



fguaNEWS

FALL 2011 — Golden Gate/Lehigh Acres/North Ft. Myers

updates & information from your
water and wastewater utility

www.fgua.com

How Your FGUA System Rates Come About

One of the duties of the Florida Governmental Utility Authority (FGUA) Board is to make sure the FGUA rates are sufficient to pay all FGUA operating costs and repay the debts incurred for the bonds that are sold to finance the purchase of the utility and large capital projects. The FGUA is a not for profit entity, and each system must generate its own revenue.

Like many other utilities, the FGUA uses an independent rate consultant to analyze the revenues and required coverage obligations for the utility. The report suggests any rate increases necessary for the current year, and projects rates necessary for future years. The report is shared with the host county government and FGUA Board as well as publically in an open rate hearing (if a rate change is required).

Rate hearings are typically held on a week-night, in a local library, community center, or other large room with public access. The hearing is advertised in a legal ad in the daily newspaper, online at www.fgua.com and on customer bills in the weeks before the hearing.

Each FGUA system operates individually and customers are only responsible for the debt in their system.

At the public hearing, the rate consultant and FGUA financial staff gives a presentation on the costs incurred by the utility, and the amount of revenue available to meet bond obligations. Rates for the FGUA are compared to local utilities and other utilities in Florida. Members of the public are encouraged to ask questions and make suggestions at the hearing. This meeting takes place prior to the Board making a decision on the rate implementation. This is done so that all comments from the host government and the public can be shared with the Board.



A rate increase can be made for 1 year, or a multiple year time frame, such as 3 or 5 years, based on the rate consultant's report. If a multiple year increase is passed, a new rate hearing is not required each year. Often the rate consultant will only suggest a small cost of living adjustment based on the United States Consumer Price Index (CPI). A CPI increase does not require a public hearing as long as it is not higher than 2.5%.

Rate increases are usually adopted at the September Board meeting and go into effect on October 1, which is the first day of the fiscal year. Emergency rate increases can be adopted at other times of the year if revenue is not sufficient to pay the daily costs of running the utility. This is rare, but has occurred in FGUA systems.

Each FGUA system operates individually and customers from one system are not responsible for any debt in another system. That is why the rates for each system are studied, calculated and passed independently. In order to keep the rates as low as possible, the FGUA Board approved new bonds issued for the Lehigh Acres, Golden Gate and Pasco systems in 2010. The bonds have lower interest rates than the previous line of credit. Large capital improvement projects and line expansion projects have been limited in each system to keep costs to a minimum and still maintain the systems at maximum efficiency.

Customers who would like more information on the FGUA rates can visit www.fgua.com or contact their local FGUA customer service office.

Change of Operator

The Florida Governmental Utility Authority (FGUA) has contracted with U.S. Water Services/Wade Trim (USWWT) to provide operations, billing and customer services to the Lehigh Acres and Golden Gate utility systems beginning October 1, 2011. USWWT exists predominantly to serve the Florida water and wastewater utility service industry. It is the largest privately held utility operations and maintenance company in the state and maintains contracts with the FGUA for systems in Lee and Pasco counties. USWWT submitted a competitive proposal with pricing significantly below the current year contract cost, realizing efficiencies with nearby North Fort Myers operations. This helps to keep costs low and whenever possible, avoid an increase in rates.

Customers should not see significant changes in utility service or staff as many of the current employees have chosen to transfer to USWWT. Office locations and office phone numbers will remain the same. A new billing system will be used which will require customers to sign up to see their accounts online at www.fgua.com, but the bills will contain all the same information. FGUA service trucks and signs will continue to reflect FGUA but you may see uniforms or some equipment indicating USWWT.

The FGUA is committed to continue improving customer service. USWWT has a solid reputation of providing excellent customer service and already has systems in place that will offer new conveniences to customers later this year, including e-billing, which is an option to receive a paperless bill.

Utility Advisory Boards

The FGUA operates under the Florida Government Sunshine laws, providing open public meetings and records. As another service to help the FGUA Board make informed decisions, the Board approved the creation of Utility Advisory Committees in certain systems. Currently committees are in place for Lehigh Acres and Golden Gate, and will be created for N. Ft. Myers soon. Each committee consists of members of the community who live or work in the utility service area. Each member fills out an application and is appointed by the FGUA Board to a 3 year term. The committee members serve in a volunteer capacity, with no financial compensation, for providing suggestions to the FGUA Board on how to improve utility services. However, the committee members are provided with up to date information regarding utility issues, rates, projects and other utility business and have the ability to have their input presented to the Board. The committees meet 6 times per year and all the meetings are advertised and open to the public. **The Lehigh Acres Committee is currently accepting applications for 2 open seats.** The applications can be obtained from Barbara Kerby, the Community Service Representative via email, fax, or at the customer service office located at 1229 Homestead Rd N, behind the McDonald's Restaurant. The North Fort Myers Committee is currently in the process of being created. **Anyone interested in being considered for the North Fort Myers committee should contact Donna Lizotte,** the Community Service Representative via email, fax, or at the customer service office located at 5660 Bayshore Road, Suite 36.

Community Service Projects

Thanks to the generosity of the customers in Golden Gate and Lehigh Acres, the FGUA was able to provide school supplies to schools in both systems. A full box of supplies was given to Golden Gate Primary in Naples, and Veterans Park Middle School in Lehigh Acres.

Customer Update Incentive Program

This summer, the FGUA continued its Customer Incentive Program which rewards customers for updating their information and allows the FGUA to continue providing timely customer announcements as we well as prepare for transitioning from a paper-based to electronic notification system. Customers contacting any FGUA Utility System confirming or updating their information have been entered in monthly drawings for gift certificates provided by businesses in or near the FGUA service area. The following winners were recently chosen and received gift certificates generously donated from local program sponsors. **Golden Gate winners:** Jennifer Currie (July) and Curtis Norman Jones (August). **Lehigh Acres winners:** Jackson Vealey (July) and Shannon Miller (August). **NFM winners:** Maria Scrimenti (July) and Robert & Nancy Luchauer (August). **Thank you to:** Applebee's (special thanks to Majid Dalvand, GM) and Cactus Jack Southwest Bar & Grill (special thanks to Vander and Jane Oliveira, Owners).

FGUA AT YOUR SERVICE

Lehigh Acres Office

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North Fort Myers:

- Foundation construction of the Headwork's structure at the Del Prado Wastewater Treatment Plant has begun. The Headworks start the wastewater treatment process and remove screenable solids, fats, oils and greases to ensure effective and reliable process performance within the plant. Materials such as gross solids, grit and sand can cause blockages as well as wear and damage to pipework, valves, pumps and treatment equipment.
- Two main structures at the Del Prado Plant have been completed, the Oxidation Ditch & the Digester. These new structures will greatly expand the capacity of the treatment plant to handle the increased demand.
- New air release valves have been installed throughout the sewer system. The valves allow for release of accumulated air from the piping system while the system is in operation and under pressure. Pockets of accumulated air may cause high pressure surges impeding effective flow and hydraulic conductivity of the system.
- *Lake Fairways* will receive an upgrade of multiple electrical components at the water treatment plant. These upgrades are needed to allow for the proper and efficient functioning of the plant equipment.

WATERWAY ESTATES WASTEWATER DIVERSION PROJECT

Lee County Utilities (LCU), Florida Governmental Utilities Authority (FGUA) and Guymann Construction have recently started the diversion project which will move the wastewater flow from the Waterway Estates Wastewater Treatment Plant to the Del Prado Wastewater Treatment Plant. The FGUA role in this project is to manage the design, permitting, and construction as well as receive and treat the wastewater flows from the Waterway Estates wastewater service area at its Del Prado Wastewater Treatment Facility once complete. The project was recently featured in the August issue of *Gulf Coast Business Review*, in the top 10 among the "Top 30 construction projects on the Gulf Coast."

The project will require the installation of new sewage pipes along the diversion route, which will result in construction in front of the homes and businesses along the planned route. Construction of the project has been staggered to keep the Del Prado facility operating during the expansion. The new pipe line and Intermediate Pump Station (IPS) will enhance the capacity and the reliability of the collection system. This will avoid improper discharge into the Caloosahatchee River during the wet weather months thereby reducing environmental impacts and improving the local waterways and ecological



conditions. Once the diversion has been completed the Waterway Estates Wastewater Treatment Plant will be decommissioned.

There are multiple ways to keep informed about the project. You can visit www.LCUimprovements.info or call 239-628-1638. If you would like to receive updates via e-mail please provide your e-mail address to info@LCUimprovements.info.

Lehigh Acres

- The FGUA is working with Malcolm Pirnie to design a membrane softening facility which would improve water quality at the number two water treatment plant (WTP) in Lehigh Acres. The project will allow the FGUA to meet water demands in the Lehigh Acres service area and provide FGUA customers with higher quality finished water. Design is currently 70% complete with construction anticipated to start December 2011.
- The FGUA is also converting the number one WTP from gaseous ammonia to liquid ammonia to help improve safety at the WTP and provide for more efficient operations. Construction is currently underway with completion anticipated by October 2011.

Golden Gate

- The FGUA is currently performing rehabilitation and repair projects throughout the Golden Gate collection and distribution system. Work includes rehabbing lift stations, manholes, fire hydrants, valves, increased flushing of the water distribution system to improve water quality, well rehabilitation and replacement of reverse osmosis membranes at the WTP.



Maria Scrimenti



Robert & Nancy Luchauer