

**VERO BEACH UTILITIES COMMISSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2021 – 9:30 A.M.
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

PRESENT: Chairman, Jane Burton; Vice Chairman, John Cotugno; Members: Mark Mucher, Judy Orcutt and Indian River Shores Alternate Representative, Chris Hendricks
Also Present: Water and Sewer Director, Rob Bolton, Assistant City Attorney, Jenny Flanigan and Deputy City Clerk, Sherri Philo

Excused Absence: John Sanders

1. CALL TO ORDER

Today's meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. and the Deputy City Clerk performed the roll call.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) August 10, 2021

Mrs. Orcutt made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 10, 2021 Utilities Commission meeting. Mr. Cotugno seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

4. NEW BUSINESS

None

5. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Cotugno said there were several statements made at their last meeting that he felt needed some follow up. He said one (1) statement was regarding the engineering firm selection process for the new Water Reclamation Facility (WRF). He felt that because this was such an important project, that the Commission should be given a report more often.

Mr. Rob Bolton, Water and Sewer Director, reported that the City is in negotiations for the costs to do the engineering work and all the other ancillary things that are associated with the construction of the new WRF with the firm that was chosen through the bid and interview process. Staff hopes to have this before the City Council in October.

Mr. Cotugno said another statement made was that the City was not going to do a rate study until the Indian River Shores (IRS) situation was settled. He said that based on previous information supplied to the Commission he knows that the new WRF would be like a module where they could add and subtract capacity. He asked based on that information and that the rate study is not going to be done until after the first of the year, how does that impact the design.

Mr. Bolton said it shouldn't because the design process would take at least a year. The rate study would probably start after the first of the year. He explained that there are three (3) components to the project, which are the design and construction, the financing plan, and the rate study. As they get further into the design they would do another cost evaluation, which would be something that the rate study would take into consideration.

Mr. Cotugno said that he is concerned about when those numbers would be available because they impact the ratepayers.

6. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

Mrs. Burton reported that she made a presentation to the City Council at their August 17, 2021, meeting regarding adding stormwater to the Utilities Commission responsibilities. The Council agreed, however the Commission would not have any say regarding rates.

Ms. Jenny Flanigan, Assistant City Attorney, reported that the City Council directed the City Attorney's office to draft an Ordinance, which would be heard at the September 21, 2021, City Council meeting. She noted that the City Council has not taken any official action on this yet.

7. MEMBER'S MATTERS

A) Discussion on the Septic Tank Pumping Inspection Report and Power Point Presentation "Septic Systems 101"– Requested by Mrs. Judy Orcutt

Mrs. Orcutt reported that at their last meeting there was some discussion regarding the septic tank inspection report and that they might be able to implement a stronger rule than what the State has. She then gave some history of the septic systems in Florida. She reported that prior to 1983 the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Agency (FDEP) showed that a reasonable density to protect water quality was one (1) septic system per acre. At that time, there was a lot of pressure from big development companies to accommodate new development so the State of Florida took septic permitting and regulations away from what was then called the Florida Department of Environmental Regulations (FDER) and transferred the control to the Florida Department of Health (FDH). Therefore, it shifted the focus away from water quality to human health concerns. In 1983 when that transfer occurred it resulted in septic system densities of five (5) to eight (8) per acre. Now they are redirecting the permitting and the regulation of septic tanks back to FDEP with the focus of water quality protection. The FDEP is currently going through the rule making process. She then gave a Power Point presentation (attached to the original minutes). She referred to the question on the Septic Tank Pumping Inspection Report, "*Prior to pumping, was the liquid level in the tank above the outlet tee.*" (report attached to the original minutes). She said to her that is a failure. She then referred to the question, "*Prior to pumping, was the liquid level in the tank below the outlet tee.*" She said that would tell her that there is a hole in the bottom of the tank. The next question states, "*While pumping the tank, did effluent flow back into the septic tank from the absorption system.*" Again, that is another failure. She asked the Commission members to look over the report prior to their next meeting. To her it seemed like some of the

questions were to gather information and some of them were a no brainer that there is a failure and they should connect.

B) Report on the Central Springs / East Coast Regional Water Supply Plan (2020 – 2040) / St. Johns River Water Management District – Requested by Mrs. Judy Orcutt

Mr. Bolton reported that the Water Supply Plan came out about one (1) month ago. He attended the Indian River Soil and Water Conservation (IRSWC) meeting yesterday and on their agenda were some letters that were forwarded to the St. John's River Water Management District, one (1) from the IRSWC and one (1) from Clean Water Coalition (CWC). He reported that they were kind of complaining that the Plan didn't address Indian River County. It was suggested at the meeting that Indian River County should look into doing their own water supply rather than relying on the State.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:11 a.m.

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