

TOWN HALL MEETING
May 16, 2008
Called by Commissioner Bob Janes

Presenters were: Jim Lavender, Director of Public Works; Pete Eckenrode, Community Development; Scott Cougar, Attorney; Doug Meurer, Utilities Director; Thom Osterhout, Senior Manager of Development; Scott Gilbertson, DOT; Randy Surgeon, Construction.

Attended by approximately 100 people including Phil Buchanon, Cathy Hendrickson, M&M Dave Lukasek, Leo Amos, George Miller, Anna Stober, Carlyn Herring, Bob & Suzie Johnson, Marilyn Porthouse, Eileen Feldman, Hanna and Jim Ashfield, Jim Cole, Bob Sofranko, Chris Trost, Bill Mantis, Bill Thacher, Lisa Benton, Sally Tappager, and many others.

There was no agenda and 95% of the two hours was spent discussing sewers on P.I.

FACT 1: A permit has been approved for The Highpoint Tower Industries Bokeelia Harbor Resort on Bocilla Island in Bokeelia for 22 buildings, a 1000 ft. clubhouse, pool, 156 seat restaurant (will be redone), a 12 room hotel, and covered parking. A Development Order for the residential portion of the forced main (in the resort) has been approved.

FACT 2: Lee County will not issue permits for package septic plans for Pine Island because history shows they fail and the county wants to protect the environment and maintain quality. Package plans are regulated by the Public Service Commission.

FACT 3: You cannot go under pavement with a forced main. You can only go under pavement with a gravity system.

Therefore, their (Highpoint Tower) proposed system will have to be a combination of both, i.e., a forced main in the resort then a lift station for a gravity system before it goes under Main Street and becomes a gravity system. There may be another lift station at Bocilla Island Club and then a gravity system, etc.

FACT 4: Lee County has not received a Development Order or permit request from Highpoint Tower Industries for a force water or gravity system for Main Street. They have only requested a letter of availability from Lee County.

FACT 5: The BOCC wanted to get going now and have a system in place. Lee County has a Master Plan for a sewer system on Pine Island and is prepared to upgrade any sewer pipe to a 12-inch diameter up Stringfellow.

FACT 6: A Development Order is good for six years.

FACT 7: If a gravity system is going to be in the right-of-way, a permit must be issued and it must be approved by DEP and HRS.

FACT 8: A forced main sewer line currently is operational from St. James City to the Treatment Plant. Lift stations have generators to allow for loss of power.

People did not appear to be opposed to a sewer system. Their concerns were:

MAIN STREET - If Highpoint Tower Industries is permitted to put in the forced water and gravity main and complete the upland project will this open the way for the Seaport? Everyone is in agreement that the Seaport is not environmentally nor strategically appropriate for Bocilla Island because of the narrow road. They were told the Seaport is a separate project. Those living on Main Street are concerned that they will lose some of their property. They argue that Main Street belongs to the residents because it is on their deeds. Lee County claims they maintain it and it belongs to the County.

INSTALLATION COSTS - There are concerns about the costs to install the sewer not only on Main Street but south on Stringfellow to the water treatment plant. Highpoint Tower Industries will pay for 90% of the construction cost of the sewer from the Resort to the Treatment Plant. (Developer must pay 50% up front.) Lee County will pay the remaining 10% to increase the size of the pipe from 6 inches to 12 inches. This will be paid for by a sewer connection fees fund (General Capital Reserve Fund) that is paid by the rest of the county. Therefore, Pine Island will pay nothing to install this sewer. It is a three part system:

1. Collection (gravity)
2. Pump to treatment plant (forced main)
3. Treatment and used for irrigation

MANDATORY HOOKUP - It was questioned if it will be mandatory that all residents hook up to the sewer. Lee County stated that it will be mandatory for any new developments to hook into the sewer. Existing residents will have the option to hook up or remain on septic. However, if the DEP determines that an individual old septic is inefficient or is leaching into canals they can ask the homeowner to dig up the old septic and will have the option to replace it or hook up to the sewer.

INDIVIDUAL HOOKUP COSTS – *Although not stated at the meeting a call was placed to Doug Meurer, Lee County Utilities Director and he related the following costs for a residential connection: Connection fee \$2660, Connection Cost \$1500. This is from the house to the road. A group or neighborhood could get together for the pipe from the sewer forced main to the neighborhood. The County could arrange for a 20 year assessment for those residents to pay for the required lift station (\$10,000) and pipe (\$50 per foot) This may sound expensive but spread over 20 years and x-number of residents it is reasonable considering the main sewer will not be a cost to the Pine Island tax payers.*

SHELL CUT MARINA – There is a Development Order for a water taxi not a marina. A resident who lives within 500 feet was sent a notice that a dredge was requested for a marina with a ramp, 13 slips, water taxi, etc. The notice was given to Pete Eckenrode,

Lee County Community Development, who said he was not aware of it. Mr. Edkenrode said if they want more development they are going to have to do a rezoning.

BOB JANES – There was discussion of the 810-910 Rule and when it was reached. Bob Janes said that development was reduced but you cannot shut down development. He also mentioned that Burt Harris law suits are very expensive. It was noted that we were below the 810-910. Will the county provide development orders for someone who wants to build? The answer was “yes”.

Submitted by:
Marilyn Porthouse, Bokeelia Civic Association