

Woodfaulk: 'We need to be doing something ASAP'

BUFFALO DR.
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on until 1 a.m.," Peters said, adding that the automatic flushing station "got run over by someone Saturday" despite it being located off the roadway surrounded by traffic cones and marked with tape.

"We got it set back up on Monday, but it is not kicking on until 1 a.m. to 2 a.m. every morning," Peters stated, adding, "We have a game plan in place now. We just have to work out the logistics."

"We need to be doing something ASAP," Councilwoman Venita Woodfaulk urged the council.

When asked for a timeline, Peters responded, "As soon as we can get it done."

"It is a matter of how quickly we can get the materials in, and then whether or not we take on the burden of the work or contract it out," Peters said.

"There are a few different parts to it," City Manager John Hart advised. "We still think there is a well backfeeding into the system. We are going to have to force a backflow preventor onto everyone with a well. It is like shooting a shotgun at a target from 100 yards away."

"It might be one well backfeeding into the system, causing the whole problem. To solve that, we would have to force everyone to put a backflow preventor at their meter. I don't know if that is the perfect solution or not."

Hart said he preferred to run a new 6-inch water line to replace the older, existing 2-inch line serving the Buffalo Drive and Walnut Street neighborhoods to "see if it makes it any better."

"I really don't want to shoot a shotgun and make the whole city do something just to make these few wells stop backflowing," Hart said, adding, "I was hoping FRWA would give us a little more advice, rather than just agreeing to what we already knew."

"This is something

we can not hold off on," Woodfaulk said. "Do you need a motion from us to do whatever we need to do to get this taken care of? Because if not, this is gonna happen every meeting."

Morris stated she had stopped calling city hall "because I felt I was getting nowhere. I feel like I pay my bill and I should not have to keep calling about an issue everyone knows about. It makes me feel like my family is not important."

"I have to take time off of work to be here. It is not right. Why is the issue not being fixed? The water is not good. Not safe for anyone. I would not give it to my animals," she added.

Hart asked Morris to call in each time she noticed a problem "so we can document it when it happens" in an attempt to isolate the problem.

"I am tired. I am a general manager. I have four boys at home who play sports. I have to take time off to call. I have take my son to Jacksonville to the doctor. I should not have to do this. I pay my bill on time and go to work. Why do I need to keep calling about something everyone knows is not right? You can look at where it is being flushed onto the ground. It is brown. This is my second time up here, and no one knows what to do. I don't even have a timeline," Morris said.

Hart asked if he could stop by her home later in the week to observe the issue.

Councilwoman Shirlie Hampton advocated for the city to suspend billing for utilities for those affected by the problem.

"John does not feel the city should compensate customers for our failure. No customer should have to deal with drinking water that is not clean or safe for drinking, bathing or clothes washing," Hampton said. "One said they have been dealing with it for two years. Another says five years. Either way it is unacceptable."

"The city should be held to account and realize this



City Attorney Hope Demps (right) suggested the city consider short-term and long-term relief for City residents Genetris Morris and Anthony Williams, who addressed the Perry City Council regarding water quality issues around Buffalo Drive. "You don't have to wait on [City Manager John Hart] to see if it can happen. You can make a motion. Reimbursement for laundry, water or something. We don't know if her son is sick because of city water, and we don't want a situation where all of our meetings are some sort of discoverable notes as to what has been requested and if we are in any way responsible and derelict in our duties to provide safe water to our citizens," Demps advised the council.

is our responsibility and our constituents have a right to clean drinking water. We need to consider that and get this done as soon as possible," Hampton added. "Do your thing, John. Let's get this done."

"I am not 100% sure this is a city issue," Hart responded.

Mayor Ward Ketring suggested placing a filter on the 2-inch line, but Peters responded, "The issue is not necessarily the 2-inch line. We feel we may have backfeed from a private well. I don't want to go into that too far. I can't confirm that, but if that is what is happening, it means untreated well water is coming into the city line from private wells and causing the problem. The chlorine is having to work harder to disinfect that well water."

Woodfaulk suggested the council pass an ordinance to "get it straightened out," but Peters pointed out there is already an ordinance in place requiring city residents with private wells to install backflow preventors on the line to prevent well water from backfeeding into the city's water main.

However, the city has no way of knowing who has a private well on private property that may be tied into their water line connecting to the city's system.

"I am getting frustrated over this, I really am," Woodfaulk said. "Because it is not fair to her to keep having to take off work and come up here to hear us talking about the same thing. We know she has a problem with her water."

"We do have some wells out there in that area, so we have to come up with some solutions. Every single meeting it is going to keep coming up. We need to deal with this water situation the

same way we paid attention to and took care of Cherry and Ash Street (sewer line repairs)," Woodfaulk said.

"They should not be required to pay for water they can't use while we are in the process of fixing this issue," Hampton said. "We need to do that now."

When asked how the city could determine who may have wells backfeeding into the system, Hart replied, "It is a hard problem to tackle."

"You would have to go on private property. We are the ones responsible to enforce backflow preventors, but we don't have easements on private property, so it is a quandry," City Finance Director Penny Staffney said. "We were hoping FRWA would tell us what our legal rights are."

According to Peters, an "immediate fix" to the problem would be for the city to install backflow preventors on every single address on Buffalo and Walnut, but added, "That is going to be costly."

"If that is going to fix it, oh well!" Woodfaulk exclaimed.

"We need to find it and fix it," Ketring agreed.

"We don't know if that is actually the problem," Councilwoman Diane Landry stated.

"We didn't know what the problem was on Cherry Street, but we made a motion to go get it fixed," Woodfaulk retorted.

"The backflow preventor is the end-all solution because it separates the city water from the private water. The problem is it is rather expensive and typically the cost of installing a backflow preventor goes to the customer," Peters explained. "It is the quickest way to solve this, but it is a shotgun solution because we are making everyone do it, even though some do not ultimately need it."

"If we could find out which homes have wells

and only make them install it, that would be the best solution. Ultimately we need to get them all off the 2-inch line and over to a 6-inch line," Peters added.

"I am frustrated with this problem. I feel we are not taking this serious enough. Last time, we said we would find a solution, and now two weeks later we are in the same spot and no one knows what they want to do. She already has a sick son," Woodfaulk stated.

"We need to find out who has wells tied into the city system," Ketring stated. "Do we not have the right to find out and make them cut them off?"

"The question is how do you find them?" Hart asked. "Go door to door if you need to. That is the only way to find out," Ketring replied.

However, City Attorney Hope Demps cautioned against that course of action and instead suggested reimbursing residents for their expenses.

"I think we need to be very careful because right now there is no evidence of what is being pontificated. They are different ideas on what could be causing it. There has been no study done," Demps said.

"I just want us to be careful that we are not creating a boogie man because we are trying to abscond to possibly that the city has failed in some kind of way," Demps stated.

Demps referred to the previous meeting when Landry asked about providing drinking water to the families affected.

"Also, Mrs. Hampton asked, and I have not heard if there is any possible short-term relief the city could provide now outside of not charging them on their next city bill," Demps said. "Long term, this will take some time, but she has to get her kids ready, wash and eat."

Demps suggested the city consider short-term and long-term relief for Morris and Williams, adding, "You don't have to wait on Mr. Hart to see if it can happen. You can make a motion. Reimbursement for laundry, water or something."

"I think Councilwoman Landry mentioned we can't give it to everyone, but there are only two who have come asking for what is rightfully theirs," Demps said, adding, "We don't know if her son is sick because of city water, and we don't want a situation where all of our meetings are some sort of discoverable notes as to what has been requested and if we are in any way responsible and derelict in our duties to provide safe water to our citizens."

"I am getting concerned that the more we go around and pontificate, we are creating things I don't want to have a deposition on later. I am also concerned there are others who do not have the time or knowledge to come up here," Demps added.

"It is not fair for me to pay for water I can't use," Morris stated.

Woodfaulk offered a motion to stop billing Morris for water until the problem is solved. Prior to offering a second, Hampton asked for the motion to include not billing for sewer as well.

At the suggestion of Perry Police Chief Jamie Cruse, the motion included language stating that "anyone with a water issue verified by city water department staff" in only the specific Buffalo Drive neighborhood be included in the motion.

The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote, as Councilman Bill Brynes was absent for a second straight meeting while recovering from a recent surgery.

Council agrees to advertise position

FINANCE DIRECTOR
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from one of the mills," Councilwoman Shirlie Hampton said.

"It will take a month or two to hire someone, but we need that overlap time," Hart said, adding that the timing was even more important due to the city being scheduled to install a new computer and accounting system later this year.

Staffney added the city would need to amend the budget once the new finance director was on board to

cover the additional salary expenses for the remainder of the current fiscal year.

On a motion by Woodfaulk and second by Hampton, the council voted 3-0 in favor of advertising the position. Councilman Bill Brynes was absent and Mayor Ward Ketring left the meeting prior to the vote.

Prior to serving as city finance director for the past 18-plus years, Staffney was a bookkeeper with Osceola County School District (1995-2003) and with Radisson Inn Maingate in Kissimmee (1988-1995).

LEGALS

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the date of the lis pendens must file a claim before the clerk reports the surplus as unclaimed.

Dated this 3rd day of April, 2024.

Gary Knowles

Clerk of the Circuit Court

By: Kathryn Lago

Deputy Clerk

Please Publish in: Taco Times

PUBLICATION DATES: April 5, 2024

and April 12, 2024

If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact: Carrina Cooper, Court Administration, 173 NE Hernando Avenue, Room 408, Lake City, Florida 32055, Phone: 386-758-2163.

*Contact Court Administration at least 7 days before your scheduled court appearance, or immediately upon receiving this notification if the time before the scheduled appearance is less than 7 days; if you are hearing impaired call 711.

TAYLOR COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD FACILITIES DEPARTMENT REQUEST FOR

QUALIFICATIONS ARCHITECTURAL CONSULTANT PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Pursuant to Florida Statute 287.055, the School Board of Taylor County, Florida invites qualified firms to submit a letter of interest and supporting documentation relating to professional services for Architectural Consultant Services for a New Manufacturing Training Building and a Fire Training Building at Big Bend Technical College.

Mandatory documents shall include the following: letter of interest, examples similar projects completed by the firm, resumes of proposed staff, copy of license, proof of insurance & references. Four packets clearly marked, "BBTC Manufacturing and Fire Training Buildings" must be submitted before 4:00 pm, May 10th, 2024, to Dan Anderson, Facilities Department, Taylor County School.

Board 318 N. Clark Street, Perry, FL 32347-(ph.850-672-0067). All documents submitted shall become property of the Taylor County School District. For questions regarding this RFQ or for any additional information not provided in this summary or in the announcement, please contact Dan Anderson at dan.anderson@taylor.k12.fl.us.

ROSEHEAD Continued from page 1

is smoking. There are times when you walk that all you can smell is smoke. I have asthma and it makes me cough."

"We have spent thousands of dollars on this park to beautify downtown, and this is making it a cesspool. It is supposed to be tobacco-free, but different ones are smoking there, especially the homeless people," Ellison stated.

Ellison shared that during her morning walk that particular day a man with two dogs appeared to come out of the bathroom "as if he had spent the night there."

"I am concerned about my safety," she added. "This morning I had an encounter with a young man collecting rocks out of the pond. He told my sister he was looking for baby alligators,

but had not figured out yet what he was going to name them."

"You never know if someone is going to come up from behind and knock you in the head. I don't feel comfortable, and that is my only place to exercise," Ellison said.

When asked by Councilwoman Venita Woodfaulk if the city was locking the bathrooms at night, City Manager John Hart replied, "We are tired of them beating the doors off to get in there, so no... not until we can reinforce them."

Perry Police Department Chief Jamie Cruse told the council he was aware of the issue and problems at the park, adding, "We have been working on it. We have increased our presence there, but I agree with John that until we can reinforce the doors and do something

to make it harder to vandalize, we will continue to have problems."

"We can't run people out of the parks simply because they do not have a home. We are having to deal with everybody's rights," Cruse said.

Cruse added that a new law recently signed by Governor Ron DeSantis "may help us, but it does not take effect until July 1."

"We will see if we can use some language in that new law when it comes into effect," Cruse added.

When Hart asked if the city has a "leash law" to address the dog issue, Cruse stated the city adopted the county's animal control ordinance several years ago.

activities.

Also on Thursday, Cruse told Perry Newspapers, "We will continue to proactively address anyone in the parks that are violating park rules and established law with the goal of improving the ability for all persons to enjoy all of our city parks."

"The city has the ability to issue trespass warnings to anyone in the park that is violating Florida law or park rules. While this responsibility has been informally shifted to the Police Department, any city employee can initiate the process of trespass issuance to violators," Cruse said.

"Also, anyone that witnesses a violation in the park should call communications (911) while the event is occurring and remain in the area until officers can arrive to address the issue," Cruse added.