

**Public Comments from May 18, 2021**  
**Meeting for San Leon Municipal Utility District**

John Wade

- There was an allegation that was forwarded to the EPP that we addressed but I want to have it confirmed by management here. I believe it is not true that the MUD intends to install something that will send microbeads out into Galveston Bay and the oyster reefs.
  - The District did ask our engineer to evaluate whether the volume of non-waste products merited the installation of a comminutor, which breaks objects into smaller pieces that can safely pass through the initial pumps and be gathered up on the bar screen, which is installed at the headworks for the very purpose of catching solids prior to the treatment process. As part of last month's response describing the wastewater treatment process, we indicated that there are many items that end up in our collection system than just toilet paper and wastewater, such as flushable wipes, personal hygiene products, and sometimes even clothes or toys. These items can damage facility equipment and also result in clogged machinery that requires the District to pull pumps from service, remove all the debris, then evaluate the pumps for any damage prior to putting them back into service. This past year has seen a significant increase in the volume of non-traditional objects in the system, resulting in increased service calls and maintenance requirements for facility equipment. At this time, the District has not determined one way or the other if such a device is warranted, but we will be doing our due diligence to ensure any solution we implement will be done with utmost consideration for the community and environment.

David Jetelina

- To the board: with all due respect, I along with others were shocked to learn at last month's meeting of the WCID's consideration to install a standalone comminutor at the headworks of the WCID sewer plant, described by Andrew Miller as a giant garbage disposal. Yes, those machines are giant, yes, they grind up plastic-containing garbage into micro plastic, and yes, the resultant toxic microplastic mess is disposed into the effluent stream which winds up in our Galveston Bay. Especially troubling was that this WCID announcement was made during Earth Week 2021, during which one of the most top trending topics was microplastic pollution and the detrimental effects on our oceans. In addition to its fiduciary responsibilities, the board has a responsibility for environmental stewardship which is indeed a very serious matter. I encourage the board to obtain an environmental study from a subject matter expert prior to embarking on any future decisions which could adversely affect the Galveston Bay environment. Provided herewith is a technical memo, white paper, with some headworks solution options for your consideration.

- The District did ask our engineer to evaluate whether the increased volume of non-waste products merited the installation of a comminutor. However, your statement that “the resultant microplastic mess is disposed into the effluent stream” is incorrect. Microplastics are defined as “small plastic pieces less than five millimeters long”. Comminutors are not designed to grind incoming solids to that degree, but rather they are designed to reduce the size of objects that can harm/clog downstream equipment and are typical components of a headworks screening facility, as even the white paper you provided to the Board describes. Once the objects have been sufficiently reduced in size to safely pass through the pumps, they are gathered up on the bar screen, which has the express purpose of catching solids prior to the treatment process and subsequent effluent into the Salt Bayou. Many treatment facilities have manual bar screens that require an operator to routinely remove the materials to maintain flow, but the expansion at our plant will be utilizing an automatic bar screen that will immediately dispose of objects into a dumpster, with a manual bar screen on standby for backup. At this time, the District has not determined one way or the other if a comminutor is warranted, but we will be doing our due diligence to ensure any solution we implement will be done with utmost consideration for the community and environment.
- To the board: in consideration of statements made by various parties regarding District TPIA information request, and in further consideration that we have two new board members and a new president, I wish to propose for your kind consideration the creation of a volunteer position within the office of the District, that position to be responsible to assist with answering TPIAs at no cost to the District and that position to assist water customers with formulating their complaints and inquiries to the District, this position to be staffed by a volunteer at no cost to the District, whom shall be known as District ombudsman.
  - The Board has previously explained that TPIA requests and customer interfacing fall under the duties of the District Manager, who has not expressed a need for additional assistance in his responsibilities at this time. Should the need for additional assistance arise, the Board will take into consideration your proposal.
- Regarding the past three calendar years, how many conflict disclosure statements have been filed with the District, those required by Chapter 176 of the Local Government Code? With whom were they filed?
  - None have been necessary; therefore, none have been filed.
- With all due respect, I request that numerous errors in the WCID web pertaining to Chapter 176 disclosure be corrected, which are provided herewith.
  - The documents provided to the Board did not contain any corrections; please remit any recommended changes to the District Manager and they will be taking into consideration, with corrections made as necessary.

- Lastly, regarding the section of 10" PVC pipe which Andrew produced at last month's meeting, claiming there was a crack in a section of that line, that section line between Gulf Coast's sales meter and the District's check meter: why did routine analysis by our District Manager and engineer not determine the presence of an allegedly substantial fresh water leak? Would someone from the WCID District staff please explain how this massive leak could have gone undetected for so long?
  - When pipe is installed, there's a bell shape that facilitates joining the pipes together. Inspecting the excavated piece that was damaged, it looked as though the pipe had been pushed together too strongly, resulting in a hairline crack on just the interior of the pipe. Over time, the constant pressure from the water in the lines slowly chipped away at the interior and eventually manifested in a hairline crack on the exterior, which wore out over time creating a divot on the outside of the pipe. Water seeks the path of least resistance, so that leak didn't result in a geyser above the surface, but rather wore down the area around the pipe, eventually leading into the drainage ditches. Ken Keller identified a ditch full of water when it typically wouldn't be, which prompted him to test it with a chemical agent that can detect chlorine, which would mean it was treated water versus runoff or rainwater. That prompted an excavation of the area and resulted in discovery of the damaged pipe, which was subsequently repaired. Given how the damage likely occurred and the length of time it has been leaking, there would be no indicators in our monitoring systems or through our traditional checks that would have revealed the issue. While unfortunate, it is not uncommon for subterranean damage to the water and wastewater systems to go undetected until surface level evidence manifests itself, either via visible water in ditches such as this case or persistent sewer backups in the case of the collection system.

Robin Burke

- I'd just like to know if the MUD has any current lawsuits against it.
  - The District has one lawsuit against it from Benjamin Taber; there are no other lawsuits currently filed against the District.

Robert Brown

- Since we've had the freeze, has all y'all's repairs and maintenance been pretty much brought back up to standards where it was before the action took place?
  - Repairs and maintenance have returned to regular levels following the freeze. The District understands that plumbers have been difficult to schedule, so if anyone still has pending repairs where the District can assist with isolating their water line to facilitate those repairs, just contact our office and we'll be more than happy to assist.