, and we invested our life
4 savings in our house down here, and sold our house
5 back in South Carolina and moved down here full
6 time.

7 Within the past two years, y'all know, we have
8 had three major hurricanes. After Ian hit, we had
9 to strip our house all the way down to the studs,
10 move all of our contents to a pod or on the ground
11 level, and moved into our RV. Due to many
12 construction constraints and permitting, we were
13 almost a year into construction when Helene and
14 Milton hit.

15 In short, we lost our RV that was sitting in
16 the front yard, two other vehicles. We also lost
17 all of our household furniture, brand new
18 appliances, kitchen cabinets and personal items
19 that were stored on the ground level.

20 Of course, all of this being on the ground
21 level, we had no flood insurance. It doesn't start
22 until you get to the second level. So we have had
23 to take a lot of our savings to recoup to put our
24 house back together.

25 We want to be able to pass our property onto

1 our kids because we love it, and when they come
2 down here, they love it too. And we want to be
3 able to do that, but we are -- with the hurricanes
4 and with the monies that we have spent, like
5 everybody else here has the same story I have. And
6 we are just -- we are just tapped out right now.
7 It just cannot happen anymore.

8 We -- we are -- with our RV being destroyed,
9 our house is still under construction. Hopefully
10 will be in it within the next month. But we have
11 got great friends and neighbors on the island, and
12 we have been able to stay in some different housing
13 on the island, and we are so grateful to them for
14 that.

15 One thing that I did hear -- I have been here
16 all day. One thing I did here is that it was said
17 that there were septic tanks spread all over the
18 beach, all over the island, and poop and everything
19 else all over the place.

20 I ride my bicycle all over the island just
21 about every day. My little dog sits in the front
22 basket. So if you see a fat boy riding down the
23 road with a little fluffy dog, that's me. But I --
24 in doing that -- and I ride up and down the beach
25 also, but I have not seen one septic tank above

1 ground. I -- it didn't happen. It just has not
2 happened. And I was shocked when I got back to the
3 house after Milton, there were no signs of any
4 septic tanks being destroyed.

5 Thank you, I see --

6 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Question for you.

7 MR. FRIEDMAN: Yeah, I got a question. Are
8 you a member of PIE or LGIPA?

9 MR. KNIGHTEN: Yes, PIE.

10 MR. FRIEDMAN: Do you ride your bike down to
11 LGI as well?

12 MR. KNIGHTEN: I ride it down on the beach
13 side, but I have never been back into LGI. And I
14 talked to some of these people here, I need to do
15 that. But I have ridden all the way down to the
16 end right down there to the inlet.

17 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

18 MR. KNIGHTEN: That's a great ride. You need
19 do it sometime.

20 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

21 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Kjell Plotkin,
22 you are third.

23 PUBLIC COMMENT

24 MR. BAIRD: Good evening Commissioners. My
25 name is John Baird. I am a property owner at 241

1 Kettle Harbor Drive. I am a member of PIE, and I
2 did submit one letter per Commissioner.

3 Like many of my neighbors, I dis -- I strongly
4 agree that a system is not needed. It's
5 unwarranted. Additionally, attributing failed
6 septic systems to two major hurricanes
7 misrepresents the issue at hand. A private sewer
8 system would not have prevented these problems.

9 During recent hurricanes, density populated
10 areas like Tampa Bay experienced over eight million
11 gallons of raw sewage spill. When you look at
12 Hurricane Milton, there was over 70 million gallons
13 of wastewater spilled into our waterways in
14 Florida. In contrast, our sparsely populated
15 islands, where many homes are seasonal or vacation
16 properties, is well-situated for septic systems.

17 Centralized sewer systems make sense in a high
18 population density areas, where public funding and
19 economic feasibility exists. These factors are
20 absent here. The proposed service area is remote,
21 has a small population. It is geographically
22 unique and fragile. Residents would bear
23 prohibitive costs of a system that is need neither
24 needed nor justified.

25 In conclusion, I urge that you deny

1 Environmental Utilities' application because it's
2 not necessary, and would impose undue financial
3 harm to our residents.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you for your
6 testimony, sir.

7 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or
8 LGIPA?

9 MR. BAIRD: Yes, sir. I stated that at the
10 beginning. I said I am a member of PIE, and I
11 submitted one letter each of the Commissioners.

12 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

13 PUBLIC COMMENT

14 MS. LUBE: Hi. I am Kelly Lube. I grew up on
15 the island. I just wanted to state that -- I think
16 it was Jack said that there was septic tanks all
17 over the beach. After the storm, I, myself, I
18 didn't go past the State park, but I combed the
19 beach, and we were picking up as much debris
20 putting it in huge piles, everything, mailboxes.
21 We don't even have mailboxes on the island. I
22 don't know, you know, there was a couch. There was
23 a stove. There was -- you name it, it was on the
24 beach, but there was not a septic tank. There was
25 no poop on the beach. It was just, you know,

1 debris from homes.

2 Also, as far as the logistics of getting on
3 and off the island. I know that the one witness
4 said that he accounted for, like, rain days during
5 construction. Well, we -- the tide has been so low
6 that we didn't even get garbage pickup for three
7 weeks. The garbage trucks could not get over.

8 And then I also wanted to state that a lot of
9 us are still, you know, in cleanup mode from the
10 hurricane. My mom, amazing, Linda Cotherman, after
11 the storm, she was six weeks couch suffering
12 because she could not get electricity. Our island
13 was this deep in water. And most every house
14 needed to get electrical redone underneath the
15 houses, and we couldn't get electricians. They
16 were impossible to get out. And if you did get
17 one, you waited weeks before one could come out.
18 My mom waited six weeks to get her, you know, her
19 meter fixed. She lost her car.

20 There is people here in the audience that
21 still don't have a car. They got a ride here from
22 people. You know, and this was just the last two
23 hurricanes.

24 Hurricane Ian, we were just pretty much
25 recovered. There is still houses on the island

1 that when -- when Helene hit, they were just
2 getting their houses, like, having contractors come
3 to put new roofs on and stuff.

4 You know, the island is so special. This is a
5 place where, you know, you used to be able to go
6 out after the golf cart and you would count how
7 many gopher tortoises you would see, you know. You
8 see Ospreys flying. You see -- you know, we have
9 bobcats, which is, you know, just cool. It is a
10 super special place, and I --

11 You can do a quick Google search, and it's,
12 you know, millions of sewer spills, millions of
13 gallons of sewer spills. So I don't understand, if
14 we want to put a sewer in, the possibility of
15 millions of gallons, you know, going into the
16 waterways is more detrimental to me than anything.
17 And then with the logistics, what happens if a pipe
18 breaks in the middle of the night? Because the
19 ferry stops at 10 o'clock. So, you know, if
20 something happens and there has been sewer -- there
21 was -- in Bradenton, 200,000 gallons were spilled
22 July 25th last year from a lightning strike. So it
23 doesn't have to be a storm. Loxahatchee had a
24 sewer plug stuck and lost a thousand gallons in
25 May.

1 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Ma'am.

2 MS. LUBE: Yes.

3 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you for your
4 testimony.

5 MS. LUBE: Okay.

6 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Hold on for a question.

7 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or
8 LGIPA?

9 MS. LUBE: PIE.

10 MR. FRIEDMAN: You realize, do you not, that
11 the sewer plant is not going to be on the island?

12 MS. LUBE: Yes.

13 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay. That's all I have.

14 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, ma'am.

15 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Brian Fredley,
16 you are on deck. Kevin Stevens, you are after him.

17 PUBLIC COMMENT

18 MS. PLOTKIN: Hi. My name is Kjell Plotkin.
19 I am a full-time resident on Don Pedro and Knight
20 Island for the last 30 years. I was also a Florida
21 Fish and Wildlife certified gopher tortoise agent
22 with the State, and serving as the leader of
23 Bocilla Island's conservation -- gopher tortoise
24 conservation team. I have been hands-on for every
25 single survey permit excavation, educational

1 program and resident query and recordkeeping for
2 FWC guidelines for the last 15 years.

3 So today, on behalf of the residents, I am
4 stating some of their concerns regarding
5 construction process of sewer installation, and how
6 it's going to impact the gopher tortoise, which is
7 a threatened species, and it's protected under the
8 law.

9 So the statements that I am about to make are
10 all FWC regulations. So here are the facts:

11 Number one, any burrow within 25 feet of
12 construction must be prepared and set up to capture
13 a gopher tortoise that might be using a burrow on
14 that property. This would likely be done by use of
15 a bucket trap. The specifics for this process
16 involves a monitoring mandate of 30 days from the
17 time the trap is dug and set until the burrow is
18 declared vacated. The trap must be monitored two
19 times per day.

20 Number two, if a gopher tortoise is captured,
21 a holding panel of specific size must be provided.
22 It needs to have partial secure protective
23 coverage. It has to have forage. It has to have
24 water, distilled, by the way. This, too, must be
25 physically checked and monitored two times a day

1 until the construction is complete.

2 A secured black cloth needs to be buried on
3 both sides of the sewer trench in order to prevent
4 a gopher tortoise from falling into that trench
5 during the construction. The fencing needs to be
6 checked two times a day for any breaches, and to
7 rescue any gopher tortoises that breach the
8 fencing. If not, that gopher tortoise could
9 parish. Openings at the ends of those trenches at
10 the will also need to be protected. Permits for
11 gopher tortoise kept must be applied for and
12 approved for each individual lot or burrow.
13 Paperwork on any and all activity must be filed
14 with Florida Fish and Wildlife.

15 So now the questions.

16 One: Who's responsible for the application
17 for capturing and removal when the burrow is on a
18 homeowner's site?

19 Question two: Who is responsible for the
20 application if it's on Bocilla conservation
21 property, or what if it's on the West Coast Inland
22 Navigation District's property, or what about our
23 county fire station?

24 Question three: Who is responsible for
25 putting the property back to its original condition

1 after that burrow has been excavated? Who is
2 responsible for the cost of those permits? Is to
3 the homeowner? Who is responsible for the cost of
4 the holding pens, and the labor hours to care for
5 the gopher tortoises?

6 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Ma'am, thank you for your
7 testimony. Hold on for a question, please.

8 MS. PLOTKIN: Yes.

9 MR. FRIEDMAN: Ms. Plotkin, are you a member
10 of PIE or LGIPA?

11 MS. PLOTKIN: No.

12 MR. FRIEDMAN: Did -- wasn't Bocilla Utilities
13 able to install water lines where you are without
14 -- in spite of the tortoise regulations?

15 MS. PLOTKIN: I can't answer that. I don't
16 know.

17 MR. FRIEDMAN: There are water lines up in
18 where you get your water service, correct?

19 MS. PLOTKIN: There is water there, yes.

20 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay. Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: We are going to take two
22 more speakers, and then we are going to take a
23 five-minute break for the court reporter and
24 myself.

25 PUBLIC COMMENT

1 MR. FREDLEY: Hear me okay?

2 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Yes.

3 MR. FREDLEY: Okay. I am Brian Fredley, 311
4 Bocilla Drive, Placida, Florida. I am on Don
5 Pedro. We are basically an island almost separated
6 from Palm Island. There is actually a second
7 bridge, you know, once you get on to Palm Island to
8 get to our section of the island.

9 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: I am sorry, I need you to
10 speak into the microphone. Thank you.

11 MR. FREDLEY: You know, we are both -- my
12 spouse and I are opposed to the sewer project and
13 really here to protect our island. We do have
14 gopher turtles on our property. We see them daily
15 with other, you know, other species, bobcats.

16 If the EU was paying for the entire project,
17 we would still be opposed to it, because that's
18 really not the point, in my mind. You know, we are
19 in support of septic systems being inspected and
20 upgraded. And our septic system was installed in
21 2021 or '20, and it had to be permitted. It had to
22 be set back off of the waterway, off of a side
23 property line. It meets all the requirements.
24 Septic systems, you know, use the sand soil for
25 filtering. They are a, you know, the right use or

1 need for a remote, you know, place like this.

2 You know, the first step in, you know, higher
3 density development is to bring utilities, you
4 know, to an area. So I think that's really what
5 our concern is, that, you know, to bring a higher
6 density utility to a remote area that doesn't need
7 it, you know, equals there may be higher density
8 coming. And that's -- I think that's what the real
9 concern is.

10 Yeah, I don't think that there is real
11 evidence that there is not opposition. There was
12 mention there was, you know, a little opposition to
13 this. I think the opposition is pretty high.

14 I am in the same boat as the rest of the
15 residents. I mean, we had two hurricanes. We had
16 a lot of damage. You know, we had floodwater that
17 was six feet high, and our septic system performed
18 perfectly. I mean, we were able to, you know, use
19 it the day after.

20 I have a property on the east coast of
21 Florida, Daytona Beach area, and it has a central
22 sewer with lift stations, and it's a system that is
23 very similar to what they are talking about doing.
24 That system was down for 11 days after Milton
25 because the lift stations lost power, and all the

1 lift stations were swamped with seawater. This
2 wasn't the case here, and that shows that our
3 systems really work.

4 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir. Hold on for
5 a question.

6 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or
7 LGIPA?

8 MR. FREDLEY: PIE.

9 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

10 MR. STEVENS: I thought I saw Jack somewhere.
11 I just wanted to thank you for bringing us all
12 together here tonight.

13 My name is Kevin Stevens. I have been on the
14 island for about 25 years now, and I don't have any
15 party affiliation. I am not a member of any of the
16 groups out there.

17 A lot of numbers have been tossed around
18 today, and I am kind of good with numbers, but I am
19 so confused right now, but me go over what I got
20 out of it today. And, Jack, let me tell where I
21 think you have gone wrong here.

22 First of all, you haven't really done any
23 quality -- water quality data yet that you talked
24 about, and I am pretty sure that was required.

25 Also, your numbers show that you need -- you

1 showed seven percent of the residents are full-time
2 out there, and they are causing all the problems.
3 So if you will look on my right-hand side, those
4 people sitting down, that's about seven percent.
5 So those people should have to pay for the system,
6 not me.

7 You brought in a lot of expert witnesses out
8 here today, but a lot of them have never even been
9 to our island. They don't have any knowledge of
10 the barge. They don't have any island -- knowledge
11 of the island markup, which is about two to three
12 times what the normal mainlander would pay. I am
13 going to use 1.5, just to help you out a little
14 bit. And they certainly don't know anything about
15 our hurricane construction delays that we have
16 experienced in this last two-and-a-half years,
17 which has just been outstanding.

18 So let's talk a little bit about the numbers
19 here. Your own numbers are the system is going to
20 cost \$19,200. Let's use \$20,000 just to keep the
21 numbers easy. Again, I am going to help you out a
22 little bit and just say our island factor is 1.5
23 percent, so that's \$30,000 what the system is going
24 to cost you just to get going.

25 Trades have been nice to here -- for you here.

1 Trades are going to cost about \$10,000. So there
2 is \$40,000 we are up to.

3 Private barge fees. Well, we all know Adam is
4 not going to do this for free, and that's about
5 \$15,000 at a one-and-a-half times markup. So right
6 now we are at \$55,000. I don't have \$55,000, okay.

7 So if I go out and get a home line of equity
8 credit at 8.45 percent for 10 years, I can expect
9 to pay \$75,000 just to get up and running, and
10 that's over 10 years. And that's going to equate
11 to about \$700 a month. Pretty pricy privy there,
12 Jack.

13 I hope we all think about this. The numbers
14 are pretty staggering. I think your numbers are
15 considerably low, and -- well, thank you.

16 MR. FRIEDMAN: No questions.

17 MR. STEVENS: No party affiliations, and I
18 haven't talked to my Commissioners.

19 MR. FRIEDMAN: No questions.

20 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Okay. I have roughly 14 after 7:00, at 19
23 after 7:00 we will reconvene.

24 Thank you.

25 (Brief recess.)

1 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay. When we swore
2 everybody in the first time, we only had 30 names.
3 Now we are up over 50. So if you have not -- if
4 you were not here the first time I swore everybody
5 in, if I can get you to stand and raise your right
6 hand. Once again, there was about 30 people in
7 here, 30 names we had so far. We are up to over 50
8 now. If you have not been sworn in, if I can get
9 you to stand and raise your right hand.

10 (Whereupon, Chairman Graham administered the
11 oath.)

12 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you very much.

13 All right. We are going to do the same thing
14 again. We are going to call three names, one will
15 take the mic, one is on back and one following
16 after that.

17 Commissioner Passidomo.

18 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: James Daniel --
19 Daniels, you are up. Fred Brown, you are on deck.
20 Robby Anderson, you are third.

21 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Welcome, stir.

22 PUBLIC COMMENT

23 MR. DANIELS: My name is James Daniels. I
24 live in Hillsborough County. My family has had a
25 house on Little Gasparilla Island since 1963. I am

1 a retired lineman with a major utility company that
2 services that company -- or that island, and I want
3 to go to a different aspect from the sewer system
4 that we are here to talk about, but it takes
5 electricity to serve that sewer system.

6 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Sir, if I can get you to get
7 a little closer to your mic. Thank you.

8 MR. DANIELS: And I would like to remind you
9 how long sometimes it takes to get response to that
10 island, and I would like to tell you a number of
11 times starting -- I will go back to 19 -- 2014,
12 when Charley came through.

13 Sometimes you are looking at two weeks. In
14 1992, I was sent to Miami for 30 days to put the
15 electricity back on, and when I left after 30 days,
16 there were still thousands and thousands of people
17 without electricity.

18 So I understand that this gravity system, you
19 are going to make me crush a very good concrete
20 septic tank to put in a 55-gallon drum to hold the
21 waste and hook up a pump to pump it into a gravity
22 system to haul it away, and all that takes
23 electricity.

24 One other thing I would like to say, is I am
25 not for the system. I have read as much as I can

1 on it. I am like everybody else, I have gone
2 through three hurricanes in just over two years,
3 starting with Helene. There again, I had to get my
4 house started all over again.

5 There is nothing wrong with my septic tank or
6 my sewer system, but I would like to say that there
7 is no -- there is no contamination on Little
8 Gasparilla Island that comes from sewer tanks, or
9 sewer systems, septic tanks worse than the red
10 tide. So if you can tell me how you can cure the
11 red tide, then I would be for the sewer system that
12 you are talking about putting in there, but I don't
13 think you can.

14 So one other thing I would like to say,
15 everybody that doesn't work for Ford always got a
16 better idea. So I will tell you this, you turn off
17 the -- you turn off the internet, you go back to
18 1983, you turn off the electricity, and you go back
19 to the Stone Age, and I thank you for your time.

20 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, Mr. Daniels. I
21 think you got a question.

22 MR. DANIELS: Yes, sir.

23 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or
24 LGIPA?

25 MR. DANIELS: Little Gasparilla Homeowners.

1 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

3 MR. DANIELS: Thank you.

4 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Kathleen
5 Stokes, you will be third.

6 PUBLIC COMMENT

7 MR. BROWN: All right. My name is Fred Brown,
8 and I am a proud member of PIE.

9 Our family has been coming to Palm Island for
10 almost 40 years, ever since our first anniversary.
11 We have been homeowners of two homes for just under
12 20 years, they are family homes and not rented.
13 One house is on the Gulf, one is a block away on a
14 canal.

15 During all that time, we have never
16 experienced any leaks or issues with our septic
17 systems, nor have we smelled or seen any septic
18 compromises from our neighbors.

19 There are numerous, numerous reports over the
20 years of sewer compromises on the west coast of
21 Florida, St. Petersburg in Pinellas County
22 continually has sewer breaks that put raw sewage in
23 neighborhoods and in the waterways.

24 During the last two hurricanes, Pinellas,
25 Pasco, Sarasota, Hillsborough, Manatee and

1 Charlotte Counties had sewer compromises. The Boca
2 Beacon on October 14th, 2024, stated that the Boca
3 Grande sewer system was destroyed. They are a
4 stones-throw from Palm Island. We don't need that.

5 Any arguments -- any statements, arguments or
6 science that say sewer is better for its customers
7 than the environment are false. Our septic systems
8 are not broke, and we don't need -- and do not need
9 to be replaced with a sewer system that has proven
10 they have environmental issues.

11 If we had the proposed sewer system over the
12 two wash-overs from Hurricane Helene and Milton, I
13 wonder if hundreds of people would have been
14 without sewer if water submerged the control panel
15 or the pump, just like it did our pool equipment.
16 If that happened, it would be months before the
17 hundreds of homes on the island were to get
18 equipment replaced, thus, we would not be able to
19 begin the recovery process since we couldn't stay
20 in our homes.

21 At the end of the day, our septic systems are
22 not broken, and the fact is there are no proven
23 environmental issues. The hundreds of homeowners
24 on the island do not need to spend tens of
25 thousands of dollars for something that is not

1 needed. We have enough financial burden to get our
2 houses back in order from the three storms we have
3 experienced since 2022, not to mention increased
4 real estate taxes and insurance. Again, my house,
5 directly on the beach, has not had any septic
6 issues over the last two wash-overs from the
7 hurricanes.

8 Please do not make us spend tens of thousands
9 of dollars for something we don't need. In my
10 opinion, doing so, would be modern day extortion.

11 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

12 MR. BROWN: Thank you.

13 PUBLIC COMMENT

14 MR. ANDERSON: Hello. My name is Captain Rob
15 Anderson. My family and I have been visiting and
16 enjoying the beautiful Don Pedro Island for nearly
17 20 years. I have been fortunate enough to live and
18 work from the island full time since early 2020,
19 and I agree with all of the objections to this
20 project that have been made so far.

21 Since living here, I have been heavily
22 involved in several island wildlife protection
23 initiatives, such as FWC's sea turtle protection
24 and the wildlife rescue team we have on the island.
25 I also have my captain's license from the U.S.

1 Coast Guard. I spend roughly 200 days per year out
2 on the water, anywhere from Tampa Bay to Boca
3 Grande, and I have witnessed firsthand how the
4 catastrophic sewer spills can be to a water's
5 ecosystem.

6 I ask that you please deny Environmental
7 Utilities' proposal for central sewer. There is
8 genuinely no need for it, and the lasting negative
9 impact will forever alter the uniqueness and
10 simplicity that makes Don Pedro Island so special.

11 A major concern that I have is the
12 ever-present threat of weather events impacting a
13 central sewer's ability to do its job here for us
14 on the island. After Hurricanes Ian, Helene and
15 Miller, I was one of the first people to return to
16 the island to assess damage. I walked all of Don
17 Pedro Island. Catastrophic would be one word that
18 I would use to describe what I saw through those
19 events, but no septic failure in sight.

20 Luckily, with the current septic systems in
21 place, I, along with many other residents, were
22 able to stay at our homes to begin our cleanup and
23 recovery efforts swiftly, despite not having power
24 to our homes. And time matters in these situations
25 to prevent mold and further damage that comes after

1 the surge has rescinded and the winds calm.

2 After the most recent Hurricane Milton, our
3 section of the island was without reliable power
4 for approximately two weeks. It's unfathomable how
5 poorly a central sewer system would have reacted if
6 there was one on the island, which is only
7 accessible by boat or car ferry.

8 I watched in disbelief as our neighbor barrier
9 island to the south, Gasparilla Island, also known
10 as Boca Grande, had to bring in portable showers
11 and toilets for residents to use because their
12 sewer systems were destroyed in the onslaught
13 brought by Hurricane Milton.

14 According to the Boca Beacon newspaper, eight
15 days after the storm made landfall, only 50 percent
16 of their water and sewer customers were restored.

17 As mentioned before, Don Pedro Island is
18 unique, simple and delicate, and we would like to
19 keep it that way. There is a clear example with
20 what just happened at Boca Grande that a central
21 sewer system can be compromised on a barrier
22 island, and the significant time to repair is
23 concerning. The very recent history of hurricanes
24 is a stark reminder of what barrier islands are
25 prone to.

1 I will end with this. We have not been
2 presented with a need for this project. The cost
3 is extremely high and ambiguous. We did not ask
4 for this complex project, and the negative
5 environmental impact has not been justified. I ask
6 that you please deny the proposal for central
7 sewer.

8 Thank you for your time.

9 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir. Hold on for
10 questions.

11 MR. ANDERSON: No, I am not a member of PIE or
12 LGI.

13 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay. Are you aware that the
14 wastewater system serving Boca Grande is located on
15 the island itself instead of on the mainland?

16 MR. ANDERSON: I am not an expert in that
17 area.

18 MR. FRIEDMAN: I didn't ask you if you are an
19 expert. I just asked you --

20 MR. ANDERSON: No, I am not.

21 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay. Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

23 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Amanda Small,
24 you are on deck. Edward Small, you are after her.

25 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Ma'am, please.

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PUBLIC COMMENT

MS. STOKES: Hello. I am Kathleen Stokes. My home is at 8892 Gulf Street on Little Gasparilla Island. I want to thank you all for this opportunity to speak to you.

I, as are hundreds of islanders, are asking I will to deny EU's application for a wastewater certificate. I have read every entry on the PSC website. Mr. Boyer says there are close to 100 people who want his system. I have read every one. I haven't seen anywhere near 100. There have been letters from his family, from his friends, from his employees, and most of all, from realtors that don't even have a lot on the island.

First, as we go over some things that I have heard today, this is what I believe. I don't think there is a need for sewer. Mr. Boyer's expert witness says right in his written testimony that he has not tested the water surrounding our island. He refers to the waters where he teaches over in St. Lucie County, and that's on the Atlantic Ocean on the other coast, and he talks about a lot of things in the Florida Keys.

According to the Florida Department of Education report, whatever it is, lower Lemon Bay

1 has been and is currently meeting the state water
2 quality standards, and the State of Florida has
3 created a basic manage management area plan for
4 areas that need water quality addressed. Our area
5 is not included in that.

6 The cost for homeowners is excessive. I am
7 retired, and I am a recent widow, and I may have to
8 sell my beloved home, which we built 26 years ago,
9 if this comes to being.

10 There are no grants or subsidies available, as
11 I understand it, for a private for-profit company.
12 There is no pay over time for us, there is no
13 competitive building -- bidding. There is no
14 oversight. There is no single point of recourse.
15 We especially don't want a low pressure system,
16 which EU is proposing.

17 Charlotte County has reported 51 percent of
18 the spills that have happened were from low
19 pressure systems, despite being only 25 percent of
20 the county systems.

21 The South Florida Water Management District
22 gave a presentation called Gravity Sewers and
23 Beyond, and it was a discussion of sewage
24 collection technologies and beyond, referring to
25 low pressure systems. And they said, and I quote:

1 As all pipe work is under pressure, then a break in
2 the pipe may lead to large spills. It's not
3 suitable for environmentally sensitive areas. And
4 Palm Island and Little Gasparilla are extremity
5 environmentally sensitive.

6 EU has not published plans for -- in the event
7 of another disaster. We have had quite a few
8 lately, as you know. I read somewhere where he
9 said, well, we will have two trucks available.
10 Well, it's scarier now also since he plans to have
11 two crossings instead of one. And they are going
12 to be going right over the inland waterway to the
13 mainland.

14 We don't want a private for-profit company.
15 This is what really gets me. I can't understand
16 how a startup LLC, he has no equipment to begin
17 with. Most companies that are going to put in a
18 sewer have at least something to begin with. We
19 homeowners would be paying for lots, as I
20 understand it, from what I read, five lots; the
21 building; two trucks; a boat and everything else.
22 Plus, he has no experience or training in running a
23 wastewater system. He has our water system, and
24 there is questions about that.

25 Ian, Helene and Milton greatly affected my

1 life, my home, my island. We had a complete
2 disaster on our hands. No power. Just
3 heartbreaking, costly devastation. We were
4 overwhelmed as we tackled the cleanup and the
5 teardown. And as we begin to rebuild -- and we
6 cried. We cried together, but my septic system
7 worked. We could use our toilet. With Mr. Boyer's
8 proposed system, as I understand it, if we have no
9 power, we have no potty.

10 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Ma'am, thank you for your
11 testimony.

12 MS. STOKES: Thank you so much.

13 MR. FRIEDMAN: Ma'am -- ma'am, are you a
14 member of PIE or LGIPA?

15 MS. STOKES: Yes, I am a member of the LGI
16 association, and I am proud of it.

17 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

18 MS. STOKES: Thank you. Thank you. Thank
19 you, Association.

20 PUBLIC COMMENT

21 MS. SMALL: Hello. I am Amanda Small, and my
22 husband, Ed Small, and I live on the Don Pedro side
23 of the island at 30 Kettle Harbor Drive. We are
24 full-time residents at this address. Additionally,
25 we own a vacant lot a few lots over from our home

1 at 12 Point Way.

2 I am here today to request a denial of
3 Environmental Utilities' proposal for a permit for
4 centralized sewer on the bridgeless barrier island.
5 I will try to be brief on why I want EU's
6 application denied, as I am surely many will have
7 similar objections, but first a little background.

8 We fell in love with the special island years
9 ago and were fortunate enough to buy a small
10 affordable house here in 2019 before the housing
11 market went out of control. This is the affordable
12 house that we plan to retire in. The purchase
13 price and the annual cost of ownership were factors
14 that played into our decision to buy. Many of the
15 current costs, such as taxes and insurance, have
16 already greatly increased in just a few short years
17 of ownership.

18 Before we closed on our home, the septic field
19 was replaced at a cost to the previous owner of
20 around \$12,000. Our septic system meets the
21 current code for Charlotte County.

22 Additionally, we take great pride in ownership
23 of our home, and have our septic system maintained
24 and pumped out as needed and pumped and in a timely
25 manner as to avoid any issues.

1 And just over the last two years, our island
2 was hit with -- has been hit with five named
3 storms, three of which were major storms that
4 caused significant damage to our island but left
5 all -- but all left their mark. Each of those
6 three major storms, Ian, Helen and Milton, left our
7 island with long lasting power outages. Our septic
8 system did not fail and was not damaged in any of
9 these storms. Had we had EU's proposed system
10 installed at the time, we would have been in a
11 little -- in a literal you know what show without
12 power to operate the system, and feet of water
13 flooding the system and the required electrical
14 panel. When our system was covered in feet of
15 water in Helene and Milton, it do not fail and did
16 not require a cost to he repair.

17 Bottom line, we bought our house because we
18 fell in love with the island as it was, and
19 accepted the known cost of ownership to our septic
20 system. Our septic system is properly maintained
21 and has never failed. We did not ask for a
22 centralized sewer system, nor do we want a
23 centralized sewer system. There is also no proven
24 need for one. Our quality of life on the island
25 nor the local environment would be improved by a

1 centralized sewer.

2 The initial high cost of installing the
3 system, new high monthly sewer bill, plus
4 substantial ongoing maintenance will be
5 cost-prohibitive for most on the island. There
6 are -- these are the same islanders who have been
7 hit hard in the storms here since Ian in 2022, and
8 are still struggling to recover from the high cost
9 related to the damages of multiple storms.

10 This is not another burden the island needs to
11 endure. Please deny Environmental Utilities'
12 request to install a centralized sewer on Don Pedro
13 Island.

14 COMMISSIONER GRAHAM: Thank you, ma'am. Hold
15 on for a question.

16 MR. FRIEDMAN: Yeah, my usual. Are you and
17 your husband members of PIE or LGIPA?

18 MS. SMALL: Not currently.

19 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

20 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Tyler Erickson,
21 you are on deck. Peggy Erickson, you are after.

22 PUBLIC COMMENT

23 MR. SMALL: Hello. My name is Edward Small.
24 I own properties at 30 Kettle Harbor and 2 Point
25 Way on Don Pedro Island. We have -- we purchased

1 these properties over the years, and the first
2 property we purchased in 2019. We have been
3 full-time residents since 2023.

4 I agree with many of the salient points that
5 have been offered by the residents gathered here to
6 oppose the application submitted by Environmental
7 Utilities. In my opinion, the most significant
8 point is the lack of data collection and scientific
9 evidence that prove the septic systems are
10 polluting the waterways. There has been no testing
11 of our local waterways. Why are we considering a
12 solution that is in search of a problem?

13 I request that the PSC deny this and future
14 applications for a sewer system on our precious
15 barrier island.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir. Hold on for
18 a question.

19 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or
20 LGIPA?

21 MR. SMALL: Not currently.

22 MR. FRIEDMAN: Is your -- and your wife isn't
23 either?

24 MR. SMALL: No.

25 MR. FRIEDMAN: Is she on the board, or an

1 officer?

2 MR. SMALL: No.

3 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

5 PUBLIC COMMENT

6 MR. ERICKSON: My name is Tyler Erickson, at
7 111 North Gulf Boulevard. We have lived on the
8 island since 2009. Our house was built in 1989,
9 and one of the only things we have never had to do
10 was repair our septic system. We just had it
11 checked by SOS Septic, and it's completely fine.
12 Next door neighbor, and my sister-in-law and her
13 husband, Ed and Cindy Choa, also had no problems.
14 There is no need for sewer. It is just an extra
15 cost on top of all the other expenses not covered
16 by insurance.

17 One thing I would like to know, and I am sure
18 everybody in this room would like to know, is would
19 you want your plumber working on your teeth? I
20 would like to know EU's vast experience in barrier
21 island sewer service.

22 That's it for me.

23 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir. Hold on for
24 a question degree.

25 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or

1 LGIPA?

2 MR. ERICKSON: PIE.

3 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Ma'am.

5 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Lou Ellen
6 Wilson, you are on deck. Jane Kebe, you are after.

7 PUBLIC COMMENT

8 MS. ERICKSON: Hi. I am Peggy Erickson, and
9 my legal name is Margaret. We own a home at 111
10 North Gulf Boulevard, and a lot on 251 Bocilla
11 Road.

12 We just got back in our house in April after
13 Hurricane Ian. We have suffered financial burdens
14 with our home getting rebuilt, and our septic
15 system has been working with no problems the entire
16 time. That's the only thing we have not had to
17 replace, is our septic system, and we have had no
18 issues.

19 I don't see any reason to disrupt our island,
20 tear up our roads and disturb the wildlife to put
21 this low pressure system in.

22 We have numerous electrical outages. We
23 struggle getting gas on the island when we do have
24 electrical outages, and I think we need gas to run
25 a generator to get this new proposed system to run.

1 I don't see any need to change something that's not
2 broken.

3 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE?

4 MS. ERICKSON: I am.

5 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, ma'am.

7 MS. ERICKSON: Thank you for your time.

8 PUBLIC COMMENT

9 MS. WILSON: Thank you for allowing me to
10 speak today. My name is Lou Ellen Wilson. I live
11 -- and I am a full-time resident on Palm Island.

12 My background is I was a Senior Vice-President
13 in the 1980s for one of the largest developers, Sun
14 City Center and A Delta Communities. In the 1900s
15 and 19 -- I was -- opened my own consulting
16 company, and I was given the contract when Rotunda
17 was in receivership to do the day-to-day management
18 there, which included many problems with their
19 sewer system.

20 In 2000, I bought an office building, and it
21 was in south Hillsborough County, and I am the only
22 person that has spoken that has had personal
23 experience with a low pressure system. It was on
24 two occasions while I was there that I did not get
25 prompt service that I was supplied by Hillsborough

1 County, and my employees had to go to the local
2 service station to relieve themselves.

3 Also, in 2000, I then have moved -- I moved
4 down here to the island. What I -- some things
5 that you probably don't know. On the island, our
6 electric system has periodic outages where it goes
7 down and you have to reprogram my security system.
8 I understand the system that he is proposing also
9 is going to be centrally monitored. Are we going
10 to have to have a personal person come out and
11 reset this system every time we have an electrical
12 outage? I have lost an air conditioning system and
13 a TV in the last five years during -- because of
14 the surges.

15 I do not have any letters behind my name. I
16 barely got through high school chemistry. However,
17 common sense tells me that you are asking me to
18 spend over \$40,000 to replace a septic tank that
19 works, that put -- has nutrients that are leached
20 into the soil. You are also asking that I install
21 a system where we are going to put -- transfer the
22 same amount of nutrients out of my system to a --
23 across the waterway into assuming treatment plant
24 run by Charlotte County that does not remove the
25 nutrients. So I am taking the nutrients from my

1 plant from my house, not putting it in front of my
2 house, but the County will then distribute those
3 same nutrients through their wastewater system, and
4 so, therefore, we are not gaining anything on
5 cleaning our water.

6 So my question to you today is to please deny
7 this system until such time as the County can
8 upgrade their system to remove all the nutrients.
9 With this, we will -- when that is done, and a
10 contractor can come in and guarantee that we will
11 have a system that's not going to go down during a
12 storm, I will gladly pay the money to keep our
13 Gulf, whether it's the Gulf of Mexico or the Gulf
14 of America, I will gladly pay to keep it clean for
15 my grandchildren.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, ma'am.

18 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE, ma'am?

19 MS. WILSON: I am a proud member of PIE. In
20 fact, I was President of PIE for three years.

21 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you very much.

22 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Cori Palmere,
23 you will be on deck. Greg Adams, you are after.

24 PUBLIC COMMENT

25 MS. KEBE: Hi. Thank you, everyone, for your

1 attendance and for your interest. I am Jayne Kebe,
2 and I live at 18 Palm Drive on Palm Island. I am
3 also a member of PIE and I have -- and also I
4 submitted letters, individual letters to each of
5 the Commissioners.

6 Okay. I have owned my home for 13 years, and
7 I have lived here full time for eight-and-a-half
8 years. I have a Master's degree in Environmental
9 Engineering from the University of Notre Dame, and
10 I have worked for over 20 years as an environmental
11 engineering consultant, specializing in water
12 quality, hazardous waste and groundwater sampling
13 and modeling.

14 I am familiar with biological unit operations,
15 and with the education and experience necessary to
16 construct, operate and maintain EU's proposed
17 system. After reviewing the employment history of
18 the EU's developer, I believe that the developer
19 does not have either the educational background or
20 the expertise to successfully install and operate
21 the proposed system.

22 I have also spent considerable time reviewing
23 papers and reports on the septic-to-sewer
24 conversion issues. In particular, one primary
25 paper was written solely by EU's consultant, paid

1 consultant, Dr. Brian Lapointe. I would like to
2 point out that this paper was never peer-reviewed
3 or critiqued by any water quality professionals.
4 This paper attempts to describe the science behind
5 the septic-to-sewer conversion on the barrier
6 islands. However, in actuality, as you have heard
7 previously, there are no data on the impact of the
8 island's septic systems on either of groundwater or
9 the surface water. More specifically, no
10 groundwater monitoring data has been collected from
11 or near the barrier islands.

12 Lapointe's speculations based on skewered --
13 is based on skewered research conducted over 12
14 years ago on selected groundwater wells more than
15 20 miles from our barrier islands. This cannot be
16 identified as science, or have an applicability to
17 our barrier islands.

18 In conclusion, I feel that the total lack of
19 EU's experience with construction and maintenance
20 of their proposed system prohibits this approval by
21 the Commissioners. And furthermore, the science,
22 or lack thereof, presented by EU does not support
23 the PSC's requirement of a demonstrated --
24 demonstrated proven need necessary for PSC
25 approval.

1 Thank you for your time and consideration.

2 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, ma'am.

3 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Greg Adams, you
4 are on deck. Debbie Daugherty, you are after.

5 PUBLIC COMMENT

6 MS. PALMERE: Thank you for giving me the
7 opportunity to speak today. My name is Cori
8 Palmere. My husband, Jim, and I live on Don Pedro
9 Island at 31 South Gulf Boulevard. We have owned
10 our home for 10 years, and have vacationed here for
11 20 years prior to owning.

12 I wish you could all come and see the unique
13 beauty of that island. If you did visit, you would
14 also become aware of the challenges we encounter
15 living on a barrier island with mainly car ferry
16 access. Patience is required, but we like it that
17 way.

18 There are three issues I am going to speak to
19 today. One, the lack of over side of this proposed
20 EU sewer project. Two, the fact that EU is a
21 private for-profit company. And three, the
22 concerns of a low pressure sewer system when it
23 presents to the homeowner.

24 Firstly, when Charlotte County installs a
25 sewer system, it is required to provide a

1 performance bond to guarantee the project is
2 completed in accordance to the contract. As a
3 private company, EU does not have to provide any
4 guarantee of completion within timeline or budget.
5 There is no oversight for the project. It is
6 unacceptable to ask us to take this leap of faith.

7 Secondly, when it comes to a private
8 for-profit company, there is no competitive
9 bidding. Affordable payment plans are not
10 guaranteed. The financial hit to the island
11 residents as a result of the last three hurricanes
12 has been painful. The last thing my neighbors and
13 I need is an additional \$30,000 expense for
14 something we don't even need.

15 Finally, the data provided by Charlotte County
16 -- skip that part. Somebody already talked about
17 the 25 percent and 51 percent.

18 Low pressure systems are susceptible to
19 failure during storms, and do not function during
20 power outages. Our current septic tank continues
21 to work during power outages, which tend to happen
22 frequently on our island during storms.

23 In conclusion, I wouldn't hire a company with
24 no experience, using less than optimal equipment,
25 and no guarantee of cost or timeline to install an

1 in-ground pool for me, let alone an island-wide
2 sewer system, would you?

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, ma'am.

5 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE?

6 MS. PALMERE: I am a member of PIE. I wrote
7 letters this time. I spoke last time, and I wrote
8 letters last time as well.

9 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Greg Adams, are
11 you here?

12 UNIDENDIFIED SPEAKER: He had to leave.

13 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Okay. All
14 right. So I will go through the next three names.

15 So Debbie Daugherty. Pat Carlton, you are on
16 deck. Jennie -- it's hard to -- Faric -- I can't
17 read that at all, Friem, maybe. Jennie you are on
18 deck. I am sorry.

19 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Please.

20 PUBLIC COMMENT

21 MS. DAUGHERTY: My name is Debbie Daugherty.

22 I am a -- I am a resident of Little Gasparilla
23 Island, 9850 Little Gasparilla Island. I am a
24 member of --

25 UNIDENDIFIED SPEAKER: Louder.

1 MS. DAUGHERTY: Yes. So I am here today to
2 speak about the application for the wastewater
3 certificate for Little Gasparilla.

4 I have a Bachelor's and Master's from UF for
5 Environmental Engineering. I currently am
6 operating a water and wastewater system in
7 Gainesville. I am the water and wastewater officer
8 for Gainesville Regional Utilities, so I do have a
9 lot of experience in operating water and wastewater
10 systems.

11 Something that hasn't been talked a lot about
12 today is the experience of the folks that are
13 making this petition. Just because you operate a
14 water system, which is pressurized pipes and
15 meters, and that is it, does not make you someone
16 who understands how to operate systems with 800
17 pump stations. That's what I heard y'all putting
18 in the ground to start. That is a tremendous
19 amount of equipment to maintain in a very corrosive
20 environment, and it is going to be a very
21 challenging system to operate and maintain. So
22 having a company that doesn't have any experience
23 doing that is very problematic.

24 You know, from my perspective, I think, as
25 engineer, we always weigh the environmental need

1 for a project with benefit of a project versus the
2 cost, and that's the background I come from.

3 In Gainesville, where I am currently working,
4 we are spending \$40,000 a lot to do septic-to-sewer
5 conversions. Every time I do work on my home in
6 Gainesville, and I do the same project on the
7 island, I pay at least twice as much. So I am
8 really having a hard time believing the cost
9 numbers presented today by EU.

10 On top of that, you -- I am so sorry -- the
11 monthly cost to the homeowners are substantial.
12 Again, in Gainesville \$90 a month for water and
13 wastewater service is what we pay for 7,000 gallons
14 usage. This is over \$300 for water and wastewater
15 that we will be paying on a monthly basis. Those
16 costs are going to affect people that live on --
17 have lived on this island for decades.

18 Everyone around me on the island, I am on the
19 south end, they are people that have lived there
20 for generations, those homes have passed down in
21 the family. They have tremendous damage from the
22 storms. They cannot afford these types of costs on
23 a monthly basis or that.

24 So I am generally concerned about the proposed
25 wastewater certificate and its impact on the

1 community. I don't believe the proposed wastewater
2 certificate is going to help preserve the
3 environment in our area, and I am worried about the
4 long-term affordability for the life on LGI.

5 A lot of people talked about the unique
6 environment that we have, and the, you know, coming
7 on the boat, so I think it's really important to
8 keep that uniqueness of our island and not have
9 this project.

10 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, ma'am.

11 MR. FRIEDMAN: A couple of questions.

12 Are you a member of PIE or LGIPA?

13 MS. DAUGHERTY: Yes. I stated that in the
14 beginning.

15 MR. FRIEDMAN: You wrote a letter back to the
16 Commission in April, do you recall that letter?

17 MS. DAUGHERTY: I did.

18 MR. FRIEDMAN: And you were objecting to EU's
19 proposing the low pressure system that ought to
20 remove water from the tank and left the solids
21 behind?

22 MS. DAUGHERTY: They were proposing a step
23 system at the time when I wrote that letter.

24 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay. Isn't it true that you
25 said a sewage grinder pump station would provide

1 more effective design and provide better
2 environmental benefits to have a central sewer
3 system that removes all the wastewater?

4 MS. DAUGHERTY: Yes, I did say that.

5 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay. Thank you.

6 PUBLIC COMMENT

7 MR. CARLTON: Good evening, Commissioners. My
8 name is Pat Carlton, and I live at 340 Bocilla
9 Drive. I am a member of PIE, and apparently a
10 member of the Boca minority as well.

11 I would like to start out by saying I am a
12 seventh generation Floridan. My family has been in
13 agriculture for a long time. I am also on a board
14 for a regional conservation foundation. I have
15 also been a developer. So I see a lot of the
16 different aspects of what's going on here.

17 I will also tell from you just a few facts --
18 I am not going to -- I am the not going to plow old
19 ground that's already been plowed here in
20 opposition to this, but I will give you a few
21 facts.

22 We bought our house -- my wife and I bought
23 our house in 2023, and when we did, we had an
24 investment of \$30,000 in a low pressure system, and
25 it failed. It failed in the hurricanes. I had to

1 pay \$2,000 to have it retrofitted. We also had to
2 go in and manually pull the aerator out before the
3 second hurricane hit. So these costs are real near
4 and dear to me.

5 I am expected to plow my existing system in,
6 pay \$30,000 for a new one. Pay X number of dollars
7 per month for the, quote, service. And we also are
8 lucky enough to have the highest, almost -- if not
9 the highest, almost the highest, water cost of any
10 municipality in the country. These costs add up
11 and add up and add up and add up, and we have -- we
12 have gone through storm. We have done our repairs.
13 Half -- most of it is not insurable. We are paying
14 out of our pocket left and right. And to sit here
15 and tell us that we have got to come up with more
16 money to give us something that we don't really
17 want, it just doesn't sit right.

18 So I am asking you additional to deny this for
19 a lot of different reasons that have already been
20 presented questions.

21 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Questions.

22 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE?

23 MR. CARLTON: I said I was a member of PIE.

24 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Kevin Mackin,
25 you will be on deck, and then Captain Jeff Totten,

1 you are after.

2 PUBLIC COMMENT

3 MS. FREIMAN: Hi. My name is Jennie Freiman,
4 and I represent myself and my husband. We are
5 full-time residents of LGI, and we strongly oppose
6 the proposed system, really, for all of the reasons
7 that have already been stated and I don't need to
8 repeat them, but effectively that we are being
9 proposed a fix for a problem that doesn't really
10 have exist with a system that is demonstrably
11 inferior to be installed and managed by someone
12 with absolutely zero experience in this complex
13 system.

14 I just want to say one thing that I hope will
15 stick with you, because everything before me has
16 already been very eloquently stated.

17 The system is being proposed by a private
18 company, which automatically precludes any ability
19 of applying for grants that would help the already
20 strapped homeowners have a chance at getting some
21 of the funds that would otherwise be required
22 deferred. And please think about that. We have no
23 optionality to get any help if you pass this. This
24 is going to be 100 percent on the homeowners. So
25 in summary, I respectfully request on behalf of

1 myself and my husband, that you deny this proposal
2 from EU.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you for your
5 testimony.

6 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE, ma'am?

7 MS. FREIMAN: No.

8 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay.

9 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Okay. Kevin
10 Mackin.

11 MR. MACKIN: I have already spoken.

12 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Okay. So
13 Captain Jeff Totten, you are up. Paul Seavy, you
14 will be on deck. Jane Smith, you are third.

15 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

16 PUBLIC COMMENT

17 MR. TOTTEN: Good evening. I am not a
18 resident of the island. I am born and raised in
19 Venice, Florida --

20 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Pull that microphone --

21 MR. TOTTEN: Louder?

22 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Yes.

23 MR. TOTTEN: I do not live on the island. I
24 am a local Englewood. I have been in this area
25 since '79, born and raised in Venice, Florida. I

1 have been a fishing guide on the water for 30
2 years, and owned a little construction company, and
3 I have seen the big change. I don't want to put
4 blame, but when I look into things over the years,
5 fishing from Key West up to Crystal River, there
6 has been change in those areas, and change that
7 they needed. The community has seen it. The State
8 has seen it. The Keys started having blooms, coral
9 die. About eight, nine years ago, they -- sewage,
10 they got four or five treatment plants, and I have
11 noticed in the last three to four years, the
12 channels have cleaned up, the canals have cleaned
13 up, and the turtle grass looks amazing.

14 Several clients from Boca Grande area own
15 property there. One, for 24 years, owned a piece
16 of property, one now for 21 years. Been through
17 several, nine or 10 storms, Wilma, Irma, Katrina.
18 I can name them all. Just never had to pump a
19 septic tank, which we know why. Unfortunately, it
20 ended up in the Atlantic or the Gulf of Mexico.

21 If you Google that, it will tell you pretty
22 much the reason is, now who is the person to tell
23 us the reason, that's what we all have to figure
24 out. If you look it up, a lot of it was blamed on
25 septic tank leaching into the ground, nitrogen and

1 phosphate. We know where phosphate comes from,
2 washing machines. Clean clothes, we need it. You
3 can't help it.

4 And then you look up Crystal River. They are
5 in the middle of a major cleanup in the canals.
6 Google it, first thing, why is the reason the blame
7 has been put on septic tanks.

8 Now, I do know these people behind me are
9 stabbing me in the back. I am sorry. But all I am
10 hearing about is money, money, money. It's going
11 to cost us. It's going to cost us. I have seen
12 people move off the islands because they can't
13 afford the taxes anymore.

14 Unfortunately, when I grew up here, trust fund
15 money was on the island. Went to millionaire
16 money. Now it's billionaire money. Unfortunately,
17 we -- none of us in this room can change that. But
18 what we can change is what we are putting into the
19 ocean and the water. And if really been here as
20 long as I have, and watched it with my own eyes
21 since I was born here, I did not move here after
22 half the turtle grass is gone. I watched it
23 disappear. So until you have experienced it, what
24 is -- what is it worth to keep a beautiful island
25 that all these it island that all these people live

1 on? You think there would be -- I mean, they need
2 to start Googling what happened to all the other
3 islands and why they went to it, it's to protect
4 their investment.

5 So I am going to leave it at that. I am
6 not -- you know, I am not here for one side. I am
7 not here for that. I am actually here for the
8 people of Charlotte County that really don't know
9 what's happening on that island out there. And if
10 they did, they would probably be furious. But
11 let's don't let it leave the room. Let's fix it.
12 I don't know who is going to fix it, and how we are
13 going to fix it, but we are not going to fix it by
14 going back and forth. We got to find -- we got to
15 unite somewhere and come up with a problem.

16 Praise the people who do have their septic
17 tanks pumped out there. I praise every one of you
18 for that that are doing it.

19 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Sir, thank you for your
20 testimony.

21 MR. TOTTEN: The ones that don't. Shame on
22 you. Thank you.

23 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: All right.

24 Paul Seavy, are you here? Okay.

25 PUBLIC COMMENT

1 MR. SEAVY: Paul Seavy. Live at 100 North
2 Gulf on Palm Island, and I want to thank the
3 Commissioners for allowing me the time to speak.

4 I have a functioning aerobic anaerobic septic
5 system that I am happy with, and I am here to
6 oppose the Environmental Utilities' application.

7 I am a professional chemical engineer in
8 Florida. I have also got a contractor's license,
9 as well as a pollutant storage contractor's license
10 in Florida. And I have spent the last 34 years
11 working in Florida as a consultant, much of the
12 last 15 working with the Army Corps of Engineers,
13 contracts with partnerships between EPA and the
14 DEP, and also with the DOD at key facilities in
15 Florida with outstanding Florida water bodies. So
16 I pretty much have spent my career chasing
17 molecules around, trying to prevent them from going
18 into the outstanding Florida water bodies.

19 And I guess -- I am not going to repeat all
20 the things, PIE has got a nice list of reasons why
21 to deny, but I will tell you what my initial
22 thoughts are, is that this system is a lot more
23 complex than most folks would think.

24 High saline water, groundwater movement, it's
25 not something so simple. And we have spent

1 millions of dollars chasing things around Florida
2 and pointing fingers as to why things happen and
3 why they don't.

4 You know, my main reason why I can't support
5 it is there just isn't the information. You know,
6 a program where you inventory the systems, do some
7 tracer studies, sample around, find out what is
8 contributing, what problem are we trying to solve?
9 Is it 10 percent? You know, is there other ways
10 that we can solve the problem to avoid spending
11 tens of millions of dollars. So that's my main
12 reason why I can't really support that.

13 Secondarily, I think that it's vastly
14 underestimated the complexity of maintaining
15 systems on the island. I think as an engineer, and
16 I have managed sewer system contracts for Sarasota
17 school board for years, you know, they can be
18 finicky, and the saltwater is complex.

19 Personally, for me, I want to see the County
20 there when we have these big storms. I would like
21 the County to step up and participate, develop data
22 and, in partnership, take responsibility out here
23 on the island. That's really what we need. And
24 thank you for your time.

25 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you for your

1 testimony.

2 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or
3 LGIPA?

4 MR. SEAVY: Yes.

5 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Harry Burke,
6 you are going to be on deck. Joan Der, you are
7 after.

8 PUBLIC COMMENT

9 MS. SMITH: Good evening. My name is Jane
10 Smith. I bought a house at 33 Bayshore Circle on
11 Knight Island in 2015. It is my full-time
12 residence. I vacationed on the island since the
13 mid-'80s with my late husband, and chose to live
14 here full time. I have anaerobic system.

15 I guess I am here to say I don't know how
16 y'all are doing your septic tank, but Charlotte
17 County has my number, and I have to pay \$500 to
18 Martin Septic to come out twice a year. I just
19 signed the contract. I have to have the County
20 come and inspect. And I just got a letter because
21 my aerobic system was drowned by Milton and I
22 couldn't get my electricity up to snuff, so they
23 noticed that I didn't have it on-line, and they
24 said they would charge me \$1,000 a day that it
25 didn't work. Well, that got my attention.

1 And so my thought is, if we have something
2 that works, and it is inspected, why do we need to
3 change it? I know that my septic tank is efficient
4 and works well, and I don't want to see us have to
5 be bullied into doing an expensive project with a
6 private person when I don't think that that's
7 necessary.

8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you for your
10 testimony.

11 MR. FRIEDMAN: Ma'am, are you a member of PIE
12 or LGIPA.

13 MS. SMITH: PIE, I am a member.

14 PUBLIC COMMENT

15 MR. BURKE: Good evening. My name is Harry
16 Burke. And I live on Little Gasparilla Island on
17 Jolly Roger Trail. It's my home, and as I am a
18 year-round resident.

19 I, like the rest of -- I, like the rest of the
20 islanders, want to be responsible guardians of our
21 environment. In concept, a central sewer system
22 might be a good idea, but this proposal from EU is
23 severely flawed for many of the reasons that have
24 been mentioned, including the low pressure system,
25 there are no competitive bids for installation, the

1 oversight of the project, no pricing caps or cost
2 controls, no payment plans.

3 They have approached this island with no car
4 ferry, no commercial activity or paved roads, which
5 is why we all live there, means everything has to
6 be barged over. This means it takes more time and,
7 therefore, more money doing any sort of
8 construction, I had a house built, of any sort it's
9 usually around double to build on the mainland, if
10 not more.

11 Fairly or unfairly, the cost of this project
12 is not being spread across the entire Charlotte
13 County taxpayers; therefore, we will be
14 proportionately paying the huge amount more being
15 on an island versus the mainland. We do expect to
16 pay more being on an island, but the estimated
17 costs reported by experts will be crippling for a
18 lot of homeowners, especially those on fixed income
19 like myself.

20 Those who can't afford, or aren't wanting to
21 pay for the central sewer will have no option but
22 to sell. This could be devastating to the real
23 estate market on the island. Who is going to buy a
24 house that requires an additional potentially
25 \$50,000 just so they can flush the toilet, unless

1 the house is at a steal. This is a lose-lose for
2 existing homeowners.

3 Good news, there are excellent environmental
4 friendly alternatives which are much less expensive
5 that can be retrofitted to the existing sewage
6 plants making them cleaner and better for the
7 future. There will be no major disruption to the
8 island and no concentrated raw sewage in a single
9 or double pipe that, if damaged, will cause major
10 pollution to our pristine island. This alternative
11 is a win-win.

12 Please do not support this proposal from EU,
13 as it has so many problems, only some of which I
14 have mentioned.

15 Thank you for your time.

16 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

17 MR. BURNETT: I am a member of PIE.

18 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Member of PIE.

19 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Joe Savoldi,
20 you are on deck. Jeff Bisgrove, you are after.

21 PUBLIC COMMENT

22 MS. DER: Hello. I am Joan Der. I live at
23 171 South Gulf Boulevard on Don Pedro Island with
24 my husband, and we have owned this house for 25
25 years.

1 Please deny the EU application to be a
2 provider of sewer services for our idyllic island.
3 My 1989 septic tank is reliable. I have been able
4 to use it the day after every storm. It's
5 resilient. No storm has stopped my usage. I can
6 use it without electricity or a backup generator,
7 or hiring a repair service. It has worked in all
8 cases. I continue to wash dishes and take showers.
9 Thankfully, because I don't always have all the
10 other services I need. I see no convincing need to
11 replace what is working well.

12 This proposal will maybe offer inconsequential
13 impact on water quality at a gigantic cost and
14 inconvenience. Currently, my wastewater travels to
15 a tank five feet to my house. My septic tank.
16 Under the EU proposal, waste would be processed to
17 go down a shell covered road, over a single-lane
18 bridge, over a double-lane bridge, then under the
19 intercoastal waterway, where a ferry operates a
20 minimum of 16 hours a day. Is that an improvement?
21 Are the risks any less?

22 My septic has offered negligible risk for the
23 25 years we have lived there. Treatment happens in
24 my yard, one and done. So as far as a private
25 utility is concerned, what incentive does EU have

1 to be efficient to hold on you costs? None that I
2 can see. They receive total reimbursement, and
3 they get to charge a profit, which municipal
4 customers do not get charged.

5 Our contractors familiar with the nuances of
6 our barrier island and ferry access, I can tell
7 from you contractors I have for storm repair, not
8 always, they try, but they are not always familiar
9 with the nuances. What single point of recourse do
10 have I when things go wrong during the
11 implementation or after installation? I hope there
12 is a performance bond, as one of the earlier
13 speakers mentioned.

14 So my life could become more expensive and
15 complicated under this proposal. We already pay
16 the highest water prices in the state with a
17 private utility. Don't approve another private
18 utility. Please deny this application.

19 Thank you for listening.

20 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 MR. FRIEDMAN: Ma'am, are you a member of
23 either of those organizations, PIE or LGIPA?

24 MS. DER: PIE.

25 PUBLIC COMMENT

1 MR. SAVOLDI: Hello. My name is Joe Savoldi.
2 I live at 390 Kettle Harbor Drive on Don Pedro
3 Island. I have been a permanent resident since I
4 am bought my house in 2017, and I am against this
5 totally and completely, for all the reasons that
6 have already been stated, and I won't repeat. I
7 don't think EU is qualified to do a project of this
8 size and magnitude. They have no experience, as
9 people have pointed out.

10 I will talk about my own septic tank. My
11 septic system is an aerobic septic system. It's as
12 green as you could get at the time that I had it
13 installed, in that aerobic systems, you know, you
14 pay a permit fee annually to the State of Florida.
15 You pay to have inspectors come out twice a year,
16 as someone previously mentioned. So all in, with
17 the cost of electricity to run the aeration system,
18 probably a thousand bucks a year I spend because I
19 care about the environment. I care about the
20 island. I care about our water purity, the
21 cleanliness. I want to be a good samaritan.

22 The ability to -- the real reason that you
23 would spend that money for an aerobic system is
24 because the gray water or the effluent can be used
25 for irrigation, and that's helpful. That's -- you

1 know, it's not just going into your leach field and
2 going into the ground. I can use it to irrigate my
3 property, which then provides more green habitat
4 for the island life, like the gopher tortoises.
5 And I just would like to see, you know, other
6 considerations being made for alternative solutions
7 if we do find out that we actually have a problem,
8 and that, like many people have said to me, the why
9 of this whole situation is kind of dumbfounding,
10 because until there has been some solid proof that
11 there is a problem, there is nothing that needs to
12 be fixed, in my opinion.

13 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or
14 LGIPA?

15 MR. SAVOLDI: Why do you want to know? No, I
16 am. Yes, PIE.

17 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

18 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Jennifer
19 Jarvis, you are on deck. Shawn Rae, you are after.

20 PUBLIC COMMENT

21 MR. BISGROVE: Hi. My name is Jeff Bisgrove,
22 441 Bocilla. I have been on the island for 27
23 years, same septic system.

24 We are really here because the resort needs
25 sewer. Jack is spearheading it. That's why we are

1 here. They have the ability to update their sewer
2 system for \$1.5 million, and we wouldn't be here.
3 They have a contract with the County to hook up to
4 the sewer line that was put in at Placida Road at
5 their own expense, which is 2.5 million. But yet,
6 they are going to try to jam it up the island
7 expense because they don't want to put up the
8 money.

9 Jack is out there trying to sell his position
10 at EU. I met with him, and he offered it to me for
11 \$11 million. Now, if this individual is trying to
12 sell it now, what's he going to do once you give
13 him the permit?

14 Okay, and then you got Bocilla Utilities who
15 is out there trying to sell right now, and he has
16 got a contract with them. So where is this going?

17 You guys cannot tell me you are not familiar
18 with the sewer spills and the red tide outbreaks as
19 caused by the sewer spills. Are you not familiar
20 with the \$80 million contract that Charlotte County
21 is doing for a new sewer expansion? Do you know
22 that there is a sewer treatment plant on Bermont
23 Road in Charlotte County that pumps their waste
24 into our aquifer, that comes out of a natural
25 spring in Charlotte Harbor, where there is red tide

1 all the time. Bonita does the same thing, it comes
2 out of Dog Pass.

3 So you guys are in charge of the sewer system,
4 and we got to beg you not to destroy our
5 environment, when you guys already know the damage
6 the environment does with the sewer. And then to
7 top it all off, you have a County Commissioner who
8 is a builder/developer who is spearheading this and
9 pushing it, who is going to benefit from the
10 building, and then is has the power to change the
11 zoning to hotels and condos. So this all stems
12 back to where we are at with the resort on the
13 island.

14 So what are we going to do about this? Are we
15 going to continue to let shady commissioners push
16 things along. And this Commissioner was at Dean
17 Beckstead's bedside when he died, okay. And Dean
18 was trying to get sewer to the resort before any of
19 this even happened. That's why he got the contract
20 with the County Commissioners before he died.

21 Jack Boyer, this is capitalism, has an
22 opportunity to make a shit ton of money off this
23 deal and not even put the sewer in himself, because
24 as soon as you approve it, he is going to sell it
25 to me, and then I am going to put it in okay. And

1 that's what's going on here.

2 This is all smoke and mirrors. Everybody out
3 here crying about their houses getting destroyed.
4 It's true. But you people are on the take too if
5 you don't do something with this. You need to
6 investigate what's going on here from top to
7 bottom, the zoning changes, the resort. The resort
8 has property there that they got that they can't
9 sell until they get their sewer treatment plant
10 taken care of.

11 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Sir, thank you for your
12 testimony.

13 MR. BISGROVE: Investigate what you're doing
14 here.

15 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or
16 LGIPA?

17 MR. BISGROVE: I am a member of everything
18 that is up your ass.

19 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Ma'am. No, you are up.

20 PUBLIC COMMENT

21 MS. JARVIS: Okay. Sorry.

22 Good evening. Thank you very much for
23 allowing -- good evening. Thank you very much for
24 allowing and being patient with all of us, and
25 hearing repeatedness over and over again.

1 Hopefully I cannot try to repeat some of the other
2 that has happened.

3 A little history with me. I have been going
4 to the island since I was three. My parents, my
5 dad bought the lot on LGI for \$5,000. He has
6 passed. We took it over very proudly, and try to
7 continue his legacy and what he has done for us.
8 Now we are 20 years into ownership, and have
9 replaced our septic system, and abide by the County
10 rules in regards to having it pumped on a regular
11 basis, even though we do not rent, and there is
12 only two of us. So every five years, I pay \$2,800
13 roughly to have it pumped. I had my house in
14 Winter Haven, Florida, pumped recently, at the tune
15 of \$375. There is a huge difference, and we all
16 feel struggle.

17 I am not a millionaire, nor do I claim to be.
18 Don't want to be. There is too many more problems
19 that happen in that. So here's what I have to say.

20 We are very much opposed to this system. We
21 do not feel as though the warrant is there. Is
22 there truly a need? I don't see one.

23 Around our area where I am, do we have
24 spillage? No, not that I see. We have responsible
25 homeowners around us.

1 Could there be a spillage? Sure, there could
2 be. I have heard that there are other people on
3 the island that are not responsible homeowners. I
4 am sorry for that, because it breaks my heart that
5 somebody wants to hurt something that is so
6 beautiful to so many people.

7 Also, a concern of ours is electricity. You
8 have heard it before. I won't say it again. Who
9 is going to be responsible for that? Is somebody
10 going to live on the island from EU to be able to
11 respond to the needs that will arise? It's not an
12 if they arise. It's that they will arise. No
13 different than the water system. There are always
14 going to be issues no matter what. Nothing is
15 perfect, neither are we.

16 We feel as though there would be environmental
17 impact on this because we have all said it, we have
18 all seen it, there is sewage systems that are
19 dumping in, creating, affecting, encouraging red
20 tide. We have stopped fishing because the red tide
21 was so horrible for so many years.

22 What do you do next? You know, this is
23 definitely a question that needs to be addressed.
24 No, we are not opposed to going to a central sewer
25 system, just not what this has been proposed as.

1 The expense involved, the time involved, I drove
2 two hours just to be here and wait until 8:30 to
3 speak.

4 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you for your
5 testimony, ma'am.

6 MS. JARVIS: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you.

8 MS. JARVIS: I appreciate it.

9 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or
10 LGIPA?

11 MS. JARVIS: LGIPA.

12 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

13 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Monica Errico,
14 you are on deck. Kurt Pendergrass, you are after.

15 PUBLIC COMMENT

16 MR. RAE: Good evening. My name is Shawn Rae.
17 I am a member of PIE.

18 It's interesting, I have become -- I have
19 become a member of PIE since 2016. It sounds like
20 we are a terrorist organization, but actually we
21 just like to get together and share some cocktails
22 occasionally and have cleanup projects.

23 But I am a mechanical engineer by degree. I
24 have spent my entire career in the water and
25 wastewater industry, first with a pipe

1 manufacturer, and lastly with Ferguson Waterworks,
2 part of Ferguson Enterprises. In that capacity, I
3 managed our water and wastewater treatment plant
4 division.

5 And what we did, we would partner with
6 contractors and engineers and do design/build
7 projects. That's a lot of our revenue. So I am
8 very familiar with the design/build, as we did them
9 all over the country.

10 What's concerning here, of all the projects I
11 bid, from hard bid to design and build, you have a
12 minimum of three bids, typically five proposals,
13 with different designs, different -- if it's a
14 wastewater treatment plant, going if from 20 to 40
15 million gallons a day. You would have three bids,
16 with probably three different alternative designs.

17 So here, we have one bid, and the design/build
18 is that you are pre-qualified, meaning you have
19 demonstrated that you have built projects of the
20 scope and cost, successfully completed them, and if
21 it's a design/build/operate, that you have operated
22 systems.

23 Why would the County, or why would you all
24 force us to take one bid from a contractor -- he is
25 not even a contractor -- who has never built a

1 system who or maintained a system like this? Our
2 county would never go out and take one bid for
3 20,000 feet of water main, just one bid, and from
4 someone who has never put in -- 12-inch pipe is
5 12-inch pipe.

6 So what we are being asked is to take one bid
7 from a company that's never done this. It is like
8 saying, hey, I am going to build a 5,000 square
9 foot home, I am going to get one price in from a
10 guy who has never built a home. That's just --
11 that's what you are asking us to accept. And I
12 appreciate your time.

13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, sir.

15 Question for you.

16 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or
17 LGIPA?

18 MR. RAE: I mentioned that I am not part of a
19 terrorist organization, but I am a member of PIE.

20 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Yes, a member of PIE.

21 PUBLIC COMMENT

22 MS. ERRICO: Hi, everybody. First and
23 foremost, thanks for coming out and allowing us to
24 have this time to speak. My name is Dr. Monica
25 Errico. I have a Ph.D., MBA, background in

1 infectious decrease, immunology, molecular
2 biochemistry with a little bit of law background as
3 well. That has nothing to do with what I am going
4 to speak with here today. It's more to do with my
5 wanting to share my personal experience as to what
6 I have been through on this island since the
7 hurricane.

8 And so Helene and Milton, I have been -- I am
9 a full-time resident on Don Pedro Island, Bocilla
10 in particular. I am one of the older homes, where
11 I am one of the few homes that's deeded to actually
12 a have two single family residences on my property.

13 During both Helene and Milton, and Milton in
14 particular, I had almost seven feet of storm surge
15 of water underneath my house, which is approximate
16 to 10-, 11-foot of storm surge overall. The only
17 thing that is functional on my house today, to this
18 very day, is my septic. I don't have stable power.
19 I am three weeks out from having full power
20 restored to my house. I have blown every
21 appliance, washing machine, dishwasher,
22 refrigerator, HVAC, pool equipment. Replaced my
23 HVAC system twice so far since the hurricane. What
24 do I think is going to have to happen when I have
25 to have a pump system, and a grinder, and a lift?

1 I would not be in my house today.

2 And I am not going to repeat everything else
3 that everybody has already talked about, but I did
4 want to poll the audience real quick and say, on a
5 show of hands, how many people are actually for the
6 sewer? And how many people are opposed?

7 Proud member of PIE. Thank you.

8 Questions?

9 MR. FRIEDMAN: No. That was my question.

10 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, ma'am. Thank you
11 for your testimony.

12 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Ember Harker,
13 you are on deck. Nick O'Rourke, you are after.

14 PUBLIC COMMENT

15 MR. PENDERGRASS: My name is Kurt Pendergrass.
16 I have a house on Little Gasparilla Island. It's
17 been in our family for approximately 70 years. We
18 have never had problems with our septic system,
19 ever. It has been emptied, pumped, but that's
20 expected when you have a system that's been around
21 for that long.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Louder.

23 MR. PENDERGRASS: Sorry, I am losing my voice.

24 I want to talk one thing about water quality.

25 I don't want to be redundant on all of the

1 ridiculous reasons that these people are trying to
2 push this in, and the reasons why it shouldn't be
3 there. I am definitely opposed to it. But I have
4 been fishing these waters in this area of Florida
5 my entire life. I grew up in Tampa. I fished
6 Tampa Bay all my life, and I spend my time down
7 here. Why? Because it's better. It's a better
8 quality. The water quality is great. I have heard
9 people say it is not. The facts do not support
10 that. The facts support that the water quality is
11 great. The fishery is great. They ban us from
12 catching fish when there is thousands and thousands
13 of the same fish that we can't catch because of red
14 tide, and they try to justify that for years
15 sometimes. It doesn't hurt the fishery. It hurts
16 the fisherman. He is still catching, he just can't
17 eat them.

18 But I have seen manatees do more damage eating
19 seagrass in our waters here than what I believe any
20 septic system does. Septic system are designed
21 specifically to filter out the bad stuff of that
22 gets back into the water. Can there be leach and
23 damage from stuff like the last couple of
24 hurricanes we had? Absolutely. It doesn't even
25 compare to what there -- could happen if we have a

1 water system that's being proposed here.

2 And I want to answer the question that people
3 don't seem to really figure out that they really
4 have. Why were we here? The first red flag that
5 we should have is the name of the company that's
6 making this proposal, Environmental Utilities.

7 Most companies in Florida and around the
8 country that use this word, environmental, are not
9 environmental. It's about money. That's the only
10 reason we are here, because somebody wants to make
11 a lot of money off of a lot of people that don't
12 need what they are proposing, and we are asking you
13 to not do that. That's the legal definition of
14 extortion that you are being asked to participate
15 in.

16 We don't need it. We don't want it. And if
17 they can't afford it, then they shouldn't have it.
18 And if you force us to have it, then we should own
19 part ownership of the company, and a majority
20 ownership of it.

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you.

23 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE?

24 MR. PENDERGRASS: No.

25 MR. FRIEDMAN: LGIPA?

1 MR. PENDERGRASS: Yes.

2 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay.

3 PUBLIC COMMENT

4 MS. HARKER: Hello. My name is Ember Harker.
5 I am the Communications Director for PIE. I am a
6 full-time resident on Kettle Harbor Drive.

7 When we talk about the need to service, we
8 definitely talk about water testing, and obviously,
9 what this huge group of people has to say about it.
10 But it stands to reason to me that if I were going
11 to put out a utility, and I were going to inspect
12 whether or not there was a need for service, that
13 you might actually poll the people who you would be
14 giving that service to. And I want to be very
15 clear that EU has never asked, to the best of my
16 knowledge, never performed any kind of pole, or
17 asked anyone on that island whether or not they
18 actually wanted this service.

19 Beyond that, up until today, I had never
20 talked to a single person that wants the sewer.
21 And to the best of my knowledge, the only people I
22 knew that supported the sewer were family members
23 and friends.

24 He said he had 79 letters from people. Where
25 are they? Because my count, we have about five or

1 six people talk that were sewer today; whereas, you
2 have got about 150 people here that are saying no.

3 So beyond that, I want to talk a little bit
4 about cost. The County recently did a -- released
5 a estimate that they think it costs about \$30,000
6 for them to install the sewer on the mainland. EU
7 is saying they can do it for 20. And one thing
8 that is an inalienable truth on this island is that
9 nothing costs less on the island than it does on
10 the mainland.

11 To that point, a \$600,000 markup for barge
12 fees is absurd. And I am going to tell you that,
13 because I built my house two years ago. My barge
14 fees were over \$100,000 for one house, my 1,850
15 square foot mansion was over \$100,000. So if one
16 house costs that much, there is no way that
17 \$600,000 is going to cover it.

18 I also have severe concerns about a lot of the
19 feedback -- or the testimony of Jonathan Cole
20 today. I took copious notes. He said so many
21 things that you heard were literally laughable to
22 this audience. Things like, there is a short line
23 for the ferry in the morning. That's somebody that
24 doesn't know what they are talking about. Saying
25 that a big excavator would just take up a few car

1 spots on the barge. No, it takes up the whole
2 barge every time. And he didn't say -- he said, I
3 don't think there is going to be any tidal impact.
4 Somebody already mentioned that we had to wait
5 three weeks for our trash to get picked up because
6 of low tide.

7 So ultimately EU had years to do water
8 testing. They didn't do it, and I going to ask you
9 why. The reason they didn't do it is because Jack
10 said very clearly in his testimony, quote, it comes
11 down to money. It's simply not about the
12 environment here. It's about the cost, and what
13 you can do with this permit. So I politely ask you
14 to refuse his request for the permit.

15 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, ma'am.

16 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Kathryn Judd,
17 you are on deck. Jaci Wasserman, you will be after
18 that.

19 PUBLIC COMMENT

20 MR. O'ROURKE: Hello. My name is Nick
21 O'Rourke. I live on Little Gasparilla Island with
22 my wife and seven kids, where we have lived for the
23 last -- this is our fifth year.

24 On Little Gasparilla, we have what I consider
25 to be -- I am -- also, I manage and run a general

1 contracting company on Little Gasparilla Island.
2 And on our island, I can't say as much for Palm
3 Island because I feel like the two islands are
4 different. We have to figure out our own way on
5 Little Gasparilla. And Palm Island has multiple
6 barges that bring people back and forth, obviously,
7 for a fee.

8 But on our side island, it costs over \$2,000
9 to have your septic tank pumped. And while I
10 watched my overrun into the road every time my wife
11 did laundry, it took me six months to get somebody
12 to come out and pump it, and I am a contractor. I
13 do business with these guys every single day.
14 There is only two people that do it.

15 Secondly, after Ian, our island had nobody to
16 barge stuff back and forth. Not one experienced
17 barge member. And all of a sudden, out of nowhere,
18 Rob Hill popped up, and he said, I will take care
19 of it. And we rebuilt our entire island with a man
20 who had never run a single barge back and forth.

21 I believe that if I -- as a contractor, I
22 don't -- I can't do the engineering, so I hired an
23 engineer, and I pay them to do the part that I am
24 not equipped to do. And I feel like we have to use
25 a little bit of common sense here.

1 There is no question that our waters are being
2 polluted. That we are losing our grasslands. The
3 statistics are everywhere. The State has given its
4 law and its mandate that we are supposed to change
5 over to sewer, but there is nobody here to do it
6 except for one person. So I say, let's provide
7 oversight, and let's get it done, and let's get our
8 island cleaned up.

9 I won't even let my kids -- so our house is up
10 to code. My cat box is in my back yard, it's built
11 up, right? I have a little litter box. My
12 neighbor's is not because it's going to cost him
13 \$40,000. That neighbor is not. That Neighbor
14 happens to be homeless. And you know what the only
15 thing that works on his house is, his septic tank.
16 He goes and gets -- he gets water out of the bay,
17 he puts it in his toilet and he flushes it because
18 it works. But five months out of the year, his
19 septic tank is under water. And so in order for me
20 to get from my house, and my kids to get from our
21 house to the dock with our groceries, we have to
22 walk through knee deep of water that's just 50 feet
23 away. His septic tank and his leach field is
24 completely under water. And he is not the only
25 one.

1 And there is nobody -- nobody from the County
2 is coming out to inspect these septic tanks, and so
3 I beg you, if you are not going to approve sewer,
4 send the County -- come out once a month and
5 inspect these septic tanks, because I personally,
6 since Milton, have been asked by multiple
7 homeowners to come out and send my guys to shovel
8 the sand out of their septic tank because their
9 neighbors did it, and theirs is working fine.

10 And I think that, as a generation who is going
11 to be here to see what happens to those waters --
12 to the rest of those waters, like, I have a
13 commercial pilot's license. I have been
14 commercially fishing in these waters since the
15 early '90s. And I am telling you, it's different.
16 I haven't seen five -- I have lived on the island
17 for five years. I haven't seen three redfish on my
18 dock in the last five years.

19 20 years ago, they were everywhere. Everyone
20 -- people came from everywhere to catch redfish
21 here.

22 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Sir. Thank you for your
23 testimony.

24 MR. O'ROURKE: Thank you.

25 MR. FRIEDMAN: No questions.

1 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Sir, excuse me, sir, we have
2 question for you.

3 MR. VOLPE: Thank you.

4 Mr. O'Rourke, I just have one quick question.
5 Are you related to the applicant?

6 MR. O'ROURKE: Mr. Boyer, he is my
7 father-in-law.

8 MR. VOLPE: Okay. Thank you.

9 PUBLIC COMMENT

10 MS. JUDD: Hello. My name is Kathryn Judd.
11 Me and my husband live on the island, and we have
12 been there about four years now. I want to thank
13 you for allowing us this opportunity to talk with
14 y'all.

15 So I was actually on the island during Ian. I
16 was having my house rock back and forth. And
17 during that time, after I came out of it, the only
18 thing that was working was my septic. I was
19 working on a gas grill, and during that two weeks,
20 almost three weeks that we did not have power, I
21 what is able to actually cook and be able to use
22 the bathroom in my house that I could not get out
23 of because I was barricaded in trees all around me.
24 People had to actually cut trees to get to me and
25 around my house on all the roads. My house was --

1 I live in the damage -- survived.

2 So as the last hurricanes have become more
3 frequent, it shows how this potentially would be
4 hazardous with a few weeks of no electricity, and
5 the last -- we are the last to get connected to the
6 electricity grid whenever a storm comes through,
7 creating the potential backups in the system.

8 By denying the EU central sewage system -- we
9 contribute to Charlotte County as a whole, they
10 could not process all the waste that they had, and
11 had to release into the Gulf. Keeping septic
12 creates less stress for the entire system of
13 Charlotte County.

14 Our septic allows our waste to be per property
15 basis, and has not caused me any issues on our
16 property in the past four years, even going through
17 Milton and Helene. This is not a solution. It
18 will create more problems with an inadequate
19 system.

20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you.

22 MS. JUDD: I have been. Yes, I have been.

23 MR. FRIEDMAN: Which one?

24 MS. JUDD: PIE, I have been, yes. Thank you.

25 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Ms. Wasserman,

1 you are up. After will be Troy Szukhent.

2 PUBLIC COMMENT

3 MS. WASSERMAN: It's Jaci, by the way.

4 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO SMITH: Jaci. Okay. I
5 apologize.

6 MS. WASSERMAN: Hi, you all. Listen, it's
7 been very interesting listening. We came here to
8 see what was going on --

9 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Ma'am, speak into the
10 microphone.

11 MS. WASSERMAN: I am sorry. I am sorry. I am
12 usually a loud talker.

13 I said it's been very interesting to listen to
14 what's been going on, and I live on Marsh Street on
15 Little Gasparilla Island. We are newbies. We came
16 here four years ago, and we love the island. We
17 wanted to get away from, quote/unquote,
18 civilization, and we found a paradise here.

19 We have never, and I mean never -- the house
20 was built in 1978, and there has never been a
21 problem with the septic tank. There must be a
22 reason. I mean, yes, prophylactically, I will have
23 it drained when I need to, or cleaned, and we drop
24 the things, the pellets in the toilet when you have
25 to every month. We do what we have to do

1 prophylactically to maintain the system.

2 If the system ain't broke, why the hell are we
3 trying to fix it? It's not fair to ask me, on a
4 fixed income, to try to shell out money. I am not
5 going to a bank. I am not exposing my taxes. I am
6 not exposing anything about my money to get a loan
7 to take care of this. And now I hear I can't even
8 get a loan because it's private.

9 Jack, why are you doing this? I know that you
10 want to line your pockets for the future legacy of
11 your children, but my house is supposed to be part
12 of my legacy to my children.

13 I have an autistic grandson that loves to come
14 here, and now if this passes, kiss it goodbye. And
15 you know what, it's also going to be a fire sale on
16 the island, because too many people are not going
17 to be able to afford to stay, and all of a sudden
18 the real estate is going to go wild.

19 I just spoke to my realtor the other day just
20 out of curiosity to see what my house was worth.
21 It's down \$20,000 -- excuse me, \$200,000. That's a
22 lot of money to be losing. And especially with all
23 of this talk, it's really making it difficult.

24 So I don't know what's going to happen. I am
25 not happy about it. The old saying is if it ain't

1 broke, don't fix it. It's a bad deal. It's a bad
2 deal for all of us. It smells. It's not right.

3 Maybe more work should be put into it as a
4 comparison to convince us of what we are doing to
5 make it right, to make it feel better. But right
6 now, when I go to bed at night, I am losing sleep
7 over this, because I can't afford what you are
8 talking about.

9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, ma'am, for your
11 testimony.

12 MS. WASSERMAN: Yes.

13 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member --

14 MS. WASSERMAN: No.

15 MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay.

16 PUBLIC COMMENT

17 MR. SZUKHENT: Good evening. My name is Troy
18 Szukhent. I live at 400 North Gulf Boulevard on
19 Palm Island. I am a member of PIE as well.

20 My wife Deb and I have owned our home for the
21 past six years, and I have lived here full time for
22 the last almost two-and-a-half, since Hurricane
23 Ian, rebuilding and recovering from the damage from
24 Hurricane Ian.

25 I have actually been coming to Palm Island

1 since 2004 vacationing. We actually didn't buy
2 until 2019.

3 My wife and I are not in support of the sewer
4 system for the island. All of our friends and
5 neighbors that I have spoken to on the island, I
6 have not talked with one, has been in support of
7 the sewer.

8 The proposal, as far as I can determine, was
9 completely unsolicited by island residents and not
10 based on need for service. I find it really
11 ridiculous and infuriating that residents have to
12 continually take time away from work and other
13 tasks, the rebuilding and recovery we have had to
14 our homes, just to come here and fight something
15 that we didn't request from outside and, frankly,
16 don't want it.

17 We have been through the three actual damages
18 from -- actual damage from three hurricanes in the
19 past two years. The rebuild and recovery has been
20 long and slow. The financial low continues to
21 rise, and during resources to rebuild, also trying
22 to upgrade and mitigate for future weather related
23 damage as well. Those upgrades generally are not
24 covered by any insurance payments that you
25 eventually end up getting, which we all know how

1 that goes with the insurance companies right now
2 anyway.

3 Minimal reimbursements received, it often
4 takes a long time to pay it out. And like it said,
5 it doesn't usually cover these improvements.

6 During the six years, and through the storms,
7 we have never had an issue with our septic system.
8 It hasn't failed at all. We have it pumped out
9 regularly. And because of the fact that I had the
10 sewer system, and that was working. I was able to
11 begin recovering immediately on my home through all
12 three hurricanes.

13 The reason for our opposition to the sewer are
14 many. The exorbitant cost we would incur are
15 unacceptable. Those costs include -- they are not
16 all included in the EU proposal, including the need
17 and installation of a backup generator if you want
18 to keep working when the power goes out. That also
19 includes that you have to have a fuel source for
20 that generator as well, which you might be putting
21 a propane tank in. Those are all costs that
22 weren't figured into this.

23 You hire you a plumber, you hire an
24 electrician, you have to have your service panel
25 replaced. My service panel is almost maxed out as

1 it is, and I had it replaced after Ian, which we
2 were stripped to the studs, all ceilings and floors
3 from Ian, and we just finished two weeks before
4 Helene hit.

5 The inconvenience of longer ferry lines and
6 increased time getting on and off the island. With
7 larger traffic roads and -- or traffic loads and
8 the road congestion on the island are a lot of
9 concerns to us.

10 Due to the fact that we have a shared lot
11 also, I have neighbors who live behind us on the
12 canal side, there would be required two easements
13 to go through my property to take their pipe to
14 their property. As I understand it, the easements
15 we would not be able to build over or drive over.
16 The front yard of my property is where we park is
17 because we have a shared driveway, and so we
18 cleared the front to be able to park our cars in
19 the front so that our neighbors can get back and
20 forth.

21 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Sir, thank you for your
22 testimony.

23 MR. SZUKHENT: Certainly.

24 MR. FRIEDMAN: Are you a member of PIE or
25 LGIPA?

1 MR. SZUKHENT: I am a member of PIE. We had
2 eye contact when I said it. Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: So now that was our last
4 speaker that we had signed up. Is there anybody in
5 the audience that wished to speak that was not
6 signed up?

7 Ma'am, come on up, give us your name and
8 address for the record, and you will be given three
9 minutes. Ma'am, were you here when we swore the
10 crowd in earlier?

11 MS. MAYMARD: I had to go back out because my
12 daughter had an injury actually at the library.

13 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Ma'am, over here. Were you
14 here when we swore the crowd in earlier?

15 MS. MAYMARD: I was earlier, but then I got
16 taken out because my daughter fell over at the
17 library, so I was dealing with the medic. I don't
18 have a statement, I have a --

19 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Ma'am, first of all, over
20 here, once again, in front of you.

21 MS. MAYMARD: I own two properties --

22 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: No. Were you here when I
23 swore in all the other witnesses?

24 MS. MAYMARD: No, I wasn't.

25 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay. Could I just get you

1 to raise your right hand?

2 (Whereupon, Chairman Graham administered the
3 oath.)

4 PUBLIC COMMENT

5 MS. MAYMARD: Yeah.

6 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you.

7 MS. MAYMARD: I own two properties on Don
8 Pedro. I kind of just want to have a question,
9 because we had a little bit new information come
10 out tonight.

11 Have you guys already decided, and we are
12 wasting our time here?

13 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: No, ma'am. There is no
14 decision. We are just here to hear your testimony.
15 We are not necessarily here to answer any
16 questions.

17 MS. MAYMARD: Well, that's basically what I
18 had, because I was listening to a lot of these good
19 people talk, and then I listened to the other man
20 talk, and there just seems to be information
21 missing. So I guess I am just confused, and I am
22 worried, because I also have two properties that I
23 have to deal with. And unfortunately, I am in a
24 position where I might not be able to afford that.
25 And I think a lot of questions that need to be

1 answered prior. I mean, this seems very serious.
2 I may seem like ignorant in some of it, which I
3 probably am, but I did hear what was going on
4 tonight, and I think -- I just think there is more
5 answers needed.

6 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: We are a long way away from
7 an answer. We are just --

8 MS. MAYMARD: That's -- you know, I just need
9 to say my peace. That's all. I appreciate your
10 time, and thank you for a being here.

11 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you very much.

12 MR. FRIEDMAN: Ma'am, are you a member of
13 PIE -- are you a member of PIE or LGPIA?

14 MS. MAYMARD: I was for years until I got
15 these. The past three years, it's been medical or
16 PIE.

17 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, ma'am.

18 Well, seeing there is no other speakers, I
19 want to thank everybody for coming out today. We
20 are going to be doing a service hearing again
21 tomorrow morning at 9:30. If any of your neighbors
22 that want to come out that want to speak, once
23 again, it's going to be here tomorrow at 9:30.

24 Thank you so very much. You guys were a great
25 crowd, believe it or not, and for being under

1 control, I do appreciate it. And, everybody,
2 please travel safe.

3 We are adjourned.

4 (Proceedings concluded.)

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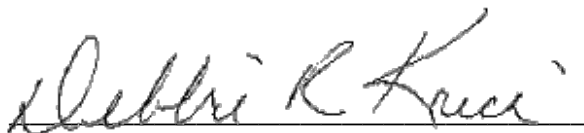
STATE OF FLORIDA)
COUNTY OF LEON)

I, DEBRA KRICK, Court Reporter, do hereby
certify that the foregoing proceeding was heard at the
time and place herein stated.

IT IS FURTHER CERTIFIED that I
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I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative,
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DATED this 21st day of February, 2025.



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