



Project Administration Department

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Memorandum

Date: May 24, 2024
To: Mark LeCouris, City Manager
From: Bob Robertson, P.E. Project Administration Department Director
Subject: Bayshore Drive Septic to Sewer – Response to 5/21/24 Comments and Concerns from Mrs. Goldman

The following information is provided in response to an email inquiry from Mrs. Tonia Goldman, received by you and the Board of Commissioners on May 21, 2024. The questions in her original email are provided below in their entirety and original formatting. Responses from the City to each question (or group of questions) are provided in a green font for clarity. Some items will require additional research and/or follow-up as indicated herein.

This response along with previous responses to homeowner inquiries has been posted on the City's project website at <https://www.ctsfl.us/bayshore-drive-septic-to-sewer-project/> for public access.

Comment #1 from Mrs. Goldman

OMISSIONS

Florida State Statute 381.00655 (1)(a) states "The publicly owned or investor- owned sewerage system must notify the owner of the onsite sewage treatment and disposal system of the availability of the central sewerage system. No less than 1 year prior to the date the sewerage system will become available, the publicly owned or investor-owned sewerage system shall notify the affected owner of the onsite sewage treatment and disposal system of the anticipated availability of the sewerage system and shall also notify the owner that the owner will be required to connect to the sewerage system within 1 year of the actual availability."

Source: handout at May 6, 2024 meeting by Bob Robertson, Project Administration, City of Tarpon Springs

The first omission: by this statute and City reckoning of completion of project, residents should have been notified in November 2023 of the impending

sewerage project. In fact residents were made aware on or around April 23 by the contractor's representative asking for equipment location. Notice from the City about the project came days later in an undated flyer titled "Notice of Construction."

Second omission: Notice that the owner will be required to connect came for the first time with the above cited "Notice of Construction" as #11 in the City's FAQ sheet, also undated, and delivered end of last week of April.

City Staff Response:

City Ordinance 20-22 includes the 365-day notice requirement after the project construction is complete and the system is available and able to receive connections. It has not been updated to include the 1-year pre-construction availability notice as stated in Florida State Statute 381.00655. Although funding for the project was publicly allocated at a Board of Commissioners meeting of February 22, 2022, formal public notice had not been issued at that time. So, as stated in previous communications, the City is working with the City Attorney on the mandatory connection deadline in accordance with both City and State requirements to maximize the time required for mandatory connections. This has not yet been finalized. Additional information and clarification on this will be coming soon.

Comment #2 from Mrs. Goldman

CONTRADICTIONS

First contradiction on cost:

#6 of the City's FAQ sheet answers the question "How much does it cost to connect?" but lists only the costs the resident pays the City, some \$2,000.

Only when we get to #8 of the FAQ sheet do we see that there is plumbing, grinder pump purchase and installation cost as well. And only when we read the separate 2022 Alternatives Analysis do we see the projected cost to each household at \$15,000. This analysis was made available online only on May 8, per the memo to residents from Mark LeCouris on that same date.

Second contradiction on funding for residents' expense:

Residents were told during the May 6 meeting that there is no grant funding available for residents' expense, yet it is widely reported in the Tampa Bay Times that Hillsborough County is using grant funds to pay their residents' installations.

By May 9/10 the City announces that it has indeed found a grant source and is applying for \$500K.

Related third contradiction on funding:

The 2022 Analysis pegs each household's expense at \$15,000. There are 60 households involved, with a total of \$900,000. Why apply for only half the amount needed?

City Staff Response:

As stated in a recent update document, the City engineering consultant's estimate used a conservatively high number for the projected household cost. Recent research by City staff as posted on the City project page indicates the typical cost may be on order of \$11,500 to abandon an existing septic tank, install a grinder pump unit with electrical, install pipeline and connect it to the City's LPSS force main, and pay City impact and connection fees. By comparison, a typical connection to a gravity sewer system is estimated to be approximately \$6,500. City impact and connection fees (approximately \$2,000) have several financing options available.

At the May 6, 2024, meeting, no grant funding had been granted to the City other than the ARPA funds to fund the construction of the project. Eligibility for additional grants had not yet been determined by the May 6 meeting, so we were unable to affirm grant funding availability. Since that time staff has worked to confirm eligibility for an FDEP Water Quality Improvement grant, received an endorsement letter from Pinellas County, increased the grant funding request to \$550,000, and submitted the application to the FDEP. It is anticipated that grant funding availability will be determined long before any sewer connection deadlines.

To be fair and equitable, the amount of grant funding that was applied for was intended to provide supplemental funding to homeowners through a rebate program for costs that would exceed the cost of a typical gravity sewer connection (i.e. the cost of grinder pump unit and electrical connection). The grant application anticipates and requests funding for up to 100 households (i.e. up to \$5,500 per household) to account for North Bayshore, South Bayshore, and homeowners in the Central Bayshore that have previously connected to the existing LPSS system as well as other potentially impacted homeowners. If the grant is approved, additional information regarding eligibility and rebate procedures will be distributed to homeowners.

Comment #3 from Mrs. Goldman**MISINFORMATION****On cost of grinder pump**

Again, #8 of the City's FAQ sheet states that a grinder pump can be had for \$400.

An internet search of current state of the art pumps yields very different pricing:
<https://www.rcworst.com/myers-vrf20a-21-vr2-residential-submersible-grinder-pump-2-0-hp-230v-1-ph-automatic-20->

[cord.html?feed=Froogle&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw6auyBhDzARIsALlo6v8HGsl7X-MdouIG32OhrXokl3vS4n3HhMs4UuSOE58--2QwVGJy9kaApMhEALw_wcB](https://www.froogle.com/gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw6auyBhDzARIsALlo6v8HGsl7X-MdouIG32OhrXokl3vS4n3HhMs4UuSOE58--2QwVGJy9kaApMhEALw_wcB)
\$2,816.00

or

https://www.septicsolutions.com/septic-parts/submersible-pumps/sewage-grinder-pumps/lsg202a_liberty-omnivore-lsg-200-series-20-hp-grinder-pump
\$1,949

Why promote a lowball pump when there are so many tales of failure and disfunction?

City Staff Response:

The City's FAQ states the following: "Local hardware stores sell them for under \$400." This is a factual statement as shown in the links below. This statement was not intended to indicate that these were the only types of grinder pumps available to homeowners to select.

<https://www.lowes.com/pd/Superior-Pump-Sewage-0-5-HP-Cast-Iron-Sewage-Sump-Pump/1001002920>

<https://www.homedepot.com/p/Superior-Pump-1-2-HP-Sewage-Ejector-Pump-Kit-with-Basin-93020U/308252607>

Comment #4 from Mrs. Goldman

QUESTIONS REMAIN

Why did the City preempt the 2022 Analysis by installing a segment of LPSS sewer on Bayshore to a lift station that served the gravity system in Bayshore Heights?

Why was this work done on such a small section that in-house resources were used? What was the urgency?

City Staff Response:

The impetus for the Bayshore Septic to Sewer project goes back to 2000 when a Citywide *Feasibility Study for Extended Sewer Service within the Service Area of Tarpon Springs* was created by an engineering consultant for the City. The plan outlined a proposed sequence of neighborhoods and areas within the City in which residential septic tanks were in use near vulnerable bodies of water.

After completing several phases in the Lake Tarpon area and completing the Seabreeze Drive area, Bayshore was one of the next project areas on the list. The City's Public Services Department, City Manager's office, and elected officials had been approached frequently about bringing City sewer service to the Bayshore Area.

The Central Bayshore area was selected and prioritized as the first construction phase because it is the only section that is physically able to connect to the existing Bayshore Heights lift station and as a smaller section it was able to be constructed in-house. It is the closest section to the Bayshore Heights lift station, so it was necessary to complete this section first. No other section could have been built without completing this one first.