



Memorandum

Date: May 8, 2018

To: Honorable Mayor and Board of Commissioners

Through: Mark LeCouris, City Manager

From: Ron Harring, Finance Director
Paul Smith, Public Services Director

Subject: Public Hearing: Proposed Water and Sewer Rate Plan and Revisions to Chapter 20 of the Code of Ordinances

Recommendation

Approve Ordinance 2018-08 to make specific changes to *City Code of Ordinances, Chapter 20, Water and Sewers*.

Background

The City's current 10-year water and sewer utility rate plan is set to expire at the end of Fiscal Year 2019 (September 30, 2019). This past February, City staff completed an updated water and sewer rate study to include a comprehensive review of water and sewer enterprise fund operational and capital needs and associated revenue sufficiency. In completing the study, projects and expenses were carefully evaluated, prioritized, reduced and/or deferred where possible to minimize any required rate adjustments while meeting long-term needs.

The results of the rate study indicate that the previously approved Fiscal Year 2019 rate increase can be **reduced** from 6.75% to 5.0% for both water and sewer, and successive annual increases through FY28 can be sustained at a minimal **inflationary level of 2.9%**. This is below the average inflationary increase for the various utility expense categories of 4.3% and below the range of planned annual increases of other utilities in the area of 4% to 11.5%.

It is recommended that a new 10-year rate plan starting in Fiscal Year 2019 be established and implemented in accordance with rate study recommendations and the proposed Ordinance 2018-08 to sustain future operational and capital needs into the future.

The rate study evaluation and results were presented in February 2018 to the Budget Advisory Committee who recommended implementation. The results were also presented at the March 20, 2018 Regular Session. Public notice has been sent to customers advertising the May 8, 2018 and May 22, 2018 Public Hearings of this ordinance pursuant to Chapter 180 F.S.

Ordinance 2018-08 presents the proposed rate plan and also revises *City Code of Ordinances, Chapter 20, Water and Sewers* as follows:

- ❖ Decreasing previously approved water & sewer rates for FY19 from 6.75% to 5% per the plan
- ❖ Increasing future years at 2.9% for water and sewer for FY 2020 through FY2028 per the plan
- ❖ Applying increases to reclaimed water rates for same period
 - Currently \$0.95 per thousand gallons;
 - Increasing the meter/ tap-in fees for reclaimed water service from \$300 to \$350
- ❖ Establishing a flat monthly sewer rate for those without water service
- ❖ Misc. administrative revisions (i.e. outdated references, general document maintenance, etc.)
- ❖ Providing for an effective date immediately upon adoption

ORDINANCE NO. 2018-08

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF TARPON SPRINGS, FLORIDA AMENDING PORTIONS OF CHAPTER 20 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF TARPON SPRINGS; REMOVING REFERENCES TO PAST IMPACT FEES; INCREASING THE TAP-IN FEES FOR NEW RECLAIMED WATER SERVICE; DECREASING THE RATE OF INCREASE FOR WATER RATES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019 (OCTOBER 1, 2018 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2019; INCREASING WATER RATES EACH YEAR BEGINNING ON OCTOBER 1, 2019 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2028; ESTABLISHING A FLAT MONTHLY SEWER RATE; DECREASING THE RATE OF INCREASE FOR SEWER RATES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019 (OCTOBER 1, 2018 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2019; INCREASING SEWER AND RECLAIMED WATER RATES EACH YEAR BEGINNING ON OCTOBER 1, 2019 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2028; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ORDINANCE.

WHEREAS, the City's current 10-year water and sewer utility rate plan is set to expire at the end of Fiscal Year 2019 (September 30, 2019)

WHEREAS, the City of Tarpon Springs has completed a water and sewer rate study to include a comprehensive review of water and sewer enterprise fund operational and capital needs and associated revenue sufficiency; and

WHEREAS, such rate study indicates that the previously approved Fiscal Year 2019 rate increase can be reduced from 6.75% to 5.0% for both water and sewer, and successive annual increases can be sustained at an inflationary level to reflect the rising costs of goods and services; and

WHEREAS, it is recommended that a new 10-year rate plan starting in Fiscal Year 2019 be established and implemented in accordance with rate study recommendations to sustain future operational and capital needs into the future; and

WHEREAS, proper notice has been sent to customers pursuant to Chapter 180 F.S., and it is determined and found by the Board of Commissioners that water and sewer rates must be raised over a number of years to provide a viable water and sewer system to serve the people of Tarpon Springs and to meet bond covenants; now, therefore

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF TARPON SPRINGS, FLORIDA, THAT:

Section 1. That subparagraph (a)(2) of Section 20-1 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Tarpon Springs be amended in its entirety as follows:

- “(2) The impact fee for the period October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2018 shall be as follows for each single family residential unit (ERU):
- a. Water service impact fee, \$2,347.22.
 1. Thereafter, the water service impact fee shall be increased or decreased annually, effective as of the October 1 of every year, by the percentage which the ENR-CCI for August of the then current year has increased or decreased over the ENR-CCI for August of the year preceding.

b. Sewer service impact fee, \$1,577.28.

1. Thereafter, the sewer service impact fee shall be increased or decreased as provided in the preceding paragraph. “

Section 2. That subparagraph (d) of Section 20-1 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Tarpon Springs be amended as follows:

(d) *Reclaimed water.* Reclaimed water shall be available within the city as determined by the city. A **meter and** tap-in fee of ~~\$300.00~~ **\$350.00** shall be required of all reclaimed water customers. A deposit of \$40.00 shall be required of all reclaimed water customers. The required deposit shall be increased to four times the average monthly charges (or shorter period of time if a one-year account information is not available), if service is terminated for nonpayment. No impact fees or meter charges will be assessed on reclaimed water customers. The city may require additional, fees for tap in as determined by the city to recover reasonable costs for sidewalk or road restoration, difficult installations, or other circumstances that would result in an increased cost of tap-in. These costs that cause the increase in tap-in fees shall be enumerated in the customer's tap-in fee invoice.

Section 3. That Section 20-2 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Tarpon Springs shall be amended in its entirety to read as follows:

“§ 20-2. - WATER RATES ESTABLISHED.

(a) Water rates for all water service provided for the period October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2018 shall be as indicated in Exhibit A.

EXHIBIT A
Effective October 1, 2017

WATER

Residential, Individually Metered:

Base Facility Charge:

Meter Size	Customer Charge	Readiness-to-Serve Charge	Total Base Facility Charge
All meter sizes	\$3.74	\$17.42	\$21.16

Gallonage Charge:

Block	Usage Range in Gallons per Month	Rate per 1,000 Gallons
1	0 to 5,000	\$3.99
2	5,001 to 10,000	\$7.97

3	10,001 to 15,000	\$9.98
4	15,001 to 20,000	\$12.50
5	20,001 to 25,000	\$15.54
6	Greater than 25,000	\$19.44

Residential, Master Metered:

Base Facility Charge:

Meter Size	Customer Charge per Account		Readiness-to-Serve Charge per Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU)				
All Meter Sizes	\$3.74	+	\$17.42	×	ERUs	=	Total Base Facility Charge
Where:							
ERUs = Number of units × ERU Equivalency Multiplier, and							
ERU Equivalency Multiplier = 0.7 Per unit unless otherwise calculated based upon actual usage history.							

Note: All multi-unit residential accounts will have an equivalency multiplier of 0.7. Accounts with greater than ten units can request that their equivalency multiplier be established based the maximum month usage per unit of their most recent twelve month billing history.

Gallonage Charge:

Block	Usage Range in Gallons per Month	Rate per 1,000 Gallons
1	0 to 5,000 × ERUs	\$3.99
2	5,000 × ERUs+1 to 10,000 × ERUs	\$7.97
3	10,000 × ERUs+1 to 15,000 × ERUs	\$9.98
4	15,000 × ERUs+1 to 20,000 × ERUs	\$12.50

5	20,000 × ERUs+1 to 25,000 × ERUs	\$15.54
6	Greater than 25,000 × ERUs	\$19.44

Non Residential:

Base Facility Charge:

Meter Size	Customer Charge		Readiness-to-Serve Charge Per Meter Equivalency Factor		Meter Equivalency Factor		Total Readiness-to-Serve Charge	Total Base Facility Charge
5/8 × 3/4"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	1.00	=	\$ 17.42)	\$ 21.16
1"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	2.50	=	\$ 43.55)	\$ 47.29
1-1/2"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	5.00	=	\$ 87.10)	\$ 90.84
2"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	8.00	=	\$ 139.36)	\$ 143.10
3"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	16.00	=	\$ 278.72)	\$ 282.46
4"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	25.00	=	\$ 435.50)	\$ 439.24
6"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	50.00	=	\$ 871.00)	\$ 874.74
8"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	80.00	=	\$ 1,393.60)	\$1,397.34
10"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	115.00	=	\$ 2,003.30)	\$2,007.04

Gallonage Charge:

Block	Usage Range in Gallons per Month	Rate per 1,000 Gallons
1	0 to 5,000	\$3.99
2	Greater than 5,000	\$7.97

Irrigation:

Base Facility Charge:

Meter Size	Customer Charge		Readiness-to-Serve Charge Per Meter Equivalency Factor		Meter Equivalency Factor		Total Readiness-to-Serve Charge	Total Base Facility Charge
5/8 × 3/4"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	1.00	=	\$ 17.42)	\$ 21.16
1"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	2.50	=	\$ 43.55)	\$ 47.29
1-1/2"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	5.00	=	\$ 87.10)	\$ 90.84
2"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	8.00	=	\$ 139.36)	\$ 143.10
3"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	16.00	=	\$ 278.72)	\$ 282.46
4"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	25.00	=	\$ 435.50)	\$ 439.24
6"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	50.00	=	\$ 871.00)	\$ 874.74
8"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	80.00	=	\$ 1,393.60)	\$1,397.34
10"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	115.00	=	\$ 2,003.30)	\$2,007.04

Gallonage Charge:

Block	Usage Range in Gallons per Month	Rate per 1,000 Gallons
1	0 to 5,000 × Meter Equiv Factor	\$ 7.97
2	5,000 × Meter Equiv Factor + 1 to 10,000×Meter Equiv Factor	\$ 9.98
3	10,000 × Meter Equiv Factor + 1 to 15,000×Meter Equiv Factor	\$ 12.50
4	15,000 × Meter Equiv Factor + 1 to 20,000×Meter Equiv Factor	\$ 15.54
5	Greater than 20,000 × Meter Equiv Factor	\$ 19.44

Fire Service:

Base Facility Charge:

Meter Size	Customer Charge		Readiness-to-Serve Charge Per Meter Equivalency Factor		Meter Equivalency Factor		Total Readiness-to-Serve Charge	Total Base Facility Charge
5/8 × 3/4"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	1.00	=	\$ 17.42)	\$ 21.16
1"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	2.50	=	\$ 43.55)	\$ 47.29
1-1/2"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	5.00	=	\$ 87.10)	\$ 90.84
2"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	8.00	=	\$ 139.36)	\$ 143.10
3"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	16.00	=	\$ 278.72)	\$ 282.46
4"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	25.00	=	\$ 435.50)	\$ 439.24
6"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	50.00	=	\$ 871.00)	\$ 874.74
8"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	80.00	=	\$ 1,393.60)	\$1,397.34
10"	\$3.74	+(	\$17.42	×	115.00	=	\$ 2,003.30)	\$2,007.04

Gallage Charge:

Block	Rate per 1,000 Gallons
All Usage	\$3.99

- (b) All irrigation accounts terminated at the customer's request and where the meter is removed shall not be charged the monthly base rate. Water meters may be pulled if the customer has obtained a demolition permit to remove a structure. For each field test of a 3/4" or 1" potable water meter there will be a charge of \$50.00 and a charge of \$100.00 for each bench test. For each field test of a 1 1/2" or 2" potable water meter there will be a charge of \$100.00 and a charge of \$200.00 for each bench test. Meters 3" and over that are tested outside a scheduled annual test shall be charged \$400.00. The necessity for testing shall be determined by the Water Division. In the event a meter defect has resulted in an overcharge to a customer, there will be no charge for the test.
- (c) For fiscal years 2019 through 2028, the water rates set forth in subparagraph (a) of this section shall be automatically adjusted to increase on October 1 over the previous year's rates by the following percentages defined in the column "Annual Rate Increase".

Fiscal Year	Annual Rate Increase
2019	5.0%
2020	2.9%
2021	2.9%
2022	2.9%
2023	2.9%
2024	2.9%
2025	2.9%
2026	2.9%
2027	2.9%
2028	2.9%

- (d) In the event that the City must purchase water wholesale from Pinellas County for a period longer than 30 consecutive days, and such purchase represents a cost higher than the City’s cost to produce water, the water rates set forth herein shall be adjusted upward to the extent required to recover such costs only for such time that the wholesale purchase continues to be in effect following the initial 30 day period. Upon the City returning to producing its own water, the rates shall revert to the rates currently in effect for that fiscal year per subparagraph (c). “

Section 4. That Section 20-4 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Tarpon Springs shall be amended in its entirety to read as follows:

“§20-4. SEWER RATES ESTABLISHED.

- (a) Sewer rates for all sewer service provided for the period October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2018 shall be indicated in Exhibit B.

EXHIBIT B
Effective October 1, 2017
SEWER

Residential, Individually Metered:

Base Facility Charge:

Meter Size	Customer Charge	Readiness-to-Serve Charge	Total Base Facility Charge
All meter sizes	\$2.05	\$14.80	\$16.85

Gallonage Charge:

Block	Usage Range in Gallons per Month	Rate per 1,000 Gallons
1	0 to 5,000	\$4.41
2	5,001 to 20,000	\$8.85
3	20,001 to 25,000	\$0.00
4	Greater than 25,000	\$0.00

Residential, Master Metered:

Base Facility Charge:

Meter Size	Customer Charge per Account		Readiness-to-Serve Charge per Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU)				
All Meter Sizes	\$2.05	+	\$14.80	×	ERUs	=	Total Base Facility Charge
Where:							
ERUs = Number of units × ERU Equivalency Multiplier, and							
ERU Equivalency Multiplier = 0.7 Per unit unless otherwise calculated based upon actual usage history.							

Gallonage Charge:

Block	Usage Range in Gallons per Month	Rate per 1,000 Gallons
1	0 to 5,000 × ERUs	\$4.41
2	5,000 × ERUs+1 to 20,000 × ERUs	\$8.85
3	20,000 × ERUs+1 to 25,000 × ERUs	\$0.00
4	Greater than 25,000 × ERUs	\$0.00

Non Residential:

Base Facility Charge:

Meter Size	Customer Charge		Readiness-to-Serve Charge Per Meter Equivalency Factor		Meter Equivalency Factor		Total Readiness-to-Serve Charge	Total Base Facility Charge
5/8 × 3/4"	\$2.05	+(	\$14.80	×	1.00	=	\$ 14.80)	\$16.85
1"	\$2.05	+(	\$14.80	×	2.50	=	\$ 37.00)	\$39.05
1-1/2"	\$2.05	+(	\$14.80	×	5.00	=	\$ 74.00)	\$76.05
2"	\$2.05	+(	\$14.80	×	8.00	=	\$ 118.40)	\$120.45
3"	\$2.05	+(	\$14.80	×	16.00	=	\$ 236.80)	\$238.85
4"	\$2.05	+(	\$14.80	×	25.00	=	\$ 370.00)	\$372.05
6"	\$2.05	+(	\$14.80	×	50.00	=	\$ 740.00)	\$742.05
8"	\$2.05	+(	\$14.80	×	80.00	=	\$ 1,184.00)	\$1,186.05
10"	\$2.05	+(	\$14.80	×	115.00	=	\$ 1,702.00)	\$1,704.05

Gallonge Charge:

Block	Usage Range in Gallons per Month	Rate per 1,000 Gallons
1	0 to 5,000	\$4.41
2	Greater than 5,000	\$8.85

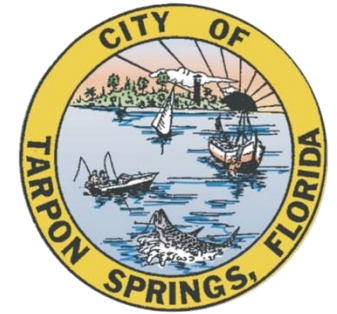
- (b) For sewer customers that do not have metered City water service, there shall be a flat rate for sewer service of \$47.93 per month for the period October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2018.
- (c) For the period October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2018, all reclaimed water accounts provided service shall be charged \$0.95 for each 1,000 gallons of reclaimed water used per month.

- (d) For fiscal years 2019 through 2028, the sewer and reclaimed water rates set forth in subparagraphs (a), (b), and (c) of this section shall be automatically adjusted to increase on October 1 over the previous year's rates by the following percentages defined in the column "Annual Rate Increase".

Fiscal Year	Annual Rate Increase
2019	5.0%
2020	2.9%
2021	2.9%
2022	2.9%
2023	2.9%
2024	2.9%
2025	2.9%
2026	2.9%
2027	2.9%
2028	2.9%

”

Section 5. That this Ordinance shall become effective immediately upon adoption.



CITY OF TARPON SPRINGS, FLORIDA

Public Hearing:

Proposed Water – Sewer Rate Plan and Revisions
to Chapter 20 of the Code of Ordinances

Board of Commissioners Meeting
May 8, 2018 Regular Session

Recommendations

1. Approve Ordinance 2018-08 to make specific changes to Chapter 20: Water and Sewers, including:
 - ❖ Decreasing previously approved water & sewer rates for FY19 from 6.75% to 5% per the plan
 - ❖ Increasing future years at 2.9% for water and sewer for FY 2020 through FY2028 per the plan
 - ❖ Applying increases to reclaimed water rates for same period
 - Currently \$0.95 per thousand gallons;
 - Increasing the meter/ tap-in fees for reclaimed water service from \$300 to \$350
 - ❖ Establishing a flat monthly sewer rate for those without water service
 - ❖ Misc. administrative revisions (i.e. outdated references, general document maintenance, etc.)
 - ❖ Providing for an effective date immediately upon adoption

Water-Sewer Rate Plan through FY 2028

Timeline:

- Revenue Sufficiency Study Presentation to Budget Advisory Committee on February 8, 2018.
- Revenue Sufficiency Study Presentation to Board on March 20, 2018.
- Notice of Public Hearings on Water & Sewer Rates to utility customers with April 2018 bills as required by Florida Statute 180.136
- May 8, 2018 first reading of Ordinance 2018-08 .
- May 22, 2018 second reading of Ordinance 2018-08

Water-Sewer Rate Plan through FY 2028

Financial Highlights:

- Funds \$58 million of CIP FY 2018 thru 2028.
- Unrestricted Fund Balance above 25% minimum.
- Debt Service Coverage above requirements.
- No financing is required.
- Reduces rate of increases, even previously approved FY 2019 increase.

Water-Sewer Rate Plan through FY 2028

CIP Highlights:

The CIP provides the necessary funding to invest in infrastructure rehabilitation and replacement and maintain the efficient operations of the Water Plant, Sewage Treatment Plant and Lift Stations.

➤ Key initiatives within the **10-year CIP** are:

➤ Water Pipe Replacement Program	\$8.0 million
➤ Sewer Lines Maintenance / Repair	\$3.5 million
➤ Lift Station Rehab	\$2.2 million
➤ Future Water Wells	\$1.6 million
➤ Hydrant Improvements	\$1.6 million
➤ Sewer Expansion	\$1.6 million
➤ Reclaimed Water Expansion	\$1.5 million
➤ Solar Energy Improvements at Water Plant	\$2.5 million
➤ Beckett Bridge Water/Sewer Lines	<u>\$1.0 million</u>
➤ Total	\$23.5 million

Comparison of Rates

- A survey was completed of 28 area utilities to estimate relative water and sewer monthly bills under current and projected future rate scenarios
- An average monthly water usage of 6,500 gallons was used for the comparison
- Projected rates are estimates only and are based upon limited survey information.
- Where data was not available, an average annual percent increase of 6.5% was utilized based upon the range of values surveyed.
- This is not intended to predict the rates of other utilities, but rather is a means of a hypothetical area comparison.

Results of Comparison

Current (FY18)			Projected 5 Years (FY23)			Projected 10 Years (FY28)		
	Water and Sewer Total	Ranking		Water and Sewer Total	Ranking		Water and Sewer Total	Ranking
High	\$ 128	1	High	\$ 176	1	High	\$ 241	1
Average	\$ 84	14	Average	\$ 112	14	Average	\$ 150	14
Low	\$ 43	28	Low	\$ 59	28	Low	\$ 80	28
City of Tarpon Springs	\$ 105	5	City of Tarpon Springs	\$ 124	7	City of Tarpon Springs	\$ 143	18

- In future years, our low inflationary increases will serve to meet our needs while bringing us closer to the area average
- Continued control of costs into the future will allow us to be less than average for our rates

Conclusions

- No future increases leaves insufficient funding
 - Operating fund balance exhausted by FY28
 - Inadequate debt coverage
 - Approximately \$20M of CIP (about 34%) that could not be completed without additional debt
- Inflationary increases fund needs without debt and provides *critical funding for ongoing system sustainability*
- The *Budget Advisory Committee* has reviewed and *recommends the plan as proposed*

City of Tarpon Springs

Re: Notice Of Public Hearings On Water & Sewer Rates 4/16 2018

I have received the above notice and I would like to have my comments Stated for the record relative to this notice.

I live at 432 hope Street in Tarpon Springs. This is a second home for me. My husband and I pay our taxes and our bills for this residence. It is not a rental. However, the proposed water and sewage rates are becoming so expensive that I protest this proposed rate hike regardless of the good intentions of safe potable water.

1. The way in which we are billed creates a hardship on me and no doubt, others who are in residence part-time. Our house is small, yet I am billed almost \$80. A month for these services while not in residence.
2. The bills that we receive are elided together in such a way that part time homeowners are charged unfairly.
3. I have no problem contributing to the services offered by Tarpon Springs while there. However, while not in residence I am being charged the same rate for Sewer and Garbage pickup, not to mention a hefty bogus charge for "water ready" hookup to the water main but how many times can you charge for water ready? When you lump all these charges together in your billing process, you garner monies for the City unfairly.
4. I believe I speak for many in my situation. This is a gold mine for the city but does not serve tax paying part-time homeowners fairly.
5. I seek some kind of equitable remedy, for charges not rendered/used while not in residence.

I don't mind some charge, but this has become ridiculous. I propose some kind of different billing practices, separating out these services. Presently, the only option is to have the water turned off, and then turned on again (of course, for a big fee) which makes this often prohibitive. Yet it does nothing, to alleviate the ridiculous notion that I should be charged for Sewage, Water and Garbage together, that I am not using for months at a time.

Further, I have attended numerous meetings in the past as we reviewed a new water proposal and heard about the many failed and costly mistakes and false starts in attempts to achieve better water sources. This is not the fault of the ratepayer, but falls squarely on the elected officials that bungled these attempts. We are already paying for a legacy of abandoned well projects to name one, and I have no reassurance that this will be any better.

A TANGENTIAL ISSUE, when, in 2016 we needed to have a new main from the street to our house, the plumber in accordance with the permit laws, drew a permit to do this work. The city made him put in an above ground commercial backflow at the juncture of the City street main to our house. The plumber complained that this was for commercial use and did not understand why this was demanded. We complied. Upon my return this year, in November, I found that, this backflow had been removed by the water department. This change in pressure caused, a burst main under my house shortly after I got there. I had to pay to have this fixed. Heaven knows what this cost me in water. The town water department sent out someone that evening to address my concerns, while the plumber

fixed the water main running under my house. The water service was still carrying the expensive bronze fixture (we'd paid for) around in their truck. I should have been notified of this, as it was expensive and my property. I paid for it. Secondly, we were told to do something that obviously was not in accord with the prescribed backflow and meter that should have been installed. Enough so that the City quietly changed it back.

The argument was made that the plumber probably wanted to "over charge or gouge" and install a needless expensive backflow treatment. He did not; he said how needless it was. IN ANY EVENT: the city of Tarpon Springs is ultimately responsible. Because a T.S. building inspector had to sign off on this job! The building department is fond of saying, these building permits and inspections are here to protect you".

Well, if this was the incorrect back flow or if the plumber was scurrilous enough to put in the incorrect fixture, then how is it that the building inspector passed it?? Where was our protection then? Why was the building department so ill informed, that while I was gone and without informing me, the water department came to the above address and replaced the offending backflow with the proper one.

I called the building department, and was passed on to some grumpy character who called back; while I was out & played a good game of phone tag, saying if I could reach him he'd discuss it with me. Of course whoever this was, was never there when I called. This misstep by the building department was never addressed or remedied. I have to repeat, regardless of accusations at the plumber, who is unfortunately deceased, it begs the question: how could the incorrect installation of a non-warranted/non-compliant backflow be OK'd and permit written off by the inspector? Why was I never informed of the situation? Had I not called at that particular time (shortly after this change was done) and I had arrived. I've no doubt that this would be swept under the carpet and the attending backflow would have gone, where??? To whom? And when the pipe connection burst as a result of these changeovers who would have been there to check if I'd not been informed of this crazy dance?

For once, I would like someone to take responsibility. I would like a letter explaining to me what, when, why and what they are going to do about this.

Given the above; how can I think that we are well served, and should support such a new measure, when there have been such past blunders? When the City of Tarpon puts up a one-way wall of "you give us money, but we'll not be answerable to you". The largest being the inequity in billing practices. Tarpon Springs, like many resort areas makes a good profit on property taxes that support the city and municipalities. Roads / bridges and City infrastructure are not *burdened* by the, disparaged snow birds, except when they are there. When they are, business do very well, on the backs of these birds, property taxes paid in full, with no exemptions etc. yet you may not want to kill the snowbird that laid the golden egg.

Sincerely, Claudia Kuehnl