

Antonia Hover

From: Antonia Hover on behalf of Records Clerk
Sent: Thursday, April 18, 2024 3:38 PM
To: 'MARY CHROW'
Cc: Consumer Contact
Subject: RE: RE. Docket #20240032-SU

Good Afternoon, Mary Chrow.

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

Thank you!

Toni Hover

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

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From: MARY CHROW <mchrow@comcast.net>
Sent: Thursday, April 11, 2024 12:07 PM
To: Records Clerk <CLERK@PSC.STATE.FL.US>
Cc: Office of Chairman La Rosa <Commissioner.LaRosa@psc.state.fl.us>; Office of Commissioner Clark <Commissioner.Clark@psc.state.fl.us>; Office of Commissioner Passidomo <Commissioner.Passidomo@psc.state.fl.us>; Office of Commissioner Graham <Commissioner.Graham@PSC.STATE.FL.US>; Office of Commissioner Fay <Commissioner.Fay@psc.state.fl.us>
Subject: RE. Docket #20240032-SU

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Clerk of the Commission and Commissioners,

RE: Objection to Central Sewer Palm Island, Placida, Florida

I am the property owner of 411 Bocilla Drive, Placida, Florida located on Don Pedro Island/Bocilla Island, and I am writing to strongly object to the application by the private company Environmental Utilities (EU) to the Public Service Commission for the installation of a central sewer system as well as wastewater service on Palm Island, Placida, Florida in Charlotte County.

Our barrier islands are located in the officially designated Rural Service Area with long-standing on-site approved and mandated private septic systems. Now, a private company with no prior sewage/central sewage expertise is applying to force all residents to abandon existing approved septic systems regardless of age into a costly sub-standard low-pressure system which will require costly initial hook-up (studies show tens of thousands of dollars), new electrical panels, ongoing pumping out, and even generator costs to run the low-pressure system in times of power outage.

I, together with the majority of our Palm Island neighbors, respectfully ask the Commission to deny the central sewer and wastewater service applications by private firm Environmental Utilities (EU).

I highlight the numerous challenges posed by central sewer including, irreparable and devastating environmental impact and damage, mandatory compliance, private property infringement, no grand-fathering of current septic systems, high and ongoing escalating costs of maintenance, and years of traffic congestion and destruction to property and roads.

No Need for Central Sewer

There has been no evidence provided that supports a need for service in the proposed service area. No water quality testing has been done in our area to prove a need for central sewer. Residents and taxpayers will have to bear the increased costs for mandatory hook-up as Charlotte County regulations require all homes to connect to central water and wastewater within one year of availability. In addition, residents and taxpayers are not permitted grand-fathering of current septic systems no matter the age or condition. Most utility easements are placed in the road right-of-way and the applicant EU is mandating a new utility easement that will encumber private property mandated through the connection agreement without compensation to the homeowner. Some properties have physical constraints that will complicate how the applicant gains access to the property without leaving the boundaries or damaging the grounds.

Financial Impact

The costs of central sewer, including initial hook-up, monthly fees, and ongoing maintenance fees/related costs, are quite considerable and burdensome at a very bad time for Islanders. Many are still engaged with their insurance companies for settlements from Hurricane Ian and have had to lay out large sums for their rebuilds while they wait for compensation. Some owners have just paid large sums ranging from \$20,000 - \$35,000, to install new septic systems at their newly built or re-built homes. Salt air takes a heavy toll on mechanical and electrical equipment here. Central sewer equipment will need replacing when it fails, possibly at five-year intervals. This proposal places too much responsibility on the homeowner at too great a cost. Most property owners on the island simply do not have the resources available to convert from septic to sewer.

Environmental Destruction

Palm Island, including Knight Island, Thornton Key, Bocilla Island, Don Pedro State Park, and Little Gasparilla Island comprise some of the most stunningly beautiful, pristine, and preserved barrier islands along Florida's Gulf coast. In particular, our anchor 'tenant', the island-based portion of Don Pedro State Park, demands that the rural nature - the Rural Service Area as we are designated - of the island is something to be treasured and preserved for generations to come. This proposed Central sewer which would run through the entire barrier island, its preserves, and directly through the State Park will ultimately lead to increased development and high-density waterfront development, ultimately ravaging the preserves, wildlife, and natural habitat that Don Pedro State Park on the island now offers to nature enthusiasts, paddlers, kayakers, hikers, and families. The negative environmental impact of central sewer will have devastating long-term consequences for the county residents and the greater public's enjoyment of Don Pedro State Park and its island surroundings. As a responsible neighbor of the Park along with my other island neighbors, we ask

the Commission to deny this central sewer application as it will ultimately destroy the integrity of this treasured park. This project brings the potential for the destruction of habitat and interference with endangered species such as the gopher tortoise across the entire island, including the surrounding aquatic life. Also, the high risk of a central sewer leak with a subaqueous crossing is greater than the risk of one or more septic systems developing leaks. The applicant has not addressed how the system will be serviced in the event of failure during frequent storms or other adverse conditions and has no previous expertise in such matters.

Traffic Disruption/Road & Property Destruction

Vehicles have only one point of entry/egress via the car ferry. With normal traffic, service, and construction trucks, delays at the ferry line can be an hour or more. This project will result in years of traffic issues. The combination of post-storm rebuilds, new home construction, and tourist traffic during the season has made wait lines at the ferry both unpredictable and unwieldy. Now, consider the ongoing damage to our roads and property due to the heavy equipment and materials transport needed to construct an island-wide central sewer system - let alone the more frequent pumping out of the low-pressure central sewage tanks that will be required.

In closing, I implore the Public Service Commission to hear the voices of the **majority** of our islander residents, taxpayers, state park visitors, and our year-round visitors to the island who are dedicated to protecting and preserving this unique environment and habitat to reject the application of the in private enterprise Environmental Utilities, which has no sewage/wastewater expertise, for a central sewer and wastewater service on/for Palm Island, Placida in Charlotte County.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Chrow (property owner)
411 Bocilla Drive
Placida, Florida 33946