

To: Commissioners Canon, Johnson, Hale, Elliot, Benton

Fr: Ken Greenberg, Jesse Phillips, Winter Springs
Community Association

CC: Hon. Mayor Charles Lacey, Commissioner Jay
Zembower, Commissioner Constantine, Commissioner
Lockhart, Commissioner Dallari, Commissioner Herr



December 29, 2020

Commissioners:

Over the course of our tenacious advocacy for safe, quality water, we have always viewed water quality to be first and foremost a public health issue. Although the City has never seen it this way, our hope is the recent outcry from residents at the putrid smells may raise this as a public relations issue sufficient to convince even the most cynical politician to take notice.

You will never hear us say *we told you so*. However, the fact remains this crisis exists entirely because you chose a course of action based on political expediency and not public health. In fact, the commission has repeatedly denied any public health concerns, while embarking on a series of expensive election year projects, a patchwork of short-term “solutions”, the smell of which has now raised the concerns of even the most skeptical residents.

Our Association found water quality to be Winter Springs residents’ top issue of concern 18 months ago. Imagine where it stands now.

If the commission had simply acknowledged the problems with the drinking water, instead of slandering those who raised them, and prioritized building new drinking water plants, residents would not be nauseated due to the putrid smell.

We understand the political benefit a of superficial repair on a wastewater plant: the appearance of concern without the liability of admitting the genuine public health risk of our drinking water. Our hope, however, is this letter finds the commission sufficiently chastened by the spectacular manner with which its most recent PR stunt backfired, and more agreeable to entertain actual solutions to the problems those of us living in reality are faced with each day.

It’s time to get real about our water. Here are five things which can set the City on a better path toward clean, safe water:

1. **Fire Veolia** – The incompetence and mismanagement is exactly what we warned about when we cautioned against hiring a company facing a class action lawsuit for their involvement in Flint, Michigan. It will cost the City much more to keep Veolia than to

fire them before more damage is done. How many more people need to complain about health issues before something is done? Is filing insurance claims really the best solution the City can come up with? Even if you do not share our concerns about the Flint issue, it's clear by now this management model is not working and it is time for a change.

2. **Acknowledge the health risks** – At least one commissioner has admitted in writing an expressed desire for engineers and experts to downplay health concerns raised by the City's own water reports. This flies in direct contradiction to reports the City has filed an insurance claim on behalf of at least one resident to seek to address a health concern which may have resulted from drinking our water. The City should come clean and acknowledge the health risks.
3. **Abandon the PR stunt** – Besides the evident corruption of spending taxpayer dollars in an election year public works campaign designed and marketed to solidify the re-election of incumbent commissioners, the Water Works program is misguided, since it is founded on a political calculation made by those who refuse to admit the health concerns with our drinking water. Its predictably poor execution has greatly decreased the quality of life for many City residents, caused untold discomfort and angst, and should be abandoned before it does any more damage, or produces unjust enrichment for vendors.
4. **Prioritize drinking water infrastructure improvements** – Instead of spending millions of taxpayer dollars on a patchwork of non-solutions to a problem which is not our most serious problem, the City's limited resources should be prioritized on the most pressing issue: safe, high-quality drinking water.
5. **Appoint a citizen's task force** – In order to regain public trust, the Mayor should appoint a citizen task force, consisting of individuals who are residents of Winter Springs with no financial ties to the City and no business interests with any City vendor (i.e. a water contractor, or otherwise). The task force should be given access to any and all documentation, correspondence and communication regarding the water system, tests, complaints and current projects in place, to make recommendations to the City staff for improvements, and develop an online resource for residents to quickly obtain accurate information related to our water system.

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