

NEWSLETTER#34

I had intended to write this newsletter immediately after our next PLUS (Port LaBelle Utility System) board meeting but I was told at lunch today by Lester Baird (Hendry County Administrator) that this meeting was postponed because the engineers, for the City of LaBelle, were not ready with their cost report. The report will tell us the cost per gallon for each of the different treatment methods proposed for the combined water treatment plants for Port LaBelle and the City of LaBelle.

This report was asked for at our last board meeting June 28th with only 3 of 5 Board members present. The following is from the minutes of that meeting. Roger Greer (The Utility Director) reported on the 2003/2004 proposed Budget. Each line item was adjusted due to inflation and growth of the community. In this budget were these capital improvements:

- \$80,000 for a new wastewater treatment plant lab with warehouse to house equipment and inventory

- \$60,000 for new utility business office to be located in Port LaBelle

- \$15,600 for electric security gates for the water and wastewater treatment plants

- \$45,000 for emergency 3-phase generator for the lift stations

- \$20,000 for a used panel van as a utility repair vehicle

Salaries were increased 3% for annual cost of living raise and \$20,000 plus benefits was added to the budget for half of the expense of a new employee (a graduate Engineer) to be shared by Hendry County Engineering department and Port LaBelle Utilities.

Harold Reecer asked if the interest from the escrow was being used to fund the new buildings in the budget? He feels it's not fair to use the escrow interest from the lot owners in Banyan Village since they can not benefit from their lot by building a house. Lester Baird stated the people do get a benefit, the study for the water line extension to Banyan Village is being paid from the interest arbitrage.

Terry Kester (Board Member) asked Jennifer Davis (Hendry County Financial Officer) if the Board could get a summary on all investments and accounts for the next meeting. Jennifer said she would have it by the next meeting August 7th.

The next meeting was postponed until August 21st and now until September 11th so if we don't get the results we expect you will hear me where you live because I'm going to write another newsletter with a plan of action and asking for your help.

I'm the Harold Reecer mentioned in the minutes and I am mad as h--- and feel our efforts to get water run to Banyan Village is purposely being held up by the people in charge.

Newsletter#33 was mailed the day after a letter to 2160 lot owners in Banyan Village was sent. The purpose of the letter to Banyan Village was to get the owners to help to get the water lines installed in Units 10, 11, 12 and 13 which is Banyan

Village. The help I asked for was a letter sent to me but addressed to the (BOCC) Hendry County Board of County Commissioners telling them, that you the lot owner have paid into the escrow account and the escrow money was used to install water lines to all lots in Port LaBelle EXCEPT Banyan Village. This was done in 1998 and 1999 and in 2003 nothing has been done so as a lot owner you feel discriminated against.

On February 29, 1996 Hendry County signed the agreement to purchase the Water and Sewer Utilities from General Development Utilities for \$4,500,000 and at the same time Hendry County signed a Utility Transfer Agreement with General Development Utilities and the State of Florida. In this agreement Hendry County agreed to send an annual report to the State telling of the progress during the last year until all lots in Port LaBelle had water lines installed. In this same agreement the County agreed to provide water service to all lots in Port LaBelle in a uniform and non-discriminatory manner. The last report to the State was in 1999 and the County Administrator and County Attorney don't think the County has discriminated against anyone because they didn't run water lines to the Jones lot and not to the Smith lot in the same unit.

A Banyan Village lot owner included in his letter sent to me a letter from Roger B. Greer the Utility Director. This letter from Roger Greer dated January 15, 2002 saying that since the purchase of the Utility on February 29, 1996 the county had installed water lines to 7,118 lots in the Port LaBelle area. Unfortunately due to the low demand for Units 10, 11, 12 and 13 it is not feasible to run water lines to this area. At some time in the future, water lines will be installed to this area. Dates for this project have not been determined at this time. (You know who you are and we all *Thank You*).

This letter seems to state and confirm the negative attitude of the people in charge and until they are forced to run the water lines to Units 10, 11, 12 and 13 nothing will happen.

I don't have a lot in Banyan Village nor any financial connection with anyone that does so what is spent comes out of pocket. Please I'm not crying about the considerable time and money spent to send a letter to all 2160 lot owners in Banyan Village but I feel I'm entitled to at least get a response from everyone doing what is asked to help get water lines to your lot. To date less than 200 have sent the requested letters or E-mail.

(This is by way of clarification for all lot owners. The original name of Port LaBelle was Villages of Port LaBelle so all areas (Units) of Port LaBelle are called Villages. Unit 5 where I live is called Laurel Oak Village, another area is called Country Village, another is Eucalyptus Village and all Units 10, 11, 12 and 13 are called Banyan Village. This information is intended to inform you not to confuse you. For many years now the Villages of Port LaBelle has been shortened to Port LaBelle).

Harold