

Reverse Osmosis Referendum
Public Meeting
Saturday, June 15, 2013

Bob Sandifer, Jungle Road: **Question:** Is the Town water currently considered safe?

Answer (Doug Kinard, DHEC Director of Drinking Water Protection): Mr. Kinard stated it would be difficult to make a blanket statement that any water is “safe”, but by the definition of the law, it is in compliance with the primary standard. Then Mr. Kinard gave a detailed answer. Mr. Kinard stated that Fluoride at the secondary contaminant level of 2.0 mg/L or 2 parts per million can cause cosmetic effects (such as skin or tooth discoloration) or aesthetic effects (such as taste, odor, or color) in drinking water. Tooth discoloration and/or pitting is caused by excess fluoride exposures during the formative period prior to eruption of the teeth in children (8 or younger). Levels of Fluoride about 4.0 mg/L are known to cause health issue such as increased fractures to bones and bone disease (including pain and tenderness of the bones. Mr. Kinard discussed that EPA has been looking at lowering the primary standard to 2.0 mg/L but could not provide any guidance about when this might happen. **Question:** Are any other communities faced with the issues that Edisto faces with Fluoride? **Answer (Doug Kinard):** Yes, there are other communities who face this problem but Edisto is unique because of the taste and corrosiveness issues due to elevated sodium and chloride. **Further information regarding EPA and Fluoride can be found at** <http://water.epa.gov/drink/contaminants/basicinformation/fluoride.cfm> and http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/rulesregs/regulatingcontaminants/sixyearreview/upload/2011_Fluoride_QuestionsAnswers.pdf

Tommy Mann, Myrtle Street: **Question:** Some states have lowered the allowed maximum contaminant level below the EPA level of 4.0 mg/L for Fluoride. Why doesn't the State of SC enforce the 2.0 mg/L level on fluoride as other states do such as North Carolina? **Answer (Doug Kinard):** EPA recommends secondary standards to water systems but does not require systems to comply. However, states may choose to adopt them as enforceable standards. It's just been done that way for a long time. If we tried to enforce that, there would be a big push back. It would take people at the very top of the agency to make that happen.

David Cannon, Point Street: **Question:** Didn't the Town of Conway have a similar problem, and how did they fix it? **Answer (Doug Kinard):** They tied in to the Grand Strand Water and Sewer Authority.

Susan Kozub, Oristo Ridge: **Question:** Have you read or do you know anything about the study that shows that even at 1.0mg/liter there is a chance of gastrointestinal problems? **Answer (Doug Kinard):** No, I have no knowledge of that study.

Bill Andrews, Rice Lane **Question:** Do our fluoride levels typically stay stable? **Answer (Doug Kinard):** Between 2004 and 2012 the range was 2.8mg/l – 3.5mg/l so I would say it is fairly stable over time.

Nancy Smith **Question:** Does reverse osmosis remove Fluoride? **Answer (Doug Kinard)** Yes, reverse osmosis removes Fluoride. **Question:** Does the Middendorf aquifer have a higher level of Fluoride? **Answer (Mike Beckman URS)** The Fluoride level is higher in the Middendorf aquifer but the reverse osmosis process will remove it.

Newton Hornsby, Docksite Road **Question:** Why would you use Kiawah as an example as the closest location to Edisto who has data on Middendorf aquifer when they use Charleston water? **Answer (Mike Beckman, P.E., URS):** They are the closest location who has data on the Middendorf aquifer. We believe the data is close but we will not know for certain until we test a well at Edisto.

Paul Miskimin, Palmetto Walk **Question:** Where is the water discharged, is it in Big Bay Creek? Are there any limits on discharge? **Answer (Mike Beckman, URS):** We cannot discharge into Big Bay Creek as it is designated as an outstanding water source. The outfall will be in the South Edisto River or in the ocean. If Mr. Miskimin would like to review the regulations, they are available at URS.

Newton Hornsby **Question:** Is the discharge on the side beach? **Answer (Mike Beckman URS)** The discharge is the South Edisto River.

Patti Smyer **Question:** The map shows it goes into the Atlantic Ocean. **Answer (Mike Beckman URS).** It appears you are referencing an earlier map where we looked at using Town Hall as an alternate location for the reverse osmosis site and the discharge point was the Atlantic Ocean. Under the scenario being discussed the discharge from the RO plant is the South Edisto River.

Bob Sandifer **Question:** The existing wells will be used as backup in case of a problem with the RO plant. Would DHEC have a problem with that if the EPA lowers the level of Fluoride to 2.0 mg/L? **Answer (Doug Kinard):** DHEC has in the past allowed towns to use wells that exceed secondary maximum contaminant levels for short-term usage. DHEC has not, allowed usage of wells that exceed primary contaminant levels.

Susan Hornsby Docksite Road **Question:** What was the deciding factor to choose this plan as opposed to others like desalination? **Answer (Ray Johnson, Water and Sewer Committee Member)** We relied on the consultant who provided the Water and Sewer committee with options and this was the most feasible cost effective solution. **(Bill Houston, Licensed Contractor, Water and Sewer Committee Member):** EBPOA employed 2 engineers to review the selected project and agreed this was correct. **Mike Beckman.** Desalination is like reverse osmosis which treats water with a lower salt content. Reverse osmosis was chosen as it is a proven technology and was the most economical solution.

Bob Sandifer made statement that the EBPOA chose to fund an independent review of the RO plant to confirm the study was quality and cost estimate was good. The EBPOA board does not take a stand or endorse any project.

Ron McCall, Jungle Road **Question:** The \$383,000/year in operating costs seems low. Is this variable and how will it be paid for? **Answer: (Ray Johnson)** It will be paid for by the user fees. The variable is inflation.

Byron Briese **Question:** At the last meeting, the Town Administrator said repair costs were in addition to the O&M costs and there are some unbudgeted repairs on the existing system. Is the \$383,000 annual O&M costs the total O&M cost for the Town's water system? **Answer:** This analysis only looks at the rate increases necessitated by the RO system over and above the existing system budget including projected inflation. Any other improvements made in the system water or sewer are going to be rate increases but not necessitated by the RO system. Therefore, there will be rate increases for those items, but they are a separate issue and each decision about those increases will have to be made on their own.

Ron McCall **Question:** Does the operating cost include staff? **Answer (Ray Johnson):** It includes the salary for an operator. **Question:** If the referendum passes, can you guarantee our bills will never go up above the projected inflationary rate? **Answer (Ray Johnson):** The projections are based on maintaining and operating the system for the next 30 years. It includes inflation and routine maintenance. **Iris Hill, Town Administrator.** None of the utility rates can be guaranteed. If there is a catastrophic event (hurricanes/ illicit discharges/legal action/ etc., the costs will be passed to the consumer because the Utility is supported by user fees (water rates), not property taxes. These types of events would impact the rates regardless of whether the project is constructed or not.

Susan Kozub **Question:** If we don't move forward with this project, I see the rates going up anyway? **Answer (Ray Johnson):** Yes.

Newton Hornsby **Question:** But as the system ages isn't it going to cost more to repair? **Answer (Ray Johnson)** More so because of corrosion if the project isn't done.

Susan Hornsby **Question:** When will the new rates go into effect, if approved? **Answer (Ray Johnson):** Our intent is to have a 25% increase in 2014, 25% in 2015 and 25% in 2016. We would start in 2014 so that we build a reserve to meet the covenant requirements of the bond.

Byron Briese Edings Street: **Question:** Is the November 8th report marked "final" the final report because you stated the selected option costs \$8.4 million and on page 64 those options are \$10.6 and \$11.1 million? If this is the final report, why don't we have this fleshed out? **Answer (Ray Johnson):** This is the final feasibility report, not the final design. Many of the questions and detail being requested will be detailed in the final design that is required for permitting. The Water and Sewer Committee reviewed the recommended plan submitted by URS and felt there were areas that could be revised to provide quality water at sufficient quantities at a cost savings. The Executive summary is the summary of the final report where the options that were not feasible were taken out.

Bob Sandifer: **Question:** Is there still a plan to hire an experienced project manager to help with the preparation of the RFQ and the RFP and what are the associated costs? **Answer Ray Johnson):** Yes, the plan is to hire a qualified Engineer on a part time basis. Associated costs will be reviewed at that time, but the Committee feels there is sufficient funding in the proposed \$8.46 million to cover those costs.

Newton Hornsby: **Question:** If the discharge location is the South Edisto River, where will the water be discharged? **Answer: (David Lybrand, P.E., Water and Sewer Committee)** The proposed discharge point is at Beach Access 37 on Yacht Club Road. The discharge pipe will be directionally bored to the South Edisto River.

Charles Criss, Palmetto Blvd **Question:** Why wasn't bringing in surface water an option? **Answer (Ray Johnson):** The committee discussed this option, it was eliminated because of cost. To bring in surface water, you would have to pipe water from the other side of Highway 17 at estimated cost over \$10.5 million. The same if water was piped from Charleston to Edisto Beach. In that scenario, because the water would have to pass through other water districts, i.e. Seabrook, they would add costs to each gallon of water.

Ron McCall **Question:** Can the committee address voting? How many registered voters are there on Edisto Beach? What is the definition of a registered voter? **Answer:** The voter's registration roll is constantly changing as people move into or out of Edisto Beach. Last time we looked it was 703 of the 2,327 water accounts. A person's primary residence, or main residence is the dwelling where they usually live, typically a house or an apartment. A person can only have one *primary* residence at any given time, though they may share the residence with other people. A primary residence is considered to be a legal residence for the purpose of income tax and/or acquiring a mortgage. **Question:** How can other property owners make sure their voice is heard on this issue? **Answer:** Leave comments on the Town's website.

Question: Is the referendum binding on the Town Council? **Answer:** Revenue Bonds do not require voter approval and thus the referendum is considered advisory or non-binding.