

State of Florida



Public Service Commission

CAPITAL CIRCLE OFFICE CENTER • 2540 SHUMARD OAK BOULEVARD
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-0850

-M-E-M-O-R-A-N-D-U-M-

DATE: July 31, 2018
TO: Carlotta S. Stauffer, Commission Clerk, Office of Commission Clerk
FROM: Lee Smith, Utility Analyst, Division of Accounting & Finance
RE: Docket No. 20180021-WS Application for staff-assisted rate case in Highlands County by Country Walk Utilities, Inc.

Please file the attached email pages in the Correspondence side of the above mentioned Docket file. Thanks you.

RECEIVED-FPSC
2018 JUL 30 PM 3:17
COMMISSION
CLERK

Linda Burkell

From: Chuck Totten <chuck.totten@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 24, 2018 11:32 AM
To: Linda Burkell; Cookie Knox; Susan Sylvester; Brand Paul & Jeri (CW); Witthuhn Barbara (CW); Alexandra Casi; Jonathan Street; johnathan.street@outlook.com; Phama Rader; Troy Rendell; Rita Varona
Subject: Letter to be read at Water Commission Hearing

13 Corkwood Ave
Lake Placid, Florida 33852
July 23rd 2018

To: Country Walk Board of Directors
Country Walk Water Utility
Florida Water Commission

My family and I are property owners of three properties in the Country Walk subdivision, including the properties at 13 Corkwood Ave, 31 Lake Side Trail and 23 Quail Roost Road. I am not able to attend the July 25th 2018 Water Commission meeting, but believe it is important to share the following facts and questions for consideration, which I formally ask to be read at the meeting scheduled for July 25th 2017. I wish to express my displeasure for scheduling such an important meeting when most snowbird residents (like myself) are not available. With that being said, I believe my family has been significantly overcharged for our water at the Quail Roost residence after Hurricane Irma and the subsequent water pressure increase that far exceeded reasonable limits. The water main burst in several places, which is almost unheard of. There have been many instances of damages directly caused by this increased water pressure, which our Country Walk Water Utility Company has failed to adequately address.

What concerns me the most is the lack of trust and honesty in dealing with my water problems, which I can only describe as deception and outright lies as briefly described below. Email correspondence has been provided to the Country Walk Board of Directors to forward and/or deliver to the Florida Water Commission. I believe that the water company has been padding their expenses to justify a higher increase in water rates. This also includes the possibility of our water utility company intentionally manipulated the water test results to compel our Association to upgrade our water system. There has been problem after problem with the new water system that was installed and we have had many requests to boil our water for numerous reasons. I have personally taken pictures at my residences documenting the water utilities work crews. I have repeatedly observed four workers at a site, with only one person actually working the majority of the time while the other three workers were standing around talking. I do not know why it would take 4 men to do a water test, check a meter or clean out the line.

Prior to Hurricane Irma and the water pressure increase, the average water bill and usage at 23 Quail Roost Road was \$54.78 and 5.83 thousand gallons of water per month. That was reasonable for only two people in the house. The next three water bills with readings on 10/2/17, 11/1/17 and 12/1/17 were \$147.63 and 19,000 gallons of water consumption (these amounts do not reflect the fact the there was no water available for about a week), \$233.55 and 30,000 gallons of water consumption and \$224.83 and 29,000 gallons of water consumption, respectively. I was billed \$605.61 for three months service (over \$200 per month) with upwards of 30,000 gallons of usage per month. Please refer to the other email messages between Troy Rendell and Rita Verona. Troy continuously stated that the water increase was not the utility company's problem and that the

water tests confirmed the meter was working properly. I did receive a credit of about \$200.00, but still believe I was overcharged.

What is most disturbing is that I personally attended numerous water tests with the utility company employees. The meter would show 10 gallons of usage, but the bucket was only filled with 7 gallons. The employees conducting the test said the meter is not working right, but Troy would still insist that I was being **undercharged** for our water as he stated verbally and in his emails. I was also told I would have to pay to replace and test the old water meter. With my complaining, the meter was ultimately replaced and the average usage dropped back to an average bill of \$54.15 and 6,000 gallons of usage per month. I believe I am still owed

approximately \$220.66 when comparing what was charged to the average consumption both before the water pressure increase and after the meter was replaced. The tests for the meter confirmed that I was being overcharged, despite assurances from Troy that this has never happened and that I would be paying more money each month if the meter was replaced. I was repeatedly told by Troy that the meter was undercharging me. Though Rita has been excellent, I question Troy's integrity and feel we have been misled by the water company. I can not comprehend how any competent employee can state I was being undercharged based on the facts. How can one twist around that everything is fine when the meter registers 10 gallons and I only receive 7 with the repeated water tests? I can no longer trust anything the water company says and Troy is supposed to be the technical expert.

Questions for Water Commission:

- 1) Please explain how Troy can state that I was being undercharged based on the water tests?
- 2) Is the Water Company aware of other instances where a meter was charging too much, despite Troy's assurances that this has never happened?
- 3) Please explain why the neighborhood was told that I water was safe to drink and we passed all tests, and then a couple months later we are told that we have to upgrade our water system or else we would be compelled to do so?
- 4) Isn't it true that when the water utility company intentionally increased the amount of chlorine used, that there is a direct correlation to the increase in carcinogen byproducts?
- 5) Was it possible for the Water Utility Company to manipulate the failure in the water tests by increasing the amounts of chlorine used to try and prevent black water?
- 6) What were the specific measurements that failed and how much chlorine was utilized during those periods measured?

Please let me know if you have any further questions. I can be reached at (614) 406-7442.

Respectively,

Chuck Totten