

# CALOOSA BELLE

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## City takes step to new water

By Patty Brant

It looks like the residents of LaBelle could have good water coming from their faucets in about three years. City commissioners have been researching the issue for many months, but took the first concrete step toward financing an actual waterplant at their June 8 meeting.

The city is looking at building a reverse osmosis plant, as rec-

ommended by ATM's Grant Misterly. He said it is the standard for southwest Florida and may be changed to meet new requirements; it may be easily expanded as necessary and produces high quality water.

The city's current water plant is 30 years old and has passed design life, Mr. Misterly said.

The commissioners have discussed several options, but have decided to limit service to the existing developed city plus

South LaBelle, plus the Ross McIntosh property and Keystone 1 and 2 projects.

ATM used data to project the population of expected growth areas.

Currently, residents of LaBelle use an average of 125 gallons of water per capita per day, with a maximum of 150 gpd per person per day.

In 2009, figures project that there will be some 4,270 Equivalent Residential Connections

(ERCs) – homes in the city; 2,975 of those will be in the developed portion of the city.

Developers provided their project numbers and ATM recommended the city build a four million gpd plant, which should be adequate till 2017, at which time some 8,650 ERCs are expected to be in the city, using seven million gpd. Then the water plant can simply be expanded as necessary.

If design begins this summer,

Mr. Misterly said the new plant should be completed in 2009.

The cost of a waterplant has increased dramatically since planning began. A four million gpd waterplant now costs approximately \$30 million. It would include new wells, treatment and storage, brine disposal, converting the existing water plant conversion to a pressure booster, a storage station and

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pump facility.

At this point, some “nuts and bolts” type planning is required, such as a preliminary update on well field analysis; detail of facility – number of pumps, size, etc., and geologic evaluation. One big question still to be answered: will deep well injection of brine work?

Analyst

Bill Sundstrom took over with a report on financial planning for the new water plant. He said, with 2,195 new homes expected, each ERC would pay \$18 per month on a bond issue. He said

LaBelle probably qualify for subsidized lending and a 40-year amortization from RUS. The city should also look for \$4-5 million RUS grant and \$2 million grant from SFWMD.

Since RUS will not fund preliminary engineering, etc., the city will need \$41.5 million in

“bridge” financing from banks before RUS will get involved.

Mr. Sundstrom said it is “logical and necessary that rates will rise.”

Thursday night’s action did not commit the city to any particular design, only got the ball rolling to line up financing.