

Council Votes to Buy Bayous Plant

The Sanibel City Council unanimously approved a contract to buy the Sanibel Bayous Package Treatment Plant and a Resolution that determined the purchase was in the public's best interest.

A public hearing was held before the Council vote, as required by State law. The Council began considering the purchase in late 2007, holding several discussions to weigh the positives and negatives, view the impact on the plant's customers, and examine citizen support, among other reviews.

The plant, which serves three neighborhoods, has been cited in the past for noncompliance with State regulations. In 2007, Sanibel received grant money that was used to analyze the plant. That analysis discovered a number of deficiencies, many of which have since been repaired by the owner.

Under the terms of the contract, the City will buy the plant for \$1 and lease some adjacent land for one year at the same price. The City will purchase 2.91 acres for \$175,000, leaving just less than two acres of land that will remain in private ownership. The zoning on that land will be changed to residential and the owner, through an agreement with the City, will have the ability to build six units in the future.

Sanibel is scheduled to close on the deal on or around March 1.

The City will add the customers served by the plant to Sanibel's centralized sewer system and shut down the plant. Plans call for the pond on the site to be filled and the plant's owner will contribute toward that project. Eventually, the land will be turned into a mangrove forest.

The City of Sanibel agreed some time ago that a centralized sewer plant would be the best environmental route for the Island. Sanibel has worked with homeowners associations in the past to switch residents to the central sewer system and disband septic systems.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection will work with the City as it takes over the plant's operations in the weeks it takes to hook up customers to City lines.