

**MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
UPDATE FROM HURRICANES HELENE & MILTON
ENGLEWOOD WATER DISTRICT BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WESTCOAST CHURCH 240 PINE STREET, ENGLEWOOD, FL 34223
OCTOBER 31, 2024 @ 8:30 A.M.**

Board of Supervisors:

Robert C. Stern, Jr., Chair
Lani Gaver, Vice-Chair
Sydney B. Crampton
Dennis Pinkiewicz
Taylor Meals

Staff:

Mike Collard, Administrator
Robert H. Berntsson, District Counsel
Keith R. Ledford, Jr., P.E. Technical Support Manager
Dewey Futch, Water Operations Manager
David Larson, Wastewater Operations Manager
Lisa Hawkins, Finance Director
Teresa Herzog, Executive Assistant

1. The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call to establish a quorum.
2. **ANNOUNCEMENTS – Additions or Deletions –** Attorney Berntsson stated he had received and sent copies to the board members Mr. Collard's letter stating he retired from work with the Englewood Water District under his contract. Further discussion to take place under the Attorney's report. Mr. Ledford was then seated with the board as Acting Administrator.
3. **PUBLIC INPUT**
 - a. Joanne Agostarola – 11180 McDermott Ct / Ms. Agostarola questioned the procedure for public notification for emergency meetings, protocol for approving more residences and EWD's capacity to serve the growing community.
 - b. Art Larson – 101 N Cayman Isles / Mr. Larson questioned if developers help fund improvements to the water system and what EWD requires monetarily from developers to help with growth.
 - c. Jane Hunter – 180 Stratford Rd / Ms. Hunter questioned why the sewer system floods every time there is a storm and if EWD is adequately staffed. She also expressed appreciation of a local district not owned by an outsider.
4. **DISCUSSION**
 - a. Update from Hurricanes Helene and Milton
 1. Keith R. Ledford, Jr., PE, Acting Administrator – Mr. Leadford read his prepared statement: Approximately 25 months ago, Hurricane Ian made landfall just south of our District as a Category 4 storm and caused a magnitude of damage to our District that most of our employees had never seen before. Our system was severely impacted by Ian to include the loss of our standby generator at the WRF which delayed us from being able to work on getting the sewer system up and operating. Additionally, the flows from our Distribution system were extremely high causing us to shut down the system to minimize the amount of potable water that the system was losing. Staff spent weeks getting the water and sewer systems restored. Following Hurricane Ian, the Board held a similar Board Meeting, here at this vary location, to allow the public to provide their feedback of where we may have come up short. Those comments along

with staff's experience recovering from Ian helped us develop an after-action report that we have used to attempt to improve on our emergency responses. Many of the public comments were related to the minimal or lack of notifications that were being sent to the public. In response to those comments, staff worked hard to implement our CodeRED Alert system, which allowed us to send alerts, both system wide and to smaller targeted areas, throughout these recent storms. As with any "new" system, there is a learning curve, and we hope to continue to improve on the messaging that is being sent out during these types of events. The one thing that Hurricane Ian did not prepare us for was the storm surge caused by a storm that passes us just off our west coast or more recently, one that makes landfall just to our North. We got a glimpse of that in August of 2023 when Hurricane Idalia came up the west coast and eventually made landfall as a CAT 3 in the Big Bend area of Florida. Unfortunately, I was on vacation during this event so I cannot speak firsthand of the experiences during/immediately after the storm but one key take away was the susceptibility of Manasota Key Road at middle beach and our water main that lays beneath it. Fast forward to August of 2024 where Hurricane Debby slowly made its way up the west coast and eventually made landfall as a CAT 1 in the Big Bend area of Florida. While Debby was not a large storm, the impacts the rainfall and surge along portions of Manasota Key wreaked havoc on our sewer system as it tried to keep up. Flows from this storm far exceeded the WRF's rated capacity and severely taxed our collection system. Rainfalls of this nature are not something you would typically design for, much less the impacts of the surge water on Manasota Key that we continued to pump to minimize any potential sewer spills. During the month of August, we experienced numerous rain events that caused our crews to work long hours in order to keep the system running. Now fast forward to September 26, 2024, when Hurricane Helene paralleled the west coast of Florida with an eventual landfall as a CAT 4 in the Big Bend area of Florida. Both Charlotte and Sarasota County had issued evacuation orders for the barrier island while the storm was approaching. Protocol dictates that we shut down the water system to these barrier islands, followed by the pumping down of our collection system. This allows us to isolate the system in hopes of being able to preserve the remaining system on the mainland. While the day was mixed with periods of sunshine followed by torrential downpours, staff continued to work during the storm to keep the system operational as long as possible. However, no one knew what was in store for us later that afternoon. As the surge began to rise, it was apparent that we were no longer going to be able to keep portions of the sewer system going. One by one, the vacuum systems became waterlogged, and the stations went into high level lock out. While most of our gravity systems were minorly affected, they were able to stay in operation and pump down as the collection system pressures subsided. The water distribution system remained operational during the storm and did not lose pressure. The next day, staff began working on getting the vacuum systems back operational. Due to how the system works, it is a very slow and methodical process. At any point in time, a "new" vacuum leak can cause the system to crash and undo everything that was completed. While the mainland was being attended to, staff began accessing the lift stations on both Sandpiper Key and Manasota Key. A handful of the lift stations panels were partially

submerged during the storm and required replacement of breakers, starters and communication modules in order to properly function. Meanwhile, the Distribution staff was attempting to assess the water mains to determine if any damage was sustained. As we saw with Hurricane Idalia, Manasota Key Road at middle beach was washed out again, this time partially exposing approximately 150-200' of pipe. In the end, staff was able to get almost all of the water and sewer services restored by October 2nd, with the final boiled water notices rescinded on October 4th.

Three days after the last boiled water notices were rescinded, staff began preparing for our next challenge, Hurricane Milton. Hurricane Milton became the second-most intense Atlantic hurricane ever recorded over the Gulf of Mexico reaching Cat 5 status twice before eventually making landfall as a CAT 3 near Siesta Key on October 9th. With surge predictions higher than seen with Helene, both Counties order mandatory evacuations for the barrier island, as well as, almost all of the EWD service area. Water and sewer services were suspended again to the barrier islands. In an effort to save some of the important components that we had just replaced in the lift station panels, once the lift stations were pumped down, staff removed some of the critical components in hopes that it would allow for a quicker recovery. As Milton made landfall that night, the surge heights exceeded those previously seen with Helene and created widespread devastation. During the storm, the water distribution system lost pressure and was ultimately shut down in order to preserve the potable water storage volumes. On October 10th, the recovery efforts began with an assessment of our facilities. We quickly realized that most of Englewood was without power. By day's end, less than 20% of our sewer system had commercial power with another 10% being operated on generator power. Again, staff began the process of getting the lift stations pumped down. As those stations were reenergized by FPL, we continued to jockey generators to those without power. While the collections department was working on the sewer system, the distribution department began working on restoring water service. Water service to the mainland was fully restored by October 12th with the boiled water rescission for this area on October 14th. Restoring services to Manasota Key proved even harder than with Helene. The components that were taken out of the lift station panels now had to be reinstalled while other components needed to be replaced in order to get it running again. Portions of the water main at middle beach had been washed away and exposed in a few other locations on Manasota Key. In the end, all of the water and sewer system for the District was back in operation by the morning of October 19th, with the rescission of the boiled water notice for Sandpipe and Manasota Key being issued on October 22nd. While everything may be back up and running at this time, it is important to note that there is still a lot of recovery efforts that will need to be completed. In the end, the staff has worked extremely hard during these events over the last three months, many times putting their personal needs aside in order to restore the services to our customers. They should be applauded because without them, none of this would be possible.

2. Dewey Futch, Water Operations Manager – Mr. Futch read his prepared statement:

Hurricane Helene

The week before Helene we began preparing for what might come fueling trucks and equipment, stocking up on supplies, and cleaning up any debris from the yard or any other of the district's properties that might be affected.

On 9-25 at 7pm we shut the water off to the barrier islands.

On 9-26 that afternoon we began experiencing storm surge on the barrier islands and coastal bay areas. That evening distribution worked with collections pumping lift stations and chasing vacuum leaks in the system through the night.

On 9-27 distribution began restoring water from 1921 beach Rd – 2710 N Beach Rd.

On 9-28 we restored water from 2710 N Beach Rd – 6111 N Beach Rd.

On 9-29 we started working the North end of Manasota Key and restoring water pressure from 8000 Manasota Key Rd – 7430 Manasota Key Rd.

On 9-30 We restored water from 7430 Manasota Beach Rd to the 7000 block. Also, the private end of N Manasota Beach Rd from 712 – 860 N Manasota Key Rd.

On 10-1 we started restoring water pressure to Gulf Blvd from 942 – 1505 Gulf Blvd including all side streets.

On 10-2 we started restoring from 7000 Manasota Beach Rd – 1780 Manasota Beach Rd. A new valve was also installed on the North side of blind pass / Middle beach and all water service was restored from that new valve at middle beach north to the end of the key.

From 9-27 portions of the barrier islands were under boil water notices and all was rescinded by 10-4-24.

On 10-3 Distribution went out to middle beach and covered a portion water main that was exposed by the storm with bags of concrete and covered it with sand.

484 work orders were generated for distribution during this event.

Hurricane Milton

On 10-8 less than a week after we finished with Helene, we began shutting the barrier islands off at 12pm.

On 10-9 Milton made landfall, all personnel were off the road for this day. That evening during the course of the storm we were unable to maintain pressure due to leaks in the system, the decision was made to shut off the High Service pumps and close the valves on the storage tanks to maintain water reserves.

On 10-10 we routed water to Englewood Hospital, isolating the rest of the distribution system.

On 10-11 we opened the system back up to Englewood except for the barrier islands. Distribution began working calls that came in for leaks in the system on multiple homes.

On 10-12 we continued working leaks in the system throughout the day and into the next on 10-13.

On Sunday 10-13 we began turning water on to the key to as many customers as possible from 1921 Beach Rd to 6131 Manasota Key Rd. Then on the North end of Manasota Key we restored water from 2055 Lemon Ave south to 7445 Manasota Key Rd. On Sunday distribution also cut in a valve for collections on a vacuum main behind Key Agency.

On 10-14 We rescinded the boil water notice for everything except Manasota Key. We started restoring Gulf Blvd from the White Elephant to 1519 Gulf Blvd.

On 10-15 we restored water from 6131 N Manasota Beach Rd all the way to the south end of middle beach. We also restored water service from 712 N Manasota Key Rd to 860 N Manasota Key Rd. By the end of the day on 10-15 all water was restored to the barrier islands. Throughout this event a precautionary boil water notice was issued to the key on multiple days and rescinded on 10-22.

673 work orders were issued for distribution during this event.

c. David Larson, Wastewater Operations Manager – Mr. Larson read his prepared statement:

WRF:

1. Average flows for this time of the year are normally 1.5 MGD, the past 3 months averages have been 2.5 MGD: During the storm events averages have been 3.5 MGD to 5 MGD, well over plant capacity.
2. Damage: Helene – No damage. Milton: Lost partial FPL power within the plant but the generator came on.

Collections:

1. Helene – Gravity system mostly has FPL power and was functional. Lift Stations on the Key had water damage. The vacuum system was the main problem but the system was mostly back up by 9/29/2024. Milton – the entire system lost FPL power creating a big problem with the vacuum system and SOS septic was used extensively during the recovery. Many lift stations on the Key had water damage, most are running but need more work. Two lift stations are still not completely functional.
2. Many clean outs and vents were damaged by the storm when residents piled debris on top of them, or when the debris was hauled off. Collections and Distribution crews were commended for their work to get the systems back up.
3. Assistance was provided by AirVac and Charlotte County.

d. Lisa Hawkins, Finance Director – Ms. Hawkins read her prepared statement:

Customer Service:

1. Helene – customer service was staffed Friday and Saturday until 11:00 pm

and all-day Sunday and Monday. Milton – they answered phones Friday thru Monday until 10:00 pm. EWD felt that it was important to take calls in person during the disasters, in order to give excellent customer service.

2. Meter readers and the Backflow Technician also worked many hours assisting the distribution department helping them get back up and running.

Finance:

1. We have spent about \$166,000 on the two hurricanes so far, not including labor costs which have not been calculated yet. About \$77,000 of this was for the services of SOS Septic and \$40,000 was parts that we used from inventory. It was noted that not all invoices have been received yet. A FEMA claim will be submitted once they start accepting claims.

At conclusion of staff reports, board consensus was communication and continual education are key in keeping the customers informed, and an after-activation report will be prepared. During discussion, it was made clear that additional assistance from outside vendors will likely be requested to help EWD repair all the broken vents and cleanouts once debris is picked up. The watermain on middle beach was also discussed and an estimate for replacement/upsizing of the main is expected before the next meeting. Elevating the lift stations at the beach and repair/replacement of sewer vents with possible grant funding was also touched on. Development and growth within the EWD service area was explained. Mr. Ledford then concluded his report.

5. ACTION ITEMS – None

6. ATTORNEY'S REPORT – Robert H. Berntsson – Attorney Berntsson reiterated that a letter from Mike Collard was received yesterday stating the Mr. Collard would be retiring from the District, as within his employment agreement, a 90-day notice was necessary and his last day of employment would be February 2, 2025. Under his contract as well, there is provision that the board can waive any or all of that 90-day period for him to be relieved of the administrative duties. Mr. Collard has indicated that if the board does wish to exercise that, he would be happy to serve as an Administration and Operations Advisor to the board during the 90-day period to provide feed-back and recommendations based on his tenure at EWD. Attorney Berntsson recommended the board accept the offer, waive the 90-day Administrator duties and allow him to serve as this advisor to the board during that 90-day period.

Mr. Meals moved, **“for that,”** seconded by Mr. Pinkiewicz. Ms. Gaver clarified the motion, **“to waive the 90-days so he will not be here and we can get information from him as needed.”**

UNANIMOUS

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Further discussion will be held at the next meeting.

7. OLD BUSINESS – None
8. NEW BUSINESS – None
9. PUBLIC COMMENT – ANY TOPIC

a. Chris Kenealy – 1024 Topelis Dr / Ms. Kenealy questioned the age of the infrastructure, and how EWD is funded and offered her appreciation of staff's hard work during the storms.

b. Theresa Emmanuel – 11059 Artists Ave / Ms. Emmanuel thanked staff for the job they do, questioned why EWD updates are not provided by Sarasota County. She spoke of her opposition to another development on Artists Avenue and expressed her concern of adding additional customers to the infrastructure. She also offered to serve on any committee as a citizen of Englewood.

10. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

a. Mr. Pinkiewicz questioned whether additional staff should be hired, adding that the board wants to assist staff in what they need to do.

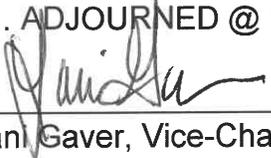
b. Mr. Meals commented on the storm surge that Englewood has never seen before and Mr. Collard's retirement.

c. Ms. Crampton commented on protecting the environment, being adaptable, looking to the future and working together.

d. Ms. Gaver commented on the CodeRED alert system and the need to educate the public on our system.

e. Chair Stern commented on the speed our systems were recovered and all board members thanked all staff for the work done during both storms.

11. ADJOURNED @ 10:15 A.M.



Lani Gaver, Vice-Chair

/tlh

APPROVED