

**East-West Spring Lake Wastewater Pilot Program
Stakeholder Committee Meeting Report
Wednesday, January 30, 2013
2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

On Wednesday, January 30th, Banks Engineering held the first in a series of East-West Spring Lake Wastewater Pilot Program stakeholder committee meeting. Nineteen stakeholders attended the meeting which was convened by Todd Rebol of Banks Engineering and facilitated by Joy Hazell from University of Florida/IFAS/Florida Sea Grant. Stakeholders represented seven community groups including the Chamber of Commerce, Team Punta Gorda, and the Curmudgeon Club. The balance of the committee was filled with 12 residents of the pilot community. The residents were randomly selected to be on the committee from a pool of interested parties. The workshop objectives were to:

- Provide information on the East-West Spring Lake Wastewater Pilot Program
- Gather input from a wide variety of stakeholders on the benefits and concerns of the East-West Spring Lake Wastewater Pilot Program

The workshop began with introductions and an explanation and affirmation of stakeholder committee goals and the meeting objectives. Participants were then asked to share their favorite memory of Charlotte Harbor as a way of establishing common ground. Participants generated ground rules to guide this and subsequent meetings. The ground rules were agreed on by all members of the group and adopted. (Appendix A.) The ground rules included the establishment of a parking lot to record ideas that were important but not directly related to the discussion. (Appendix B.) The parking lot is a record written visibly on a large flip chart of important items, ideas and issues that may be tangential to the discussion or meeting objectives. The items on the parking lot will be addressed later in the discussion or at a follow-up meeting.

Todd Rebol gave a presentation detailing the history and current status of the East-West Spring Lake Wastewater Pilot Program. Participants were given 15 minutes to ask questions which ranged from specifics on when wastewater utility charges would begin to how the program would be funded to more general questions including how residents are supposed to manage current septic problems while the pilot program remains undecided. Many of the participants' questions and answers can be found in a frequently asked questions document:

<http://charlottefl.com/outreach/ccu/Projects/SpringLake/FAQ.pdf>.

Participants were asked to brainstorm benefits and concerns they had about the pilot program assuming it was adopted as is. They wrote their benefits and concerns on individual large sticky notes and hung them on the wall. The facilitator read the benefits and concerns out loud so the group could hear everyone's ideas and for clarification. The results of the brainstorm are listed in Table 1.

The public was also welcome at the meeting and provided their input in writing. Their comments and questions are listed in Appendix C.

Table 1. Results of Program Benefits and Concerns Brainstorm

Benefits	Concerns
Residents able to finance and extend the cost.	Establishing expectations of the cost of replacement may make replacement challenging for future projects
Meets government regulations	Phasing vs. demand
Cleaner harbor	Increased costs of monthly utilities bill and timing of the increase
No more worries about septic	Residential access to their private homes while construction is taking place
Low interest repayment stretched over 20 years	Disruption of street during construction
Financial risk transfer benefits homeowner	Maintenance cost of sewer
For people with families it would help reduce cost of having tanks pumped frequently	Residents not having the option to handle own connection and demo
Long term economic and environmental benefit to homeowner and the county	Initial cost
Abandons existing tanks and drainfields versus low pressure system that still has a tank	Cost for vacant lots
Clean harbor	High cost per unit
Water Quality	Home values decrease while cost of managing wastewater increases – if home values stay down residents won't recoup costs
Increased tourism	Want all people on board so there isn't delays once started
Value increase of your home when finished	Construction planning and methods. Construction professionals should participate during both the conceptual and detail design
Increased property values	Pilot program must be part of a comprehensive program. Doesn't make sense as a standalone program!
Connections completed at the same time	Time it will take to complete the county
House selling value	People seem to be walking away from properties. Who pays the cost of sewers for these properties
\$10,000 over 20 years instead of \$15,000 out of pocket to replace septic system	Cost
Quality of life	Timing for completion
Increased property values	I think many people in this area cannot afford the cost
Would help with foul odors which emanate from tanks not taken care of	If there is a cost overrun who pays
Increase value of the property	Less income now than in the past – how do you expect us to pay for this?

Avoidance of federal mandate as a result of not converting – relinquishing local control	Costs
	Beach closure data is fuzzy so why base project on it?
	Rebates for people with new septic systems

As a final activity participants agreed to next steps including grouping and prioritizing benefits and concerns and proposing solutions to the concerns at the next meeting. They also asked for more information on the following topics:

- Science behind the septic versus sewer debate and which is the better option
- Localities (city/county/community) with similar natural context who have information on water quality prior to conversion to sewer and after conversion to sewer
- A detailed cost breakdown of project
- Potential consequences of not converting
- Cost breakdown of Cape Coral vs. East West Spring Lake

The meeting leader and facilitator agreed to gather the requested information for the February meeting. The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Appendix A. Ground Rules

- Cell phones on vibrate
- No yelling
- Speak in turn
- Be brief
- No side bars
- Stay on point
- Move on when topic is finished
- Listen actively
- Do not interrupt
- Tell the truth
- Use parking lot

Appendix B. Parking Lot

- Has criteria for fecal coliform changed between 2002 and 2012?
- How will the project be financed? – Answer: State Revolving Funds
- What if someone currently has a problem with their septic system, do they have a grace period?
- Is there a possibility of the entire county paying for conversion versus an MSBU?
- MSBU may be better accepted
- Request for a map of Charlotte County with septic and sewer coverage highlighted
- Cost/benefit analysis of the replacement of septic systems with updated ones versus conversion to sewer

Appendix B. Public Comment

- Most residents in this program area have had septic system emptied and inspected five years ago and are being notified by state that their permit is expiring and a new inspection and permit is now required. Why do this if the project is going forward? Will there be some sort of finance consideration or “credit” if this is done – or if a whole new system is required.
- Costs-many vacant lots are just about valued at \$6,000 to sell, adding another \$6,100 would make lots unsellable.
- How is water use (car wash, water lawn etc.) going to be billed? Is it water in/water out billing?
- Where can I see water testing results?
- Concern: suppose that the new system goes in; what will be the monthly or yearly sewer bill on our taxes or is the \$9,900 assessment being discussed the only tax and or billing we will get from the county.
- Wastewater under the present system, especially near the lagoon and canals, is my major concern. The expansion needs to be approved if only to address eventual contamination of all our waterways that will impact the entire area. However, the expansion needs to factor in those residents who have new or

recent septic tanks that can be adapted and connected to whatever expansion project is approved so as to save these residents the extra expense of removing newer septic tanks – say within 5 years and in good condition.

- We wish to be counted as pro-sewer.
- Septic system working fine. Five year inspection good idea. Enforcement should be recorded when repairs are done.