

**WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON NOVEMBER 26, 2013
IN THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING ROOM
ROOM 103, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
ARCADIA, FLORIDA**

The Board of County Commissioners held a Utilities Workshop on November 26, 2013 with the following persons present:

Commissioner, Buddy Mansfield, Dist#1
Commissioner, James Selph, Dist#2
Commissioner, Gabriel Quave, Dist#3
Chairman, Elton Langford, Dist#4
Commissioner, Bob Miller, Dist#5
County Administrator, Guy Maxcy
County Attorney, Don Conn
County Coordinator, Mandy Hines
Admin. Services Director, Linda Nipper

Office Manager, Lauri Jones
Purchasing Director, Cindy Talamantez
Transcribing Secretary, Jill Thompson
Road & Bridge Director, Shawn Edwards
Utilities Director, Eddie Miller
HR Director, Don Kesterson
Utility Coordinator, Donna Smith
Sheriff, Will Wise

CALL TO ORDER

Administrative Costs

Eddie Miller spoke regarding issues that are not addressed in the Ordinance. The current late fees do not cover administrative costs or postage. Mr. Miller suggested updating the late fee to a flat \$25.00 to match what the City of Arcadia currently charges. The cutoff service for non-payment allows a 20 day window. Mr. Miller suggested changing the billing notices from a postcard size to a full page which would allow for additional information and eliminate mailing a second notice.

Commissioner Miller feels there needs to be an incentive for people to pay their bill. A late charge should not be a revenue source but should encourage one to pay their bill. He feels that a \$25.00 late charge is a little too high.

Commissioner Mansfield feels the fee needs to be high enough so that people will pay their bill on time.

Eddie Miller stated he will bring back to the Board the actual costs.

Donna Smith stated that occasionally bills are processed three times, depending on the situation. She feels the \$25.00 fee would cover the administrative fees.

Commissioner Selph commented that the \$25.00 is a penalty and not to cover costs.

Commissioner Quave agrees with the flat rate choice. He does not agree with the amount of \$25.00 but feels an incentive is needed.

Deposits

Eddie Miller stated that currently the amount charged for a deposit is \$80.00 for water and \$80.00 for wastewater. Typically the Lake Suzy residents use a higher amount of water and wastewater than local customers which results in a higher amount of debt write-off. The additional deposits would compensate for some of the write-offs. He commented that a \$125.00 deposit fee would be a reasonable amount.

Commissioner Miller questioned if the deposit fees would be different for residential and commercial?

Connection Fees

Eddie Miller stated the connection fees were increased due to a 5% increase in short service and long service. Further discussion was had regarding payment of the connection fees. Linda Nipper stated the safest method regarding payment of connection fees would be through special assessment on each property in the event that it is sold or changes hands. Further discussion was had.

Connect/Disconnect Fees

Eddie Miller stated there were no previous connection fees for wastewater due to service was not offered. He proposed to increase disconnect and connection fees to \$50.00 for normal business hours and \$90.00 after business hours.

Leak Detection & Meter Re-Reads

Mr. Miller proposed an increase in leak detection and meter rereads which would result in a fee of \$30.00. There are generally 3-4 leak detection requests from customers per month following the billing cycle. Further discussion was had regarding leak detection.

Mr. Conn commented that he did not see a legal issue if a customer continued to call regarding leak detection. He suggested if there are an excessive amount of calls from a customer during a 12 month period, the charge would increase. Further discussion was had regarding meter re-reads.

Commissioner Mansfield suggested a charge of \$30.00 for leak detection and \$30.00 for meter re-reads.

Fire Hydrant Flow Testing

Eddie Miller stated this is mainly for commercial sites or locations that have several fire hydrants around the perimeter. He proposed a monthly charge to help recover costs of flow testing. Currently there is no method of monitoring how much water is used during a flow test. Further discussion was had regarding flow test monitoring. The purpose of the flow testing is to confirm the equipment, gauges and fire sprinkler system is functioning correctly. Mr. Miller would like to be notified when flow testing is scheduled at any location.

Backflow Prevention Devices

Eddie Miller stated that this is what prevents the water coming from the house back into the County's system. It protects the water quality and supply. There is currently a \$5.00 charge for backflow devices. Mr. Miller suggested a rate fee schedule that would be based on pipe size.

Fats, Oils and Grease (FOG) Program

Eddie Miller would like to have a graduated fee and re-check schedule for violations. Currently there are customers who continue disposal of fats, oils and grease down the drain.

Commissioner Mansfield commented this issue is a serious problem and would like to see a more regulated method of monitoring the disposal. He would also like an estimate of the cost to pull and clean a clogged valve from the system. Alex Shannon stated the cost is approximately \$1,200.00.

Staffing

Eddie Miller stated currently there are 15 people on staff in the Utilities Department. With the Acquisition of Lake Suzy, there are approximately 701 customers. There is not a sufficient number of staff to service this amount of customers. There is an increase in volume of the monthly and daily service orders, re-reads, disconnect, re-connects and billing issues. There will also be a vacant position due to retirement. Mr. Miller requested that the Board allow the hire of a trainee for the impending vacant position.

Chairman Langford requested that Mr. Maxcy present this issue to the Board during today's regular Board Meeting.

Additional Issues/Challenges

Eddie Miller stated there is only one person that is trained for the Instrumentation Control Technician position. This person services all of the electronic controls and motors in the Utilities Department. This position requires a full-time employee. Phase II of the US 17 Project will create a need for additional staff. Further discussion was had regarding additional staffing. The three new positions requested are included in the 2014 budget.

Mr. Miller informed the Board of recent staff accomplishments.

US 17 Phase III will present issues such as; water pressure and quality of the southwest side of the city, the US 17 corridor has a number of dilapidated buildings and the expansion will help bring in new business which will clean up the corridor. Private wells along the US 17 corridor have poor water quality and Radionuclide levels exceed the maximum contaminate levels. The Extension will provide a clean sustainable supply of fresh water to constituents. Mr. Miller also reviewed radium testing results.

Commissioner Quave confirmed with Mr. Miller that the County would not go over budget in order to fill the requested positions and changes in staffing, although they are included in the budget. Mr. Miller replied that the last slide will address his concern.

Another challenge is an accelerated construction timeline. Mr. Miller stated that FDOT may not allow the County to expand at a later date. The cost could more than double, inconvenient for property owners, sidewalks and driveways would be torn up and disturbed a second time, the County may have to purchase easements from CR 760-A to the City of Arcadia, and no utility expansion in the southwest region. Commissioner Selph stated that we can either pay the price later or proceed with the expansion now.

Mr. Miller stated reasons why he felt the City/County Interconnect would be a win, win for both City and County.

Mandy Hines presented water and wastewater funding options. There are two application submitted, which there will be no concrete answers until the end of the process. Further discussion was had. Everything will happen all at the same time. The contract will have a provision that gives the County a 5 day out clause, which will allow the County 5 days to walk away. Mr. Conn stated that all the provisions should be in the document and an advance notice should meet all the requirements.

Future DCU Projects

- US 17, Phase III Water and Wastewater Line Extension from CR 760-A to Heard Street
- Lettuce Lake Travel Resort and Oak Haven Mobile Home and RV Park – Watermain Extension
- Lake Suzy Forcemain Extension Project, Phase I and Phase II
- Decommission Lake Suzy WWTP
- Big Tree RV Resort – Wastewater connection
- Orange Blossom RV Park – Water and Wastewater connection
- Arcadia Village – potential Wastewater connection
- The McClure Company, new development along Highway 70 and SR 31 – Water and Wastewater connection
- Toby's RV Resort – Water and Wastewater connection
- DeSoto Automall – Water connection
- Horizon Motorcoach – Water and Wastewater connection
- CSX Watermain Extension Project
- CSX / Hull Road Watermain Realignment Projects
- SunnyBreeze Palms Golf Resort – Motor Coach Park

- Reef and Beef Restaurant – Water and Wastewater connection
- 50's Diner – Water and Wastewater connection
- Lake Suzy – Kingsway Cottage Project (31 new homes) – Water and Wastewater connection
- Nocatee Church of God – Water and Wastewater connection
- First Baptist Church of Nocatee – Water and Wastewater connection
- Kingsway Golf Course Project – redirect sewer flow directly to the DeSoto County Regional WWTP from Charlotte County Utilities
- Vegetable Packing House on 760-A – Water connection
- DCIWWTP Upgrades
- Working with County Coordinator with possible Block Grant opportunities


ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Langford adjourned the workshop at 10:55 AM.

ATTEST:



C. GUY MAXCY
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSION
DESOTO COUNTY, FLORIDA**


ELTON A. LANGFORD
CHAIRMAN