

April 2, 2008

Dear Editor,

Despite the challenges posed by water supply and wastewater treatment, Port LaBelle still offers Hendry and Glades Counties their most immediate opportunities for growth. With more than 9600 vacant residential lots in Hendry County and another 1600 in Glades County, there's enough space to add 30,000 new residents over the coming decades.

It is true that the presence of shallow cap rock in parts of Banyan Village did add significant costs to the pipe network project, but collecting more soil borings wouldn't have changed the total cost of the project. However, more soils data would have given PLUS advance notice of the expenses it would face, and thus helped with project planning.

Installing septic systems will be more expensive on those lots underlain by shallow, impermeable rock. Unfortunately the Port LaBelle Utility System (PLUS) really can't install or operate a central sewer plant for Banyan Village until there are a sufficient number of occupied homes generating enough wastewater to make it technically feasible. Both the gravity sewer pipes and the treatment plant require a minimum daily volume of wastewater to operate effectively and efficiently.

Because the PLUS governance documents declare that central sewers are to be installed after 33% of lots have houses, some homeowners will face the double expense of installing a costly septic system only to be confronted with an additional sewer system charge soon thereafter. One way PLUS might be able to eliminate or at least moderate this double expense would be to establish a "septic utility system" with combined financing of both onsite septic and a central sewer systems. Whether such a new administrative structure would be possible is highly uncertain, but it is at least worth discussing. Clustered (decentralized) wastewater treatment systems are also an alternative that may be considered.

The Port LaBelle Utility System Citizen Advisory Board pledges to do its best to explore creative solutions as it works to assist the Utility in providing water and wastewater services to current and future residents of Port LaBelle. The public can monitor and provide input to the PLUS Advisory Board at [www.HendryUtilities.com](http://www.HendryUtilities.com). The public is also invited to attend our bimonthly meetings as announced on the web site and in local newspapers.

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Port LaBelle Utility System Citizen Advisory Board