

Antonia Hover

From: Antonia Hover on behalf of Records Clerk
Sent: Wednesday, December 9, 2020 5:26 PM
To: 'Jennings Neeld'
Cc: Consumer Contact
Subject: RE: Lake Yale Utilities Docket No. 20200169-WS

Good Afternoon, Ms. Neeld.

We will be placing your comments below in consumer correspondence in Docket Number 20200169, and forwarding them to the Office of Consumer Assistance and Outreach.

Thank you!

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

From: Jennings Neeld <neeld3@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 9, 2020 4:54 PM
To: Records Clerk <CLERK@PSC.STATE.FL.US>
Subject: Lake Yale Utilities Docket No. 20200169-WS

Please see the attached letter from the Sandpiper Manor Co-op Board regarding the proposed rate increase by Lake Yale Utilities.

Thank You,
Jennings Neeld
President
Sandpiper Manor Co-op Board



Phone: (352) 357-6923

Fax: (352) 357-9555

Jennings Neeld – President
Cindy Coe – Secretary
Tome Miller – Member
William Cartwright - Member

Jim Dallas – Vice President
Joe Ingraham – Treasurer
John Carter – Member

December 9, 2020

Office of the Commission Clerk
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850

Dear Commissioners,

This letter by Sandpiper Manor Co-op Board is in response to the rate increase requested by Lake Yale Utilities, LLC, Docket No. 20200169-WS.

Sandpiper Manor is a 55+ community, with both year-round as well as season residents, with the majority being year-round. Furthermore, the majority of residents are on fixed income (Social Security) and the proposed increase as written will be more than many will be able to afford.

The proposed increases, *for residential water* will call for an increased rate from about 40% to nearly 90%, based on water usage; 3,000 gallons (39.8%), 6,000 gallons (66%) and 8,000 gallons (87.2%).

The proposed increases, *for residential sewer* will call for an increased rate from about 100% to nearly 128%, based on water usage; 3,000 gallons (99.9%), 6,000 gallons (128%) and 8,000 gallons (90%).

For a combined total, in the proposed increases, *for residential water and sewer* will call for an increased rate from about 73% to nearly 101%, based on water usage; 3,000 gallons (72.5%), 6,000 gallons (100.8%) and 8,000 gallons (88.8%).

Please see the following example:

Description	Usage	Old Rate	New Rate	Old Amount	New Amount	Difference	% Increase
Water Rate	5,000	\$1.89	\$3.89	\$ 9.45	\$19.45	\$10.00	105.8%
>5,000	367	\$1.89	\$5.63	\$ 0.69	\$ 2.14	\$ 1.45	208.5%
Base Household meter charge				\$10.35	\$10.73	\$ 0.38	3.7%
Base Sewer Charge				\$10.86	\$13.90	\$ 3.04	28.0%
Sewer Charge (10,000 gal cap)		\$2.77	\$8.14	\$14.87	\$43.69	\$28.62	193.9%
GRAND TOTAL				\$46.22	\$89.91	\$43.69	94.5%

Likewise, even though the water is tested annually, because of the water quality being so bad, many of the residents within the Sandpiper Manor community drink bottle water versus tap water. Thus, the need to spend additional funds to purchase drinking water, (\$12.00 to \$24.00 per month).

Since the time that Lake Yale Utilities took over the operation for the water and sewer system, in 2017, for our community, the service which we were used to the past has continued to deteriorate. Prior to utility company being taken over, requests for service and/or assistance was quite responsive. However, since the takeover, the responsiveness has left much to be desired.

The fence surrounding the water tank and water building on Sandpiper Manor property was collapsing and had become a safety hazard. The post in the ground had rotted; the fence itself was falling over and had to be propped up in places.

In early 2019, because of the safety hazard, the Sandpiper Manor Co-op Board began discussions with Mr. Smallridge of Lake Yale Utilities for the removal and replacement of the fence. The response from Mr. Smallridge was the undertaking of such a project could take up to year as he would have to apply bfor to the utility commission at the state for permission to spend the money to replace the fence.

As this was identified as a safety hazard, it was the responsibility of the board to rectify the issue, in order for it not to be a liability within the community. Mr. Smallridge did not appear to be concerned with the urgency with which we needed to resolve the issue. The Board offered to immediately replace the fence and asked Mr. Smallridge to split the cost as it did protect the water tank and water company's building.

It should be noted that water tank and water building are at the entrance to our community. It is directly behind our Sandpiper Manor sign thus they are both very visible to everyone who enters our community. The water building itself was also in disrepair.

In places around the building the soffit was falling down and needed to be put back up. Furthermore, the building itself needed to be painted as it was an eye sore. This too was discussed with Mr. Smallridge at the same time as we discussed the fence.

In July 2019, when the board had not heard back from Mr. Smallridge, regarding the fence, the safety hazard was taken care of in order for it to not liability. The cost to replace the fence was \$3,656. When the board notified Mr. Smallridge he became angry that we had replaced the fence on our own and tried to intimidate the board member.

And just like the fence, the board had to take measures in its own hands to ensure the building was brought up to an acceptable standard. The soffits were repaired before the painting could occur. The board purchased the paint and hired a painter to complete the necessary work. The painter prepped and painted the building the same color as the clubhouse and maintenance building to assure consistency within the community. This was an additional cost to community of \$742.

In November 2019 Lake Yale Utilities was notified regarding a leak before two meters near the clubhouse in front of 1414 Azalea Drive. On numerous occasions the utilities office was notified of the leak with no response. However, on December 7, 2020, someone from the utility company arrived and has begun to repair the leak. Would you even consider this responsive service? I think not.

On several occasions Lake Yale Utilities have been notified regarding the pump cycling over and over, much more than it should. The residents who live next door to and across the street from the water building have made numerous calls to Lake Yale Utilities to report the pump noise. Each were told that is normal and it should cycle off within a few minutes. However, that is not the case. Each resident has stated that the pump motor has cycled for up to 24 hours. In each case and each incident, no one has been seen visiting the water building to check out the issue. This is not something we as a community would expect as a non-response from the utilities for such an abnormality.

In addition, the board has issues with the staff analysis. The staff analysis addressed staffing the facility. Since the take over in 2017, there has not been anyone staffed locally. It wasn't until recently (the last six months) that we have seen someone working at the water building in Sandpiper.

The staff analysis states that the community is a "seasonal community." This is incorrect. At least 42% of the residents in Sandpiper Manor are year-round Florida residents.

One other reason we are not in favor of the rate increase is the rate decisions involve considerations of equity as well as efficiency. We have many low-income households in our community, especially widows and widowers who are on fixed incomes. Should the commission approve such an astronomically high rate increase, many residents of our community may face affordability problems.

And lastly, two other things that need to be noted:

1. Those residents who are seasonal, continue to receive a water bill each month of approximately \$22.50, even without any water usage.
2. The vacant lots in our community, and we ten, are billed \$21.21 each month and there is certainly not any water consumed on those lots as the meter is locked.

We understand the Staff Assisted Rate Case, however, we strongly believe that the staff analysis should have done a better job at scrutinizing the performance of Lake Yale Utilities. It has been frustrating to deal with an unresponsive provider and poor water quality, which then necessitates the residents to purchase bottled water for drinking.

Additionally, in so far as the data which was provided to the Commission regarding expenses, staffing, and the capital purchases we have no means by which to validate or even verify the numbers presented. We can say that we have not seen the equipment in question nor have we seen the staff in a regular basis.

And lastly, I fully believe that residents of Sandpiper will address the Commission on the appointed date and time because we want to assure that our concerns are fully and fairly addressed.

Sincerely,
Jennings Neeld
Sandpiper Manor Co-op
Board President