

**COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
WATER DISTRICT IV PUBLIC FORUM  
Thursday, September 26, 2002  
7:00 P.M.**

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and time at the Dempsey B. Herring Courthouse Annex for the purpose of holding a Public Forum for the residents of Water District IV to hear concerns and questions regarding potential sign-ups for the above stated district.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

C.E. "Gene" Wilson, **Vice Chairman**  
Spruell R. Britt  
Bill Memory

**APPOINTEES PRESENT:**

Billy Joe Farmer, **County Administrator**  
Darren E. Currie, **Asst. Administrator**  
Gail E. Edwards, **Acting Deputy Clerk**

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Amon E. McKenzie, **Chairman**  
Sammie Jacobs  
Lynwood Norris  
David Dutton

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

Vice Chairman C.E. "Gene" Wilson called the public forum to order at 7:00 P.M. Mr. Bill Thompson delivered the invocation. Vice Chairman Wilson stated this forum was scheduled to hear concerns and questions from the citizens who live in Water District IV.

Leo Green of Green Engineering (Engineer for Water District IV) began the meeting by showing a map of District IV with proposed water lines and explained such to the audience. Green advised he would need 70-80% of the people to sign up for this to be a feasible project, with a minimum of 15 houses per mile. Mr. Green also advised that District IV has 2 elevated water tanks with 250,000 gallons of water. He also explained that Lake Waccamaw is also interested in tying into this proposed system.

Glenda George asked Mr. Green to explain the colored lines on the map (red, green, and blue). Green advised these differentiated the sizes of the lines with blue being the primary hub.

Lady in audience asked Mr. Green if 6" lines would tie into water hydrant if area becomes denser.

Mr. Green replied that 6 inch lines can accommodate lots of houses, and they can double the capacity of the line by giving it tie ins. County will also assume existing water system along Deerfield Estates and Honey Hill Road.

Lady in audience asked if there would be a tower on Honey Hill Road? No, replied Mr. Green.

Mr. Wilson advised that Chris Batten lives on Farmers Union Road and wishes to address the audience. Mr. Batten advised that there are 13 residences between Farmers Union and John Spaulding Road that want to sign up. Mr. Green advised Batten to get a petition with 23 names.

Mr. Farmer advised that we are actually going by taps paid. We are trying to see how many will sign up. He advised that early signups are \$100.00 and Ms. Ruby Shelley is here tonight for people to sign up. He also asked Mr. Batten how long the road is. Mr. Batten advised 2.1 miles with 23 homes. Mr. Farmer advised that it would be workable if everyone signs up as he is trying to keep the water bills down. Mr. Batten then asked him to explain the total amount divided by the number of houses. Mr. Farmer stated that the design is based on 80% signups and fewer people will have to pay higher water bills. He used the estimate of \$340,000.00 per year of P&I to explain this. He was then asked by a lady from the audience how long the early sign up period is? He explained that until the lines actually go down. He also advised that \$100.00

sign ups bring money in now, and it is much cheaper to put taps in now. Lady then asked how much future sign ups would be and he responded \$400.00.

**Billy Rushing** advised that it is better to sign up now. Mr. Memory also advised the audience to get neighbors to also sign up now. Mr. Farmer advised the audience that he wants revenue coming in. A male from the audience advised that he did not understand this. Mr. Farmer advised there is a minimum bill for the first 2000 gallons. He was then asked after P&I is paid off will the bill go down. Mr. Farmer advised that the loan is for 38 years and the number of people signed up can push the bill down.

**Jim Peacock** asked why the line was not going by his road. Mr. Farmer stated that if the line does not go by his house then he does not have to pay. Mr. Peacock asked did his taxes not pay for this? No, replied Mr. Farmer. Mr. Peacock advised he felt he was being discriminated against. Mr. Farmer asked him where he lived and he replied Rico and pointed to the map. He was then asked how many homes are on his road and he replied 5 (five) and further stated that he was being discriminated against because he lived near the Bladen County line. Mr. Farmer explained that if the system is to be feasible we must have more people on road. Mr. Peacock stated that they (Mr. Farmer) knew it was rural before they went to that area. Mr. Farmer advised that this is why they were having meetings. Mr. Peacock advised again that he is being discriminated against. Mr. Farmer asked how long is the road that he lives on and Mr. Peacock advised 1.2 miles. Mr. Farmer then explained to him that based on that information his average water bill would be about \$80.00 per month. Mr. Peacock then asked if lines were being run down Jenkins Road? Mr. Farmer explained that the lines were not written in stone.

**Lady in audience** then asked if the map was to scale in which Billy Rushing replied no because he had measured it himself earlier this week. Mr. Farmer explained that this is a business deal. Another lady from the audience then asked would everyone pay the same water bill? Mr. Farmer replied that everyone in the same district would pay the same bill? Lady then asked why are lines different at the ends of the road. He replied that it was because of the tank. She then questioned whether she would still get a good flow? Yes, he replied. Batten then asked if there was a line on 1722? No replied Mr. Rushing. Glenda George then asked to look at the map and Mr. Rushing then showed it to her and stated that if they want water they need to get people to sign up for it. Another lady then asked for the projected time frame for the water lines. Mr. Farmer stated as soon as water lines are approved which should be about one year, but also stated that we don't really have a deadline. Mr. Green explained that only 335 have signed up and he wants at least 900-we are only 1/3 there. Mr. Farmer advised that we need to make a decision by Christmas.

**Lady in audience** then asked if we provide the line down the road, does she provide the line to her house and he answered yes. She then asked what is a physical connect? He advised to keep their wells to use for watering lawns and washing cars. She then asked if the inspection would be free? He stated yes. She then wanted to know what the \$50.00 deposit was for and Mr. Farmer advised that this was to be paid when ready for water to be turned on and it would be refundable in about two years if bills are paid on time. Mr. Peacock then asked if he paid his \$100.00 tonight and the lines were never run would he get his money back. Mr. Farmer said yes. Randy Britt said that District II was a good example of this. Another lady then inquired as to whether if she builds a house in the future would it be \$400.00? Mr. Farmer replied yes or even more. He advised her to calculate it out and it would still be a minimum payment. She then asked how soon do you start a minimum payment? Mr. Farmer advised that the line must be approved by the state and at that point the customer would then receive a letter.

**Mr. Peacock** asked where would we find water at since there is a shortage now? Mr. Green advised that we have 2 wells that have 150 gallons per minute while other wells average only 100 gallons per minute. Mr. Peacock then advised he has never seen the water so low.

**Mr. Farmer** advised the audience that he is working on a proposition to link all 5 districts to all towns. Chances are all will not go dry at the same time. Mr. Farmer advised that if there is a water shortage in District IV, we could get it from District III.

**Glenda George** then asked about people who live ¾ mile off road? Mr. Farmer advised her that people could give easements. Mr. Farmer advised that we are not trying to push the system on them if it is not right for them. Glenda then asked if water lines would affect her well if she does not get water but lines next to her house. Mr. Farmer advised no.

Mr. Batten then asked that if churches are tested quarterly would this eliminate those tests. Mr. Farmer replied yes.

Mr. Green then added that if there were sufficient density on a private road, we would look at it.

Lady from audience then stated that she couldn't find people at public utilities to pay so can they mail it to them? Mr. Farmer advised that public utilities has lost staff but Ms. Ruby is there. Ms. Ruby Shelly then explained that she is now there from 8:30 to 5:00 daily.

Billy Rushing then explained that this impacts fire insurance ratings. He advised that insurance could go down by as much as 40%. He also advised that we need new industry and not the illegal kind and that a water system will draw industry. Another lady then asked if people that are on fixed incomes could pay increments. Mr. Farmer stated yes and they can sign a promissory note. Mr. Rushing also stated that if a hurricane comes, generators would keep the water flowing.

Mr. Wilson then asked if anyone had any questions, we've been going on for over an hour and we will dismiss. But we will still be here to answer questions. Thanks for everyone coming.

#### ADJOURNMENT

The public hearing was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

APPROVED:

  
GAIL E. EDWARDS  
ACTING DEPUTY CLERK

  
C.E. "GENE" WILSON  
VICE-CHAIRMAN