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September 5, 2023

The Honorable Senator Kathleen Passidomo
The Honorable Representative Bob Rommel
The Honorable Representative Lauren Melo
The Honorable Representative Adam Bontana

Re: 2023-24 Legislative Session – Immokalee Water & Sewer District Appropriations Requests

Dear Legislators,

The Immokalee Water & Sewer District (IWSD) is seeking \$5,300,000 to cover relocation of water and sewer lines, valves, hydrants, meters and backflows from stormwater improvement projects constructed by Collier County within Immokalee.

Collier County is currently programming and/or constructing eleven (11) projects (Map A) that are either wholly stormwater related improvements or a combination of transportation/stormwater improvements. The District became aware of the magnitude of the utility relocations over the last nine (9) months as construction plans have been provided to the District to review for utility conflicts. After discussions with County and/or consultant staff (representing the County), it became clear that no consideration of the cost of utility relocations were considered in the planning of the projects or funding requests. In case of the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant (federal), the District received notice (enclosed) from Collier County Transportation Engineering Division to relocate utilities within 30-days when the District had only received plans from two (2) out of five (5) improvement areas. To date, the District has not received formal plans for Area 4 of this grant and can only estimate the utility relocation cost (\$1,000,000). Projects funded with Federal Grant money follow Federal Law and guidelines – not state statutes in determining reimbursement eligibility. The Federal government has extensive guidelines for those who apply and receive Federal Grant money. Utilities that are impacted by Federal Programs and Grants are generally 100% reimbursable (water, sewer, electrical, cable and telecommunications). It is not the intent of the Federal government, much less state or local governments, to place the cost burden for national or state goals and objectives on the utilities that support the communities that they are improving. Unfortunately, the County did not include utilities relocation costs as it's our understanding that the County did not anticipate substantial relocation costs since at the time, the project was only transportation related. By combining Stormwater improvements, utility relocation costs significantly increased.

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No matter who owns the water and sewer utilities, the cost of relocating those utilities will be passed onto the consumer. A cost of \$5,300,000 in utility relocations over a twelve-month period will result in a severe rate increase for a poor community.

The Immokalee community sincerely appreciates your consideration and support of this appropriation request.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sarah A. Catala", is written in a cursive style.

Sarah Catala
Executive Director

cc: Joseph Brister, Chair, Immokalee Water & Sewer District
Laura Donaldson, District Attorney, Manson, Bolves, Donaldson, & Tanner

Attachments:

Map A – Collier County Projects
Utility Relocation Cost Spreadsheet
Collier County 30-Day Notice Letter