

# Spring Lake BREEZE

*Florida... the way it should be!*



## **Legislators Provide Needed Funding For Our District**

When the District received approval for the more than \$1 million Water Quality project from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), a 40% match was required. FDEP was going to contribute a grant of \$624,000 if the District could provide \$416,000. The Board of Supervisors turned to the Highlands County Legislative Delegation for help at their October 20, 2013 meeting. The residents of Spring Lake had spent close to \$4 million since 2005 on other unfunded mandates and storm water projects, and our reserves could not comfortably afford the matching funds without having to increase our yearly assessments.

From the very beginning of our quest for State funding, both Senator Grimsley and Representative Pigman were very supportive and pledged their help. It was a very long and tiring Legislative Session and there were several times that our Bill could have been eliminated by various committees if it were not for their intervention. This is the very first time since the founding of our District in 1971 that State funds have come to Spring Lake. We sincerely appreciate and thank Senator Grimsley and Representative Pigman. We also want to thank Governor Scott for his support and escaping the "veto pen." The Governor is very committed to water quality initiatives in the State, and our project fit right into his goals.

Spring Lake has been very proactive and diligent in planning projects to meet the criteria being established by the Legislature and regulatory agencies such as DEP, EPA, SFWMD, and others. In this first phase, our 81.5 acre project is going to positively affect 2,308 acres in Spring Lake, and impact the quality of water that our pump station discharges into Arbuckle Creek then travels south, eventually ending up in the Everglades.

If you feel led to do so, please contact Senator Grimsley and Representative Pigman to share your thanks and appreciation. Both individuals will be recognized by our Board at the formal groundbreaking for the project in the Fall.



*Senator Grimsley*



*Representative Pigman*

## **District Of The Year Award**

On June 19th, at the Florida Association of Special Districts Annual Conference, Spring Lake received the District of the Year Award. Staff members attending the event were taken aback by the announcement of the award because we did not fill out a nomination form; we were waiting for next year. We learned later that we were nominated by staff members at the much larger Wellington District who were aware of what was being accomplished in our small District and felt we deserved a nomination. It was a very proud moment to be recognized, made even more special by the fact someone else nominated us.

The nomination highlights the \$1 million project that was funded by FDEP and the State Legislature (see accompanying articles). It was noted that these were the very first State and Federal Grants ever awarded to Spring Lake since their incorporation in 1971. Additionally, the levee certification program that avoided larger flood insurance rates is noted, as well as the fact that our water utility has incorporated the most updated monitoring system and there has not been a District wide boil order in over 20 years. The nomination recognizes the willingness of our District to provide training consultation to other Districts, participate in FASD sponsored activities, and contribute to the FASD quarterly newsletter with thought provoking articles.

Given all the past problems that our community has faced, the success in recent years, and the positive challenges that lie ahead, we can all take pride in living in a community that has a dedicated Board and staff to ensure that Spring Lake is an appealing place to live now and in the future. Congratulations to all of us, and enjoy living in the District of the Year!!

# New Policy Governs Water Service



**Spring Lake**  
Phone #863-655-1715 Fax #863-655-4430  
wallison@springlakefl.com  
Water Department Turn On/Off Request  
Work Order # \_\_\_\_\_  
Turn (circle one):  ON  OFF Date Requested: \_\_\_\_\_  
Reason for turn on/off: \_\_\_\_\_  
Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Service Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Customer Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Spring Lake Improvement District require the presence of the customer or his agent when water service is reinstated. (Must be 18 years of age or older).  
I, \_\_\_\_\_ state that the water service may be reinstated in my absence at the residence listed above. I release and forever hold harmless Spring Lake Improvement District from any liability if water damage occurs inside my residence or to my service lines due to the water service being turned on in my absence.  
I understand that Spring Lake Improvement District has the right to disconnect / cut off the water service should the meter indicate that there is water being lost for any reason. In this case, it will be necessary to contact the Spring Lake District Office during regular business hours to have the service connected / turned on at my residence.  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

At the July Board meeting Supervisors passed Resolution 2014-07 that changes the policy for residents requesting their water be turned on or off. Effective immediately, residents must come to the office and fill out a signature form.



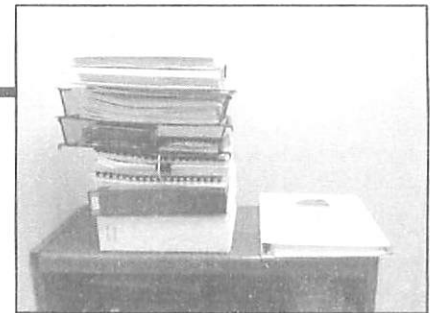
This will be required for each and every request for service to be turned on or off.

In the very near future you will be able to go to our web site, fill out the form, and sign it electronically. Until that time, you may send an e-mail to: wallison@springlakefl.com or a fax that contains your signature can be sent to 863-655-4430.

## What's Wrong With This Picture?

A picture is worth a thousand words, and here is the story.

In August of 2010 the District was approached by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to assist us with our water control plan expenses. As has been written in previous issues of *The Breeze*, they were going to offer the District a 40 year low interest loan that would allow us to spread costs well into the future. A meeting was held at their Regional offices in Royal Palm Beach with our District Manager, two Supervisors, and our Engineer, to review the application process. What started out as a great solution to our financial challenges turned into a "nightmare!" We will spare our readers what has taken place with USDA, and get right to the point of this article. After 4 years, the District has still not received approval from USDA, and as of this writing was still sending USDA more of their requests for additional information. At the Board of Supervisors meeting on July 9th, the Board voiced serious reservations on accepting the loan and, instead, continue to look into developing other funding sources.



The pile on the left of this picture represents the nearly 50 pounds of reports, maps, charts, data, letters, forms, and e-mails over the last four years working with USDA to secure a LOAN. The notebook on the right of this picture represents what FDEP required to secure a GRANT for our \$1 million project you can read about in an accompanying article. The total process with FDEP took less than 6 months! Think about that... 4 years trying to secure a loan, 6 months to receive a grant!!

When you read or hear about the Federal Government Bureaucracy being out of control, just remember this picture and our small community of Spring Lake. Can you imagine how this is replicated across the country and the cost to taxpayers? A picture is worth a thousand words!



## **Chairman's Message**

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The Board and I are very pleased to report that the District received a \$416,000 appropriation from the State of Florida. This appropriation, combined with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection grant for \$624,000 will be used to construct a storm water treatment area to address the State of Florida mandated water quality standards. These funds are a tremendous savings for District taxpayers. We owe our thanks to Governor Scott, Senator Grimsley, and Representative Pigman for making this appropriation possible. The Board continues to seek additional funding for the five million dollar water control plan so that the burden of this mandate is not borne entirely by the District taxpayers.

The Board initiated discussion on the fiscal year 2015 budget at the June and July meetings, and the discussion will continue at the August Public Hearing meeting. The budget process results in the determination of the assessment for District property owners and the establishment of rates for the water utility and the lot mowing program. This Public Hearing regarding the budget will be held at the District office August 13, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. A copy of the draft budget is available at the District Office and at [www.springlakefl.com](http://www.springlakefl.com). I encourage the public to attend and share their thoughts.

The Florida Association of Special Districts, at their June Conference, named the Spring Lake Improvement District as the Special District of the Year. It is gratifying to be recognized for the accomplishments of the District. It serves as a reminder, however, that there remains a great deal of work to be done on behalf of all the residents and property owners of the District.

I appreciate the input I have received from residents and landowners over the years and hope you will continue to contact me to share your concerns and answer your questions.

## **Water Quality Is Here To Stay**

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As a Spring Lake resident or landowner you have read numerous articles in this publication about the projects the District is involved in relating to water retention, storage, and quality. All of us have seen an increase in assessments over those years because of what is known as "unfunded mandates." Simply speaking, the Florida Legislature or Regulatory Agencies mandate that you have to do something but do not provide direct financial assistance to pay for it.

Several years ago the Florida Legislature approved State Statute 373.4595; The Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program. This law mandates that everyone who discharges storm water into public bodies must begin to meet certain standards and criteria that will reduce phosphates. The amount of phosphate that flows south and eventually makes its way to the Everglades is continuing to threaten that Florida Treasure. All of the storm water that enters Spring Lake comes from the Airport, Rt. 98, and our District lands. These waters have historically simply flowed to the pump station and discharged into Arbuckle Creek. The Creek discharges into Lake Isktopoga, then on to Lake Okeechobee, and finally to the Everglades. Our pump station discharges over 1 Billion gallons of water a year, and 26.2 metric tons of phosphate leaves Lake Isktopoga a year....huge numbers!!

Spring Lake is part of the Northern Everglades watershed and as far back as 2008 the District Board of Supervisors chose to be proactive, plan for the future, and start to develop our retention, storage, and quality system. Over the years we established relationships with a number of other agencies who provided much technical assistance and support, but no funds. Spring Lake taxpayers had to foot the bill for the unfunded mandates. As you read other articles in this issue you will see that we have acquired our first Federal and State Grants to help with our water quality projects; FDEP and the State Legislature is providing over a million dollars for our Storm Water Treatment Area. This is the start of a continuing project that will utilize over 100 acres of land along the levee for retention and storage. Prior to being discharged into Arbuckle Creek the water will be directed to the storm water treatment area, flow over the land, and when it goes thru the pump station the amount of phosphorous in the water will be reduced; thus meeting the mandate and contributing to the welfare of other water bodies.

There is a lot of engineering and technical explanations for what Spring Lake is going thru, but we are not the only ones. Other Water Districts, ranchers, citrus growers, and farmers are facing the same criteria as we are. The District will continue to seek outside funding to help pay for projects that will impact Spring Lake for generations to come. Water Quality is here to stay.

## SPRING LAKE IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

115 Spring Lake Blvd.  
Sebring, FL 33876  
863.655.1715 phone  
863.655.4430 fax



*New construction is going on throughout the District. Seven new water meters have recently been installed. This is a good sign for the future.*



*South Duane Palmer Blvd. is the last remaining major flooding area in the District as recent rains showed. The County will be assisting in rectifying this problem*



*Surveyors map out the area for the FDEP Storm Water Treatment Project*



*Highlands County Road and Bridge is always available to assist with drainage repairs, such as this one on Spring Hill Rd.*

## Bits and Pieces

Highlands County Road and Bridge has resurfaced several miles of Spring Lake roads and made numerous repairs to pot holes. The County continues to budget funds for our community and County Staff tour and inspect all roads on an annual basis to determine priority areas.

With the advent of the hurricane season, the District is in constant communication with SFWMD when storm events are detected. There is a dedicated web site that we go to that gives our staff the most current and up to date information necessary to determine if we need to run the pumps prior to the storm arriving. If a heavy storm is detected we want to lower the canals so that we can absorb the thrust of the storm.

The local newspapers reported the good news that Sebring was ranked the #3 small Florida City by Cities Journal.

The South Florida Water Management District's approval of our water control plan is part of a larger document titled, Environmental Resource Permit, that places the District in compliance for the first time in over 20 years. Along with this document that is available for public review residents can also view: The Preliminary Engineering Report; The Environmental Study; and the Updated Water Control Plan. These and many other items are in our Public Records Room.

Our website recently went thru a vulnerability scan by Vistalogix, and we have received confirmation regarding the security of our site. Our website and online payment system are not vulnerable to attack from any of the current "bugs" threatening many sites.

If you are interested in learning more about why water quality is such an issue in Florida here are several resources you will enjoy. There is an incredible short video called Waters of Destiny and it can be viewed at <http://floridamemory.com/items/shor/232410>. If you are a reader, you will want to get, A Land Remembered, by Patrick Smith, as well as his other books. Probably the most shocking book about the Everglades and how it was savaged is The Swamp, by Michael Grunwald. The book documents the politics and greed that led to today's problems.