

WATER COMMITTEE
AUGUST 24, 2005
MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chuck Watkins, Chairman
Dr. George Patton, Vice Chairman
Tony Parrott
Chris Venice

NON-VOTING MEMBERS: Bill McNally

ABSENT: Jim Mallett

STAFF PRESENT: Pete Frisina
Russell Ray

GUEST: John Munford – The Citizen

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Chuck Watkins at 8:00 A.M.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE MEETING ON AUGUST 10, 2005.

Vice Chairman Dr. George Patton made the motion and Tony Parrott seconded, to approve the minutes from the meeting on August 10, 2005. There was no opposition.

II. PUBLIC SEPTIC AND SEWER SYSTEMS.

Tony Parrott explained that there are several places in the County that a private sewer system is being proposed. He introduced Pete Frisina from the Planning Department. Mr. Parrott commented on a newspaper article that stated Gwinnett County used to have over one hundred separately permitted wastewater package plants and oxidation ponds. It took them 30 years to consolidate them.

Mr. Frisina commented that the 3rd phase of the Pavilion was on one of these systems, before it was annexed into the City. They had a permitted package plant type operation. It has since been disconnected when it was hooked up to the City of Fayetteville. Recently a portion of Whitewater Creek, The Registry, put 30 lots onto a drip irrigation system of some type. He stated he has a copy of the permit that was issued by the State. The Environmental Health Department defers to the State for these systems. They don't have anything to do with the permitting.

Mr. Frisina went on to say that there is another development on Highway 54 coming on line. It is an office development that is about 8 acres. With a community system, they can go down to ½ acre lots in O&I zoning. They have to go through the State permitting process to get the system put in. The State permits these systems, and do not give the local

government any type of notice. It is basically between the owner of the system and the State. The State has regulations on how these systems have to be put in, designed, and maintained. There is monitoring that has to be maintained, reporting to them. Also, there has to be a back up, a trustee for the system. Either another company or sometimes the local governments act as the trustee for these systems. Spalding County has one of these systems going in. They haven't put it in, yet, but they are going through the process. He is waiting to receive information from them. They are acting as the trustee for the systems going into Spalding County. The government is going to be the backup. They have a provision that if the system is profitable in the first three years, then the county will take ownership of it. If it is not profitable, they won't take ownership of it. The State requires backup area for the drip lines. They have a provision that if the owners/customers of the system don't pay the utility or the owner, the county will go in and shut the water off until they pay the utility for the sewage.

Mr. Frisina went on to say that he thinks we will see more and more of this and the question is, how do we want to handle them. Do we want to take ownership or do we want to be the trustee? At least, being the trustee is a good situation.

The same developer has approached the county with a larger development at Tyrone Road and Highway 54 which is 120 acres. He not only develops, but runs these systems. He wants to keep them because he makes money off of them. It is another revenue source. The Environmental Health Department defers to the State Department of Natural Resources to approve, permit, monitor and administer these systems. They do not do any regulating locally. The company has to submit data to the State on how the system is running.

The Committee discussed talking with Peachtree City and Fayetteville about their interest in these systems. Mr. Parrott stated 8 business lots is not as large a problem as residential developments. Turning the water off becomes a health and safety issue and the Commissioners end up being involved. Being a trustee makes you responsible for something you don't manage, operate or inspect. This is just asking for trouble.

Mr. Frisina suggested that on a local level, the County could require more than the State. He does not think there is any way to stop these systems going in. Since all the reporting has to go to the State, we might be able to be in the loop of getting the same information, and on the local level, require they report to us as well.

Chairman Watkins asked what the position of the Water System should be when not being in the sewer business? Also, why should we be a trustee of something in which we have no regulatory process, we have no approval. Mrs. Venice stated the question today is what kind of involvement do we want. These systems are going in. They are State approved. Currently they leave the County and Environmental Health out of the loop. We need to determine our level of involvement. The committee discussed this item at length, agreed to gather more information and discuss this item again.

Wc8-24-05

There being no further business, Chairman Chuck Watkins adjourned the meeting at 8:30 A.M.

Chuck Watkins

The foregoing minutes were approved at the regular Water Committee meeting on the 12th day of October, 2005.

Lisa McElwaney