

Lisa Doyle
238 Timberland Ave
Longwood, FL 32750
(407) 391-8002
UI acct # 3739727138

Re: Utilities Inc. rate case
Docket # 160101-WS

4 April 2017

RECEIVED-FPSC
2017 APR 10 AM 8:22
COMMISSION
CLERK

Florida Public Service Commission
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Madam Chairwoman and members of the Commission:

I am writing today to vigorously oppose the rate increase requested by Utilities Inc. in this action. My reasons are so numerous that they are difficult to prioritize! I'll begin with issues of broad public interest, and shift later to more personal concerns.

◆ While researching the various points I intended to make in this letter, I came across a newspaper article from 1998. This quote was of particular interest:

*“The Sanlando purchase is something different for Utilities Inc. The company usually buys utilities in need of repair. ... **Sanlando is in good working order and has even won awards for operations.**”*

So, they bought a system in top condition, **allowed it to deteriorate** in less than 20 years (current poor condition confirmed by the former mayor of Longwood at the hearing in Altamonte), and are now crying for someone else to pay to fix it?!

source: http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/1998-08-25/news/9808240282_1_sweetwater-utilities-water-and-sewer
(copy attached; ad-free copy was too large to print, electronic file on request)

◆ Utilities Inc. still, even after having the phrase criticized at a hearing months ago, brags on their web site that they have “extensive capital to fuel the company’s continued growth.” Why, then, do they have their hands out to the ratepayers to fund their upgrades?

source: <http://www.uiwater.com/florida/about-us/who-we-are>

◆ Utilities Inc. claims that they need to standardize their rates — as though it’s not a preference, but a necessity.

Insurance rates differ based on zip code; UPS charges different rates for residential and

business customers, as well as different delivery zones. The logistics and resulting cost of variations in billing don't seem to be a problem for these and other industries. Why is Utilities Inc. entitled to a one-size-fits-all billing scheme at the expense of its customers?

It seems that their uniform pricing scheme would generally decrease the rates of more remote areas at the expense of metropolitan areas. Why should those of us in more densely populated areas carry the cost burden of extending and maintaining water service to exurbs? Those who wish to participate in sprawl should absorb the cost of it.

◆ What makes them think they have the right to conflate a rate increase with the cost of upgrades? If I want to remodel my house, I can't skip my mortgage while I do it (or perhaps a more apt analogy would be that I can't demand a raise from my boss to help pay for it), nor can I expect to put money away in savings while I'm spending on materials and labor.

Upgrades are done with the aim of **future** return! And for most individuals or businesses, if the upgrades are not done well, there will be no return. I see no such quality assurance for utilities in general, or this one in particular — and they have already let the system deteriorate from "award-winning" to being so riddled with issues that the City of Longwood declined to buy it! So why should we trust them going forward to maintain quality without oversight?

I suspect everything was requested at the same time in an effort to obfuscate how much will be taken in and what it will be spent on.

◆ Perhaps UI of Florida president John Hoy's comments to a nudge-wink group of industry insiders are a better explanation of what is going on here:

Exclusive Dispatch: Private Water Industry Says Water Bills "Have to Go Up"

John Hoy, president of Utilities Inc. of Florida, was more blunt.

"There is the belief that water should be cheap. We are fighting the perception that anything over \$30 a month is a lot. [Water] continues to be the lowest utility bill. We have to go up for that."

source: <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/30724-exclusive-dispatch-private-water-industry-says-water-bills-have-to-go-up>

So, they want to be more like my \$250 Duke bill (which was only \$175 with Progress, but I digress)? Where do they think average people are going to get that kind of money for a basic necessity of life?

◆ The numbers in this rate request appear to depend on the receipt of certain federal funding. The political climate at the federal level has changed drastically since their original filing; such funding is far from assured these days. Will they be back with their hands out again when the money doesn't come? Or will they just do a slipshod job on the "upgrades", leaving us ratepayers holding the bag for still-inferior service at a higher cost?

◆ The Utilities Inc. representative who appeared at the meeting in Altamonte Springs plainly stated that 2/3 of the requested upgrade amount would be used in Sanlando. Later it was revealed that the amount is actually 1/3. Was he misinformed, or being deceptive? Neither is a good option.

◆ Many industries are somehow able to get by on less than 10% profit — and most of them are industries where consumers have a choice of providers at the very least, or can choose not to do business with the industry at all.

source: http://www.stern.nyu.edu/~adamodar/New_Home_Page/data.html

Water customers, unfortunately, are a captive audience.

Now, I'll move on to the various ways Utilities Inc. has displayed their incompetence and indifference to me personally. Separate complaint forms are attached as appropriate.

◆ It is painful to use the word “quality” when speaking about our water. The water always reeks of chlorine, especially when the pressure is low, and tastes as bad as it smells. We currently use a countertop water filter for drinking and cooking. Needless to say, the pitcher is inconvenient for cooking when large quantities of water are needed. We purchased a reverse osmosis filter but it has not been installed yet. We also have a filter in our refrigerator, and use bottled water from time to time.

Based on the fixture and appliance problems enumerated below, I suspect the water quality has fallen off drastically in the last 4 or 5 years.

◆ The showerhead in our master bathroom was brought along from our previous residence. Not once, ever, did we have to clean scale or deposits out of it there. Now, if we don't soak it in vinegar every few months, the water shoots out in all directions. The vinegar is not great for the finish on the showerhead, but the alternative is the whole bathroom taking a shower any time we do. The vinegar soak is also becoming increasingly ineffective. The crud is winning.

Low-pressure water spraying everywhere except where you want it to go, also makes for a frustrating bathing experience.

◆ Our kitchen faucet is similarly afflicted. It was a replacement in about 2011, and the spray mechanism and internal parts already failing.

◆ My bidet sprayer failed in about 3 years.

◆ Our Keurig coffee pot failed in about 2 years.

◆ We have had to replace the valve stem in our master shower twice already (since 2010) and it really *could stand to be replaced again*.

- ◆ The drain valve in our 90s-vintage dishwasher suddenly failed. We replaced it, and within a few years the replacement part failed.
- ◆ Around the same time we replaced the drain valve, we noticed some sort of staining or buildup in the dishwasher that didn't used to be there. We were unable to remove it, even with dishwasher cleaner. When the drain valve failed again about a year ago, we replaced the dishwasher. Within months, the brand new dishwasher had the same discoloration!
- ◆ We fight a constant battle against pink slime in our toilet bowls. The tanks have a lot of sediment and something "growing" on the surfaces above the water line.
- ◆ There are brownish stains or deposits in the shower (similar to the dishwasher) that we can't get rid of.
- ◆ We are nursing our sediment-riddled water heater along because we are reluctant to start the failure countdown on a replacement!
- ◆ Water pressure is a joke. When we first bought the house, I could only run one sprinkler at a time to water the grass seed, and the reach of that sprinkler was laughable. And that was in the middle of the day. The pressure goes down even more at night. There is not enough pressure to adequately rinse soap off my hands until the toilet finishes refilling.

I am deeply concerned that the water pressure will be inadequate to fight any fires that may occur in the area.

- ◆ Utilities Inc. claims in part that higher rates will encourage conservation. However, their actions with me show that they **punish** those who conserve.

One day in the spring of 2015, I woke (late, some time between 10am and noon, we're night owls) and did the usual water-related morning business. First, the toilet coughed as if the water had been off. Every faucet did the same when first turned on. Then I noticed that the water pressure was really low, even worse than what we experience at night. Wow, I thought, whatever they take down at night must have really quit this time.

Days went by, and the pressure didn't get better.

Days turned into weeks.

Then we got our bill.

It's normally under \$7 (not a typo). This one was **over \$100**.

I noticed that there were 2 meter numbers on the bill, and figured it was just some confusion over switching meters. My husband called Utilities Inc. and they said they

would send someone out. The first available appointment was a **week** later.

The employee showed up at the absolute end of the appointment window, 4pm — on a Friday. He lifted the cover off the vault and it was full of water.

Paraphrasing his response: “There’s a leak. It’s on your side. Not our problem.” He then dropped the lid on the vault, jumped in his truck and left!

We frantically called plumbers until we found one that could come out the next day. We paid for the repair out of pocket. Unfortunately I am unable to locate the receipt at this time — more on that in a minute.

Then it dawned on us — this happened when they swapped our meter. Our entire household water supply had been open to the environment **for over a month**. Thus began the next frantic task, trying to get the water tested. It turns out that the state of Florida wants to make that as difficult for homeowners as possible. It took me over a week to find out that the only public-authorized water testing company for the whole state was located in Indiana, of all places — and they would have needed the sample to be refrigerated, which we did not know we needed to do. All we could manage before the repair was done was a quickie retail test that showed pesticide contamination. We could not get the water tested for giardia, cryptosporidium, bacteria, or other contaminants.

I should probably mention at this point that I had (and still have) multiple health issues, including autoimmune disease. Consuming contaminated water is pretty much the last thing I should be doing.

Based on the bills, I calculated the rate of the leak. If my math is right, it was leaking **six gallons per minute**. There is no way they did not know that they caused a break of that magnitude in an enclosed area. But — at the risk of repeating myself — when they broke it, they dropped the cover on the vault and drove away.

The water cost alone ended up being \$262.91 (several extra weeks of leaking elapsed between the time the bill was cut and the repair was finally made), which I had to pay by credit card on 5 June 2015 to keep my water service from being shut off. The plumbing repair was in the \$400 range, for total damages pushing \$700.

To summarize and clarify:

- Our water meter was swapped completely without warning (much less permission, but I doubt they are legally required to obtain that for their own equipment), *right in the middle of the day*. No one even came to the door. Fortunately, we were not in the shower or running a load of clothes or dishes at the time!
- The reason for this swap has never been provided. I figure they were dissatisfied with our low bills, and suspected either a malfunction of their equipment or fraud on our part.

They could have just asked! Or looked at our dirty vehicles and grass-free yard and figured out for themselves that not much water gets used here.

- Our plumbing was damaged in the process, and Utilities Inc. drove away in a hurry (twice!) rather than being honest and fixing what they broke. (We have pre-repair photographs and still have possession of the broken piece of pipe. The photo files were too large to print or send electronically; they can be viewed via Dropbox at <http://bit.ly/2nVfVfK>)
- Our water was clearly contaminated to some extent, but we were never advised to boil the water, much less offered any kind of filtration system even temporarily.

Why didn't we complain at the time, and why am I having trouble locating the receipt? Because the whole incident couldn't have happened at a worse time. We had abandoned both of our properties up north in a hurry when my parents fell ill here in Florida. By the time they both passed and we were able to settle their estate here, weather and criminals had conspired to cause huge problems at both properties up there. This incident happened shortly before we were leaving to go 900 miles "back home" to deal with lawyers and courts and two huge disgusting full-house cleanouts with no help.

We had no idea it was going to take nearly a year. Have you ever gone through 11 months' worth of mail all at once? In all of the confusion, a bunch of bills and documents from just prior to our departure (i.e., stuff that hadn't been filed yet) were misplaced.

While we were gone, in December of 2015, our house sitter sent us a picture of a door hanger left by Utilities Inc. notifying us that our water had been shut off because of another leak in the same general area, "reported by a neighbor". I suspected another meter swap, since the house had been vacant and the only water usage was whatever the house sitter was doing (watering plants, keeping toilets filled, etc.); but the plumber we hired upon our return (April 2016) said this time it was merely a pipe failure, and none of the bills indicated another meter swap.

Why am I mentioning it? Because we were not advised to boil our water that time, either — which is probably even worse than the other time, since there were 4 months where the water pressure was not keeping things out of the pipes.

I'm grateful that our bills are lower than many of our neighbors'; I flinched many times at the Altamonte hearing when folks said how much they were paying. But the flip side of that is that our bill would approximately **triple** under this proposal. What a great way to reward customers who don't use a lot of water!

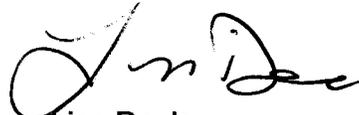
For some reason, Florida's legislators have seen fit to guarantee returns to private utilities, without regard for their performance. Until that legislation is changed, the

Public Service Commission is our last defense against predatory monopolies.

We're still paying for failed power plants that do us no good, and now we are being asked to buy a pig in a water-pipe poke. Please hold these utilities accountable!

The PSC has my permission to use my account number to pull any of my bills that are necessary to investigate anything I reported here.

Sincerely,



Lisa Doyle

Consumer Comment

Florida Consumer Water/Wastewater Alliance - FORM: 10

Application for increase in water and sewer rates in Charlotte, Highlands, Lake, Lee, Marion, Orange, Pasco, Pinellas, and Seminole counties by

Utilities, Inc. of Florida

DOCKET NO. 160101-WS

Timberlands DEVELOPMENT- Seminole COUNTY, FLORIDA
{Community/Neighborhood Name} {County Name}

Print name(s) Lisa Doyle | Kevin Doyle

Florida Address 238 Timberland Ave
Longwood FL 32750

Date 4/4/2017 Signature(s) [Signature] | [Signature]
Resident/Renter Resident/Renter

So your form is NOT REJECTED by PSC, each person must CIRCLE if you are a Resident (Homeowner) or a Renter – Thank-you!

CONSUMER COMMENTS

Please check off your concerns and add any other comments at bottom of the form.

Due to poor Water Quality, we have had to install water purification devices, or switch to bottled water: The overall water quality forced us to (check all that apply):

- Install water purification device(s)
- Switched to bottled water for drinking and/or cooking

Other Comments:

Due to taste and odor issues, we use bottled water or a countertop pitcher for drinking and cooking water.

Send your completed comment form to:

Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Commission Clerk
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Consumer Comment

Florida Consumer Water/Wastewater Alliance - FORM: 9

Application for increase in water and sewer rates in Charlotte, Highlands, Lake, Lee, Marion, Orange, Pasco, Pinellas, and Seminole counties by
Utilities, Inc. of Florida

DOCKET NO. 160101-WS

Timberlands DEVELOPMENT- Seminole COUNTY, FLORIDA
{Community/Neighborhood Name} {County Name}

Print name(s) Lisa Doyle / Kevin Doyle

Florida Address 238 Timberland Ave
Longwood FL 32750

Date 4/4/2017 Signature(s) [Signature] / [Signature]

So your form is NOT REJECTED by PSC, Resident/Renter / Resident/Renter
each person must CIRCLE if you are a Resident (Homeowner) or a Renter – Thank-you!

CONSUMER COMMENTS

Please check off your concerns and add any other comments at bottom of the form.

Boil water advisories:

Delayed or no notice of: "boil water" advisories and/or delayed or no notice of "service returned to safe operation" of our water and/or wastewater service after a boil notice has been issued.

Other Comments:

On two occasions (one of which was Utilities Inc's own
fault), the main water pipe to our house was broken.
On neither ~~one~~ occasions did they advise us to
boil our water.

Send your completed comment form to:

Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Commission Clerk
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

FWC Alliance - Consumer Comment FORM: 9

Consumer Comment

Florida Consumer Water/Wastewater Alliance - FORM: 8

Application for increase in water and sewer rates in Charlotte, Highlands, Lake, Lee, Marion, Orange, Pasco, Pinellas, and Seminole counties by

Utilities, Inc. of Florida

DOCKET NO. 160101-WS

Timberlands DEVELOPMENT- Seminole COUNTY, FLORIDA
{Community/Neighborhood Name} {County Name}

Print name(s) Lisa Doyle | Kevin Doyle

Florida Address 238 Timberland Ave

Longwood FL 32750

Date 4/4/2017 Signature(s) [Signature] | [Signature]

So your form is NOT REJECTED by PSC, Resident/Renter Resident/Renter
each person must CIRCLE if you are a Resident (Homeowner) or a Renter – Thank-you!

CONSUMER COMMENTS

Please check off your concerns and add any other comments at bottom of the form.

Billing and/or Customer Service issues:

Utilities, Inc. of Florida personnel have not been responsive when we have contacted them to share concerns, file a complaint or discuss billing/questions.

Other Comments:

When we contacted UI regarding a water bill about 15 times larger than normal, it took them a week to respond. Upon discovering that the problem was a pipe THEY broke while swapping our meter, they said it was our problem and drove away.

Send your completed comment form to:

Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Commission Clerk
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

FWC Alliance - Consumer Comment FORM: 8

Consumer Comment

Florida Consumer Water/Wastewater Alliance - FORM: 7

Application for increase in water and sewer rates in Charlotte, Highlands, Lake, Lee, Marion, Orange, Pasco, Pinellas, and Seminole counties by

Utilities, Inc. of Florida

DOCKET NO. 160101-WS

Timberlands DEVELOPMENT- Seminole COUNTY, FLORIDA

{Community/Neighborhood Name}

{County Name}

Print name(s) Lisa Doyle / Kevin Doyle

Florida Address 238 Timberland Ave

Longwood FL 32750

Date 4/4/2017 Signature(s) [Signatures]

So your form is NOT REJECTED by PSC,

Resident/Renter

Resident/Renter

each person must CIRCLE if you are a Resident (Homeowner) or a Renter – Thank-you!

CONSUMER COMMENTS

Please check off your concerns and add any other comments at bottom of the form.

Rates/Adverse Financial Impact:

Utilities, Inc. of Florida rates are higher than Utility rates for our neighboring communities and/or proposed rates would place an undo adverse financial burden upon our household.

Other Comments:

Our rates would triple so that higher cost areas can pay less.

Send your completed comment form to:

Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Commission Clerk
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Consumer Comment

Florida Consumer Water/Wastewater Alliance - FORM: 6

Application for increase in water and sewer rates in Charlotte, Highlands, Lake, Lee, Marion, Orange, Pasco, Pinellas, and Seminole counties by

Utilities, Inc. of Florida

DOCKET NO. 160101-WS

Timberlands DEVELOPMENT- Seminole COUNTY, FLORIDA

{Community/Neighborhood Name}

{County Name}

Print name(s) Lisa Doyle / Kevin Doyle

Florida Address 238 Timberland Ave
Longwood FL 32750

Date 4/4/2017 Signature(s) [Handwritten Signatures]

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each person must CIRCLE if you are a Resident (Homeowner) or a Renter – Thank-you!

CONSUMER COMMENTS

Please check off your concerns and add any other comments at bottom of the form.

Health Concerns:

There are black sediment deposits and/or slimy growths in our (check all that apply):

Toilet water tanks and bowls

Hot water heater

Kitchen faucet

Bathroom faucet(s) shower stem is failing for 3rd time in 7 years

Other Comments:

Send your completed comment form to:

Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Commission Clerk
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Consumer Comment

Florida Consumer Water/Wastewater Alliance - FORM: 5

Application for increase in water and sewer rates in Charlotte, Highlands, Lake, Lee, Marion, Orange, Pasco, Pinellas, and Seminole counties by

Utilities, Inc. of Florida

DOCKET NO. 160101-WS

Timberlands DEVELOPMENT- Seminole COUNTY, FLORIDA
{Community/Neighborhood Name} {County Name}

Print name(s) Lisa Doyle, Kevin Doyle

Florida Address 238 Timberland ave
Longwood FL 32750

Date 4/4/2017 Signature(s) [Signature], [Signature]

So your form is NOT REJECTED by PSC, Resident/Renter, Resident/Renter
each person must CIRCLE if you are a Resident (Homeowner) or a Renter – Thank-you!

CONSUMER COMMENTS

Please check off your concerns and add any other comments at bottom of the form.

History has proven that Utilities Inc. has continually filed for rate increases with little improvement to our drinkable water quality.

Other Comments:

Every year we get a notice of a rate increase, but our water quality stays bad, and the pressure is low.

Send your completed comment form to:

Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Commission Clerk
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Consumer Comment

Florida Consumer Water/Wastewater Alliance - FORM: 4

Application for increase in water and sewer rates in Charlotte, Highlands, Lake, Lee, Marion, Orange, Pasco, Pinellas, and Seminole counties by

Utilities, Inc. of Florida

DOCKET NO. 160101-WS

Timberlands DEVELOPMENT- Seminole COUNTY, FLORIDA
{Community/Neighborhood Name} {County Name}

Print name(s) Lisa Doyle / Kevin Doyle

Florida Address 238 Timberland Ave
Longwood FL 32750

Date 4/4/2017 Signature(s) [Handwritten Signatures]

So your form is NOT REJECTED by PSC, Resident/Renter Resident/Renter
each person must CIRCLE if you are a Resident (Homeowner) or a Renter – Thank-you!

CONSUMER COMMENTS

Please check off your concerns and add any other comments at bottom of the form.

I see minimal maintenance and updating of my community's utility system even though my rates continually increase.

Other Comments:

I am unaware of any maintenance activity, but my rates go up every year.

Send your completed comment form to:

Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Commission Clerk
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Consumer Comment

Florida Consumer Water/Wastewater Alliance - FORM: 3

Application for increase in water and sewer rates in Charlotte, Highlands, Lake, Lee, Marion, Orange, Pasco, Pinellas, and Seminole counties by

Utilities, Inc. of Florida

DOCKET NO. 160101-WS

Timberlands DEVELOPMENT- Seminole COUNTY, FLORIDA
{Community/Neighborhood Name} {County Name}

Print name(s) Lisa Doyle | Kevin Doyle

Florida Address 238 Timberland Ave
Longwood FL 32750

Date 4/4/2017 Signature(s) [Signature] | [Signature]

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each person must CIRCLE if you are a Resident (Homeowner) or a Renter – Thank-you!

CONSUMER COMMENTS

Please check off your concerns and add any other comments at bottom of the form.

I oppose Docket No. 160101-WS Utilities, Inc. of Florida consolidated rate case due to its overwhelming impact on my utility rates.

Other Comments:

The rate packet was confusing, but it appears that our household's rate will more than TRIPLE under this proposal. We will be penalized because we do not use enough water, while UF claims with a straight face that they support conservation.

Send your completed comment form to:

Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Commission Clerk
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Consumer Comment

Florida Consumer Water/Wastewater Alliance - FORM: 2

Application for increase in water and sewer rates in Charlotte, Highlands, Lake, Lee, Marion, Orange, Pasco, Pinellas, and Seminole counties by

Utilities, Inc. of Florida

DOCKET NO. 160101-WS

Timberlands DEVELOPMENT- Seminole COUNTY, FLORIDA
{Community/Neighborhood Name} {County Name}

Print name(s) Lisa Doyle | Kevin Doyle

Florida Address 238 Timberland Ave
Longwood FL 32750

Date 4/4/2017 Signature(s) [Signatures]

So your form is NOT REJECTED by PSC, Resident/Renter Resident/Renter
each person must CIRCLE if you are a Resident (Homeowner) or a Renter – Thank-you!

CONSUMER COMMENTS

Please check off your concerns and add any other comments at bottom of the form.

Water Quality & Rates:

The water quality of our water does not justify this rate increase.

Other Comments:

Our water always reeks of chlorine, especially when the pressure is lower than normal (most nights), and tastes just as bad as it smells. Numerous appliances and fixtures have been damaged or even ruined by sediment.

Send your completed comment form to:

Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Commission Clerk
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Consumer Comment

Florida Consumer Water/Wastewater Alliance - FORM: 1

Application for increase in water and sewer rates in Charlotte, Highlands, Lake, Lee, Marion, Orange, Pasco, Pinellas, and Seminole counties by

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DOCKET NO. 160101-WS

Timberlands DEVELOPMENT- Seminole COUNTY, FLORIDA
{Community/Neighborhood Name} {County Name}

Print name(s) Lisa Doyle | Kevin Doyle

Florida Address 238 Timberland Ave
Longwood FL 32750

Date 4/4/2017 Signature(s) [Signature] | [Signature]

So your form is NOT REJECTED by PSC,

Resident/Renter

Resident/Renter

each person must CIRCLE if you are a Resident (Homeowner) or a Renter – Thank-you!

CONSUMER COMMENTS

Please check off your concerns and add any other comments at bottom of the form.

Water Quality:

The overall water quality is unacceptable due to sediment, taste, color and odor.

Other Comments:

Our water smells and tastes of excessive chlorine.
Sediment has ruined various plumbing fixtures and
and appliances.

Send your completed comment form to:

Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Commission Clerk
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850



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SEMINOLE BUSINESS

New Sanlando Owner Says Rates Won't Rise

Wekiva-area Water And Sewer Clients Take 'Wait And See' Attitude About Utility's Sale

August 25, 1998 | By Will Wellons of The Sentinel Staff

The [sale](#) of Sanlando Utilities should have little effect on customers, said officials for the new owner. However, the recent sale does have some Sanlando customers wondering what it might mean for their water rates and service.

Sanlando customers in western Seminole County have generally enjoyed some of the lowest water and sewer rates in Central Florida. [Homeowners](#) associations have fought previous attempts by local governments to buy the water utility, fearing that rates would increase.



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So, what will the sale to Utilities Inc., a Northbrook, Ill., [company](#), mean?

Utilities Inc. managers say the sale, which still needs state approval, should go unnoticed by most of Sanlando's 23,000 [customers](#). Even the name is expected to remain the same. Rates will not be increased to pay for the sale, company officials said.

However, Chuck Ness, president of the Wekiva Hunt Club Community Association, is not entirely convinced. Nearly all of the 2,600 houses in the Wekiva community are served by the utility.

"I'm going to wait and see what happens over the next six to nine months," Ness said. "We are holding our breath."

In Sweetwater Oaks, the worries of community leaders go beyond rising rates. Some Sweetwater residents have sued Sanlando to stop the disposal of treated waste water into Sweetwater Creek. The sale has stalled efforts to resolve the dispute.

Wayne Chilton, president of the Sweetwater Oaks Homeowners Association, said the sale could be a positive [development](#) but that it was too early to tell.

Sweetwater resident Jim Purvis, who has sued Sanlando over the wastewater dumping, said the cleanup of Sweetwater Creek must be a top priority of Utilities Inc., one of the 10 largest investor-owned water and wastewater companies in the country.

Some Sweetwater residents are contemplating filing a protest with the Florida Public Service Commission over the sale to make sure their dispute is addressed. Customers have until the end of the month to challenge the sale.

The sale of the utility must be approved by state regulators. Utilities Inc. attorney Bill Sundstrom said the approval process should be completed in four months.

Sundstrom said he is aware that Sanlando has some outstanding legal issues. Utilities Inc. is committed

Water And Sewer
Sweetwater

to resolving any problems and running the utility well, he said. "Sanlando has a sophisticated group of customers," he said. "The customers want good service and a fair rate. That's what we intend to give them."

Sanlando Utilities was built nearly three decades ago by the owners of Greater Construction Co., a development company .

Utilities Inc. owns small water and sewer systems around Longwood, west Sanford, west Altamonte Springs and Oviedo. Don Rasmussen, vice president of the Florida division of Utilities Inc., said the purchase of Sanlando was a natural expansion that will double the utility's presence in Seminole County and, the company hopes, improve its efficiency. The company also just purchased Lake Groves Utilities Inc., which provides water and sewer service to nearly 2,000 customers in the unincorporated area near Clermont.

Utilities Inc. has made a thriving business out of buying developer-owned utilities and running them. It owns more than 300 utilities in 15 states.



The Sanlando purchase is something different for Utilities Inc. The company usually buys utilities in need of repair. When the company purchased Alafaya Utilities, for example, it had to upgrade the aging utility and wage several legal battles with the city of Oviedo, including disputes over which one would provide utilities to the city.

Oviedo City Manager Gene Williford said those disputes are being resolved, and his office rarely gets complaints about the utility.

Sanlando is in good working order and has even won awards for operations.

"Average customers will never notice a difference," said Jerry Salsano, general manager and vice president of Sanlando.

The biggest difference, he said, is that the new owner is in a better position to provide the type of capital that will keep the utility running well.

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