

Homosassa Special Water District

Special Meeting

April 9, 2014

Present were:

Commissioner Seibert
Commissioner Jeeves
Commissioner MacRae
Teresa Olds (HSWD Staff)

Commissioner Sipos
Commissioner Bitter
David Purnell (Superintendent)

Commissioner Seibert called the Special Meeting to order at 6:00 PM

A slide presentation was presentation was presented to the audience on the current condition of the Water Tower.

Audience Member: Are there a lot of safety issues with the interior or ladders?

Sup. Purnell: No issues.

Audience Member: Wasn't the tank painted about 5 years or so ago?

Sup. Purnell: The tank was painted about 10 years ago.

Audience Member: So the tank was painted over top of the lead paint?

Sup. Purnell: That was at the recommendation of the tank company.

Audience Member: If this was to happen and you were going to haul the tank off to have it reconditioned, are we going to be tapping off the other tanks?

Sup. Purnell: The tank would be demolished and taken away. This tank is actually lower than what the ground storage tank is at the Peach Orchard site. At Peach Orchard the floor elevation is 128'. This tank is a 130' high. When the tank at Peach Orchard gets to be full at 25' it actually overflows the tank here in town.

Commissioner Seibert: If the tank were to be hauled away and refurbished it would be done here on the spot.

Audience Member: If the other 2 tanks are up and operating and you take this tank down what one would service this area?

Sup. Purnell: Right now this area is being service 90% of the water you are getting is from the Peach Orchard site. The water in the elevated tank all it does is float in the system. We actually had to add pumps to it to pump water out of it. The water from Peach Orchard fills this tank. The elevated tank is not servicing anyone.

Audience Member: So if the tank was down Peach Orchard would be servicing our area?

Sup. Purnell: Yes. The new tank in Riverhaven actually serves the whole district as well as high service pumps. When pressure drops low they come on they increase the fire flows pressure throughout the whole system.

Discussion.

Commissioner Bitter: Could we finish the presentation and then do the question and answers.

Commissioner Seibert continued on with the presentation.

The actual cost to maintain the tank from the estimate we received is for \$220,412. Also have to look at there will be engineering cost and the items that are not included in the estimate. There is also built into the estimate an increase that would be every 3 years. This would have to go out for Bid; the cost estimate was from the inspection.

Sup. Purnell: The way it works is I get a tank inspection report every year. When you get the inspection report, you get an engineering cost for the bid & then you go out for Bids.

Discussion.

Commissioner Seibert continued with presentation.

The tank was designed to operate with one well site. It has done a good job over the years. But with the installation of the new lines the tank has become obsolete that we need it. There is no real need for that tank to be there at this point. The estimate in the presentation is \$80,000 to actually remove it is \$15,000. But we will have to install some variable speed pumps on our Bradshaw Well Site. That cost would be approximately \$32,000. Possibly another pump at the Norin Well site. The variable speed pumps would help eliminate the hammer in the water lines.

One thing that I would like everyone to be aware of is that we are sitting on is a 2 million dollar expense with a DOT Highway 19 project. Making Highway 19 a 6 lane highway. DOT informed the District that we had to move our existing water lines which will be approximately 2 million dollars for us to do this project. Now you can see why we are looking so closely costs. This is slated to begin October of 2014.

Audience Member: Does this include any upgrades to the lines when you move them?

Sup. Purnell: Right now we have 8" lines on both sides of Highway 19 being fed by 12" lines so there doesn't need to be any upgrades, but it will be all brand new pipes that will be going in.

Commissioner Seibert: So the District had to go out and borrow 2 million dollars for this project as the State would not help us financially with this.

Audience Member: How much property is the tank sitting on?

Sup. Purnell: less than a 1/4 acre.

Audience Member: If the Board decides to rehab the tank what would be the cost to the individual users to rehab the tank on our water bills and since you mentioned the 19 project what is the cost on our water bill to move the pipes on 19 to pay off the 2 million dollars?

Commissioner Seibert: We have been very good about that. We just paid off a 2 million dollar loan and had to get another one for all of our water lines. Yes the water bills went up a little bit but we've been able to manage it with our revenue and with also by pulling in some new customers with the addition of Stonebrook Mobile Home Park.

Commissioner Jeeves: If you take the figure of roughly 250,000 divide the number of users would come out to about \$100, but as the Chairman stated we have been very conservative.

Commissioner Seibert: What we are trying to do is not have to raise rates.

Commissioner MacRae: If we keep the tank your bill is not gonna go up, because we keep the tank. If we get rid of the tank your bill is not gonna go down, because we got rid of the tank.

Commissioner Seibert: What we are trying to do is keep within budget.

Audience Member: Is there any reason to keep and maintain the tank?

Commissioner Seibert: No you put the variable speed pumps on the well sites to control the hammer.

Audience Member: Do you have suitable adequate redundancy should something happen to the Peach Orchard tank?

Sup. Purnell: A normal water system operates our size has 2 wells and not even a tank. We have 2 tanks and 4 wells our Peach Orchard site it gravity feeds into the system.

Audience Member: So during the event of a storm, where electricity is out like it was several years ago for 5 days we wouldn't need the gravity from the tank to keep water flowing as it did in that 5 day event where we didn't have electricity?

Sup. Purnell: Actually the elevated tank emptied out in a couple of minutes the million gallon tank is what fed the system all those days afterwards.

Audience Member: So you wouldn't necessarily need the Homosassa Tank the gravity in it to feed the system?

Sup. Purnell: No the tank would be filled from the tank at Peach Orchard as it was feeding the system in an emergency situation.

Audience Member: Do you have any emergency generators?

Sup. Purnell: Peach Orchard site has the million gallon tank, it has 2 wells and the whole thing runs off our generator there that can go for weeks. So if the No Name storm happened tomorrow, Peach Orchard would be able to keep up with the demand.

Commissioner MacRae: The tank is an iconic symbol; some of you probably didn't realize that or care about that. That tank was installed through a lot of hard work by a lot of local residents back in the day starting out in the 40's and 50's. Homosassa didn't have any water; they didn't have any potable water. They had a little tank at the head of the river under the bridge and the well house is still there today, that some wealthy investors had that fed their little development that was called "Blue Water Forest". Through a lot of work from the early settlers here they were able to persuade the legislatures to start a Special District, the Homosassa Special Water District, the County would do nothing. So this band of people got together, they got the funding and they got the right to tax and they put this tank up and they started putting wells in, or started putting lines in to people. So it was a big deal. There is not a well at that site. So water doesn't come from that site it comes now mainly from the Peach Orchard site which is at the head of at the top of the hill on Grover Cleveland. There are 2 other wells that we draw from, used to be 3, and one of them has been capped off because

of Bacteria. The other well is on Bradshaw called appropriately the Bradshaw Well. The other one is on Grover Cleveland about half way up on the left hand side and it is called the Norin Well and it was donated to the system by Norris Development Company that developed Riverhaven Village. There is no well at the Riverhaven site though there is a tank there that is kind of like a tank like if you were on a well system yourself and you had a well at your house and had a little bladder tank for pressure. That's about what the tank is at Riverhaven. It's a glorified pressurized tank. To give more pressure to the system. It's all concrete high dollar pumps. Everything is great about it. We upgraded that system; we've upgraded lines coming into Homosassa. This has been a double edge sword. We've gotten more water flow down into Homosassa, better pressure, better fire safety, but the problem that it's done is that the old lines that are here that were put in back in the 60's now are spewing leaks because of all the extra pressure and volume of water. But we are on top of that to. We have all this high dollar leak detection equipment we're finding the leaks, we're working on that. It's an ongoing thing. I digress from the tank. So all the system improvements we've done has made that tank obsolete. It really is not an integral part of the system anymore. It acts like a big pressure relief valve. Like Commissioner Seibert said it takes the hammering out of the system. When those pumps fire up and all that water comes in, that tank is about half full and when the water is forced in you've got that pressure in the top of the tank it takes away the hammer. The more hammering the more leaks. So in order if the tank is removed we will upgrade our 2 other well sites with variable speed pumps that won't just come on and flush a bunch of water into the system they will come on slowly building up the pressure in the tank rather than forcing it. So then the tank is not necessary, we don't need it. But I thought against a lot of hammering at the district meeting that kind of opposed my idea, was that ok the bottom line is the tank will come down but let's see if there is any interest in saving the tank. It's iconic, it's part of Homosassa.

Audience Member: Put a plaque up there.

Commissioner MacRae: We thought of a hologram. It's a very expensive iconic symbol.

Audience Member: All you will probably get 3 people a year looking at it.

Audience Member: What is it worth to salvage?

Commissioner MacRae: They wouldn't tell us that. They just said they would charge us \$15,000 to take it down and that's a good deal actually it's a very good deal. If you look at it solely in the, at the financial end of it and that's what I was elected to this Board for, it makes sense to take the tank down. There is no question there, But.

Audience Member: Who makes the decision?

Commissioner Seibert: The Board.

Commissioner MacRae: Sadly enough these 5 people up here. Actually sadly enough 4 of these people up here. I kind of lost my train of thought the thing is iconic. I'm not going to keep repeating that and you can't put a dollar amount on that. I just thought inevitably it's gonna come down. But I wanted to see if there was any interest in any people out there that wanted to keep the thing and apparently there isn't. Apparently it doesn't generate a hell of a lot of interest anyway as there's not a lot of people here.

Audience Member: A lot of people have said why you couldn't just keep it. When you're out on the water it marks the way.

Commissioner MacRae: I enjoy looking at it. I live right across the river from it and I see it every day.

Commissioner Seibert: You can't just take it out of service, because it still has to be repaired. The structure of it is if we have a storm it's very weak.

Commissioner MacRae: The tank is actually designed and engineered to stand there full of water, so if the thing was emptied out it's worse than it is full.

Commissioner Seibert: The thing is if somebody wanted to spend some money to fix the tank fill it full of dirt, concrete whatever, and make it a permanent structure. It still has the maintenance. Because of the rusting and deterioration on the outside.

Commissioner Jeeves: It comes down to whether the Board should make an emotional decision or a financial decision.

Commissioner Seibert: You were asking about your bill going up \$100 to pay for it. The whole thing is we have to replace a lot of pipe down here as Commissioner MacRae was saying in Old Homosassa that needs to be replaced. We've got a lot of things that we need to do. Our water loss is tremendous and we just got to get it under control because of bad pipes.

Audience Member: You need to make this a financial decision, you have to look down the road, what it is gonna be like in 20 years

Commissioner Seibert: Well you have another 10 years that you will be looking at it again.

Audience Member: Why don't you sell it?

Commissioner Seibert: We tried that one time we did have someone out of Georgia.

Audience Member: Sell it with the land.

Commissioner Seibert: No one wants the liability. It's a liability to...

Audience Member: Is the land around it designated Commercial.

Sup. Purnell: All along the side and behind the property are all wetlands.

Commissioner Seibert: I'd be happy to give it to someone if they took on the liability of it.

Audience Member: I have a more technical question. When you remove the tank what comes with the \$15,000. Will they take out the foundation, will they take the footers out, will they take the liability, and will they take title to the tank so the Board has hold harmless agreement?

Sup. Purnell: That's the whole part of the contract the idea would be once they took a piece of material off the property it would belong to them not us.

Audience Member: So if it falls on somebody while they were taking it down.

Sup. Purnell: There are only a few companies that can do this because of the insurance that they have to have but yes they will have the insurance and that would all be checked out before they even stepped foot on the property.

Commissioner Seibert: When and if the tank is taken down either we will have or they will have the road blocked and controlled by the Sheriff's Department. We have already asked about that.

Audience Member: How long will it take to take it down?

Commissioner Seibert: 10 – 10 ½ hours is what we were told it would take to take it down.

Sup. Purnell: It's a demolition company that specializes in taking down tanks.

Commissioner Seibert: This is a small job for them.

Disc.

Audience Member: This \$220,000 plus the Engineer, plus whatever do you have that money in the Bank now if you wanted to do this?

Commissioner Seibert: We could come up with the money, yes.

Sup. Purnell: It would be a 10 year maintenance contract where we would pay about \$35,000 the first through the fifth year and then it would go down to about \$15,000 and then go back up after that.

Audience Member: So if you paid the \$15,000 to take it out of there than \$205,000 is left to invest in underground pipes.

Commissioner Seibert: That's what we would like to do.

Audience Member: Commissioner MacRae I understand you, I've only been in town close to 20 years and a lot of the old timers have been here a lot longer. I'm sympathetic to your feelings towards the tank and what have you but in reality if it's out lived its usefulness and I think we have a lot of other things a lot of wonderful things that have happened in the last 20 years that has been happening in the area, the veterans sign, the sidewalks and the new school. A lot of money has been spent to re-invent Old Homosassa. It's a wonderful place and I personally love it that's why I came here. But I think in reality the tank can't be used, it's a liability, it's gonna cost \$200 thousand plus of dollars to maintain it for 10 years and then what do you do after the 10 years. Sometimes in life you have to let go.

Commissioner MacRae: You're actually preaching to the choir here. I'm a realist I understand this as I said earlier. But I think idealistically and I thought maybe somebody would come up with some great idea. But I understand, you don't have to sway me. If you want it to come down you're not trying to sway me to do that it's gonna come down, I mean it looks like that's where it's going.

Commissioner Seibert: The whole idea of tonight was maybe someone would have come up with an idea that someone would take it off our hands. I mean basically.

Audience Member: I'm glad you brought it to everyone's attention and there are a few people in town that love it.

Commissioner MacRae: I appreciate the people that did show up on one hand I thought nobody was gonna show up and then on the other hand I thought this place was going to be jammed packed.

Commissioner Seibert: We appreciate you all showing up and it's those that don't know who I am I'm a Financial Planner so the numbers kind of speak to me and I'm sorry but the numbers speak, that's all I can say.

Audience Member: Is there any way that it could just be like non-functional?

Commissioner Sipos: It's too dangerous.

Audience Member: Fix the safety stuff that would be less than \$220,000?

Commissioner Seibert: No the \$220,000 is what it would have to do to make it even non-functional and then you've got to have water in the tank ok something in that tank to stabilize it.

Audience Member: You couldn't cap it off and leave the water in it.

Commissioner Seibert: The water will dissipate you have to have a way to continuously put water in it.

Audience Member: You have to look at the liability it's like lighting a match 3' from a stick of dynamite in wind.

Audience Member: I think a lot of people want the marker there, it's not the water it's not anything other than a marker that says Old Homosassa. How about a flagpole something that say's Old Homosassa.

Commissioner Bitter: Last time we painted that thing if you remember we had in Bold letters Old Homosassa Established 1835 and we had a couple of symbols there I think they were a couple of fish. The junk paint that is available anymore and that fairly quickly faded out. But it was a monument for the community at that time when it said Old Homosassa Established 1835.

Audience Member: Put an American flag up there with a brass thing that says Old Tank Memorial.

Commissioner Seibert: We would be open to somebody once we took the tank down for somebody wanted to do something there we would be very open considering that.

Cathy Clark: I live over in Riverhaven and I've been here for 30 plus years. I love it and everything here is great. I was gonna say kind of what you said if the people who want the water tower to stay there or who want a memory or who want a memorial they should be talking to maybe the historical society they shouldn't be talking to water people. What they are saying is this doesn't have anything to do with water anymore. This has to do with history. So the people who want this or want a memorial why don't they go to the right forum which is maybe the Historical Society or form their own little citizens action group and come up with a plan and get some money and ask you if you can deed part of the land to them or let them put a memorial on your land or do something. The water tower actually isn't anything to do with the water anymore. It's to do with history and landmarks.

Commissioner MacRae: You know if my Grandmother were here tonight she would probably say Rodney why in the hell did you bring these people here to talk about this. Tear the damn tank down and be done with it. She is a realist also and she understands that. I don't know that there is anybody that is out there trying to save this tank. It would be real nice if there was but I don't know that there is a group of people out there that would like to see this tank here. So I'm sorry I wasted your time.

Commissioner Seibert: I want to thank everyone we appreciate your input this evening.

Commissioner Bitter: I would be interested by a show of hands how many would like to see it come down.

Majority agreed.

Audience Member: I know there is a cell tower at Marlin Marine but if the tank comes down would that be a good spot for one.

Commissioner Seibert: I have been trying for 10 years to get a cell tower on that tank and our Attorney says we can't do it.

Disc.

Commissioner Seibert adjourned the meeting.