GREATER PINE ISLAND WATER ASSOCIATION, INC.

WATERMARKS

FALL 2008

WATER PLANT UPGRADES

In a continuing effort to provide an adequate water supply for our members, a $300,000 water plant capacity upgrade was completed in February. The upgrade, which was partially funded ($111,738) by a South Florida Water Management District grant, will increase plant capacity by 25% to 3.23 million gallons per day. There are currently four wells supplying water to the GPIWA water plant. In order to take full advantage of the new water plant capacity upgrade, the Board of Directors has approved the addition of a fifth water supply well. Construction of the new well, which will be located just south of the water plant, will begin in October 2008 and has an estimated completion date of April 2009. Like the previous production wells, water from this well will be drawn from a depth of approximately 750 feet. The estimated cost of the well is $930,000, however, a grant from the South Florida Water Management District has been procured and will defray 40% of the construction cost, up to $397,000. With these two water plant upgrades, it is anticipated that GPIWA will have enough production capacity to service the Greater Pine Island area for an additional 10+ years.

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NEIGHBORHOOD WATER LINE UPGRADES

Upgrading of water lines to 8" and the installation of 19 fire hydrants has been completed in the neighborhoods surrounding 7th Avenue, 8th Avenue, Mangrove Street, Sanibel Boulevard, Bayview Avenue, and Warren Avenue in St James City. The final cost of these projects was $940,000. We are pleased to announce that these projects were completed **$177,000 UNDER BUDGET**!! Members in the above mentioned areas should seek a reduction in their homeowner's insurance premiums as the ISO fire rating is anticipated to drop from a 9 to 6. Since 1995, the Association has spent $4.58 million on 12 projects to upgrade island neighborhoods. The average cost per project was $382,000. Currently 14 neighborhoods remain on the upgrade list. It is estimated that it will take an additional $17 million to complete the remaining projects. Charlotte Shores and Matlacha Isles are currently listed one and two on the upgrade priority list. However, in today's economic climate, no date has yet been set for the upgrade construction to continue. A complete priority listing of the 14 neighborhoods scheduled for upgrade can be found on an aerial map in the lobby of the Association's business office.

CENTER PUMP STATION AUTOMATIC BY-PASS VALVE.

An automatic by-pass valve system has been designed and installed at GPIWA's Center Pump Station at a cost of $11,000. The Center Pump station is responsible for supplying water to Matlacha and points East. The by-pass valve is designed to open when there is a power failure at the Center pump station and allow water to flow directly from the main water plant as a back-up supply. The valve is designed to replace the 40+ year-old emergency by-pass pump currently in use, and will save the Association the cost of a new emergency generator ($75,000).

FEMA HURRICANE ASSISTANCE

During the 4 years since Hurricane Charley & Hurricane Wilma hit Pine Island, GPIWA has spent over $3.0 million for system repairs. To date, FEMA has stepped up and reimbursed GPIWA $2,693,137 for those repairs. Coupled with insurance monies, the Association is again structurally and financially sound.

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HIGH USAGE? HOW TO READ YOUR WATER METER

We frequently get requests from customers with large water bills asking for help in finding the source of their high usage. The water meters we use are water driven and will only register usage if water goes through them. Water meters do not "speed up" as they age, but rather slow down and/or stop registering water usage all together. This is why we replace all of the 6,700 water meters in our system about every 10 years .

Before calling the GPIWA business office with questions, you should determine what your current water meter dial reads and have this number ready to give a GPIWA customer service representative. This number is important for our staff to determine if your higher than normal water bill is your problem (leak) or ours (mis-read). GPIWA can send a Water Tech. to your home to get this reading for you, however, a $35.00 charge will be assessed to the member if it is determined that your water meter is reading correctly.

To read your water meter, locate the meter box. Most water meter boxes are located near one of your side property lines in the street easement. It will usually be housed in a black plastic meter box approximately 2' in length and 1' wide and has "Water Meter" inscribed on the lid. The meter box is usually level with the ground. To look in the box, and read your meter, lift up the flap in the middle of the box and pull the meter lid off exposing the face of the water meter. The hinged cap that covers the meter may or may not be in place. If it is covering the white meter face, simply open the hinged cap. If the hinged cap is not in place, you may need to wipe off some dirt from the face of the meter to get a reading.

The meter face has numbers similar to the odometer on your car. Write down all the numbers and then match them up with the last meter reading on your current water bill. Subtract the reading on your last bill from the current meter reading on your water meter to determine how much water, if any, has been used since the last meter reading date. If the reading you get is lower than the last reading on your bill, please call the office since the meter was mis-read. If the reading is higher than the last reading on your bill you will be able to determine how much water has been used. To get the exact amount of water used, multiply the answer to your subtraction by 1,000 (gallons).

LEAK DETECTION

Your water meter has a leak detector. It is a small red, blue, or sometimes silver "star", (asterisk) or "triangle" located on the face of the water meter. While the water meter "odometer" numbers read in 1,000 gallons, and one revolution of the sweep dial reads in 10 gallon units, the leak detector can detect as little as 1 gallon going through your meter.

To determine if you have a leak using the leak detector, first make sure there is no water being used inside or outside of the house. This means, no washing machines, dishwashers, showers, sprinklers, toilets running etc. When you are sure you are not using any water look at the leak detector on your water meter. If the leak detector is turning, water is going through the meter, and you have a leak. If the dial hand is turning you have a big leak. It should be noted that a small amount of back and forth movement (wobbling) of the leak detector is normal due to its sensitivity. However, if the leak detector is turning it indicates a leak in your water system. The two most frequent sources of high water usage and leaks are sprinklers and toilets. Most residents are amazed by the amount of water sprinkling your yard even twice a week uses. Bills of $150 - $300+ a month for outside irrigation are not uncommon.

Excessive water used by a leaking toilet is much harder to detect. Many times a toilet will have a "silent" leak that cannot be heard. To diagnose a leaking toilet tank flapper (the most common cause of toilet leaks) drop a dye tablet (available free at the GPIWA business office) or food coloring in the toilet tank. Let the dye sit in the tank for 30 minutes to a hour. If the water in the bowl turns the color of the dye tablet/food coloring, water is leaking from the toilet tank to the bowl. Usually readjusting the flapper will stop the leak. However, flappers do deteriorate, so if yours is several years old, it may need to be replaced. It would also be a good idea to check the toilet tank fill valve and float for deterioration.

PLEASE KEEP YOUR WATER METER BOX CLEAR OF VEGETATION

Our water meter readers work very hard every month to accurately read the 6,700 water meters in our system. Besides rain and high water tables, meter readers also routinely encounter wasps, bees, spiders, scorpions, and even an occasional snake. In an effort to make their job more manageable, GPIWA would like to remind members that it is your responsibility to make sure your water meter box is accessible and not overgrown with vegetation. When a member's water meter is deemed too overgrown and difficult to read, a letter requesting the area around the meter box be cleared will be sent. If the problem is not rectified before the next time the meter is read, GPIWA will send a crew to clear the overgrown vegetation from around the water meter and a $35 fee will be added to the responsible member's water bill. Your cooperation is appreciated.

WATER LOCKOUTS FOR NON-PAYMENT OF SEWER BILLS

At the request of Lee County, (who grants the Water Association it's franchise rights) an agreement was approved to authorize the Association to shut off the water to members who are delinquent paying their sewer bills to Lee County Utilities (LCU). Should your water be shut off for non-payment of your Lee County sewer bill, you must contact Lee County Utilities (936-0247) directly to resolve your non-payment issues. Water Association staff cannot turn water back out without permission from LCU.

PAYMENT OF WATER BILLS

Most banks now use scanners for processing checks. If you make payment of your water bill by check it is imperative, for accuracy purposes, that you write clearly and legibly the amount of the check – both on the written amount line and in the numerical boxed section. If the scanner cannot read your check this will result in an incorrect amount being posted either to your bank account or your water account.

Management has investigated the use of credit cards, debit cards, and direct on line payments for our customer's convenience. At this time, Management and the Board of Directors have decided not to pursue these types of payments due to the costs to the Association for credit card and bank services. Payment options remain cash, check, money order, auto pay, and check free. "Auto Pay" remains the GPIWA preferred method of payment.

CANDIDATES WANTED FOR 2009 ANNUAL MEETING

The Greater Pine Island Water Association is seeking candidates for seat vacancies &/or seats due for re-election on the Board of Directors to be elected at the Annual Meeting in February, 2009.

Seats due for election/re-election and their respective geographic areas are as follows:

Bokeelia (Pine Island Road & north) – one position for a 3 year term

St James City (Pine Island Road & south) – one position for a 3 year term

At Large (any portion of the service area) – one position for a 2 year term

At Large (any portion of the service area) – one position for a 3 year term

Any member of the Association who resides in the areas eligible for election and who desires to be considered as a candidate should submit a resume to GPIWA, 5281 Pine Island Road, Bokeelia, FL 33922, not later than November 30, 2008. The candidate should indicate the specific seat he/she is applying for and list overall education and experience. Call the office at 283-1071 with any questions.