

## **Punta Gorda Utility District Bounday Codification and Utility Transfer Act**

### **12/15/2025**

#### **Introduction**

A bill is being proposed by Representative Vanessa Oliver addressing the provision of potable water and wastewater service to areas outside of the existing boundaries of the City of Punta Gorda yet within the lands the City of Punta Gorda identifies as its certificated area. The bill will be heard by the Charlotte County Delegation at the Legislative Delegation Meeting on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 10.00am in the Charlotte County Chambers.

#### **Timeline**

The following is a timeline associated with the Bill:

12/5/2025	Draft language received by county staff
12/5/2025	Draft language provided to the Board of County Commissioners
12/9/2025	Discussion during Administrator's Comments at the Regular Board of County Commissioners meeting
12/9/2025	City of Punta Gorda held a special meeting to discuss the proposed bill
12/11/2025	Charlotte County schedules a Special Meeting for 12/15/2025 to discuss the proposed bill
12/11/2025	City of Punta Gorda sends letter objecting to the bill to Representative Vanessa Oliver, copied to the Board of County Commissioners.
12/15/2025	Special meeting of the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners
12/17/2025	Charlotte County Legislative Delegation meeting to be held at 10am to discuss local bill.

#### **Key provisions of the Bill**

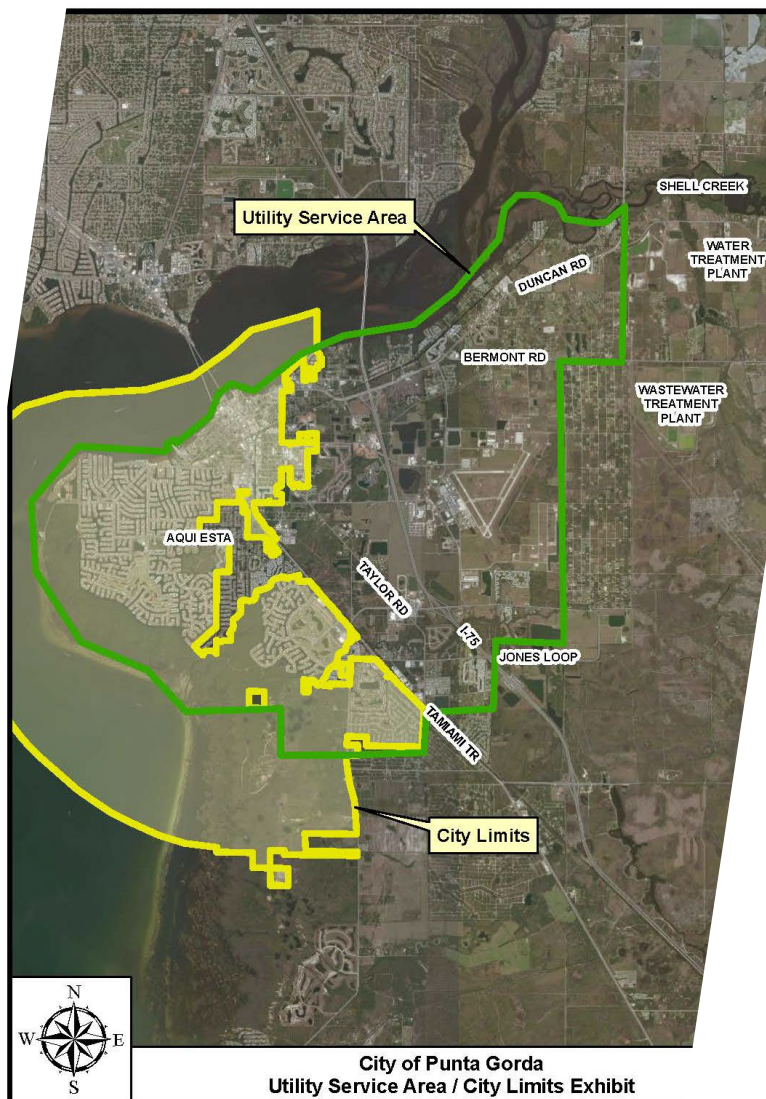
- Codifies the boundary of the Punta Gorda Utilities District to the existing corporate limits of the City of Punta Gorda.
- Authorizes the County to immediately assume responsibility for potable water utility service.
- Authorizes the County to defer the transfer of wastewater (sewer) functions.
- Requires the City to continue to provide wastewater services until such time the transfer of functions occurs.

## Area in Question

The Charlotte County utility service district for both potable and wastewater is the largest in the County and completely surrounds the Punta Gorda Utility District. It is not the only Utility in the county as shown on the attached SPAM Series Maps.

The Bill proposed that the County assume responsibility for provision of potable water and wastewater services to those areas within unincorporated Charlotte County which fall within the boundaries of the Punta Gorda Utility District service area.

The exhibit below shows the Punta Gorda City limits and the Punta Gorda Utility District.



## Overview of Charlotte County Utilities

Potable water is supplied primarily through the county's membership in the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Authority (PRMRWA) and via the Burnt Store Potable Water Treatment Plant.

Wastewater is processed at various facilities throughout the service district.

The county's infrastructure is robust, well maintained, and because of strong capital planning initiatives and detailed financial planning, is well positioned to handle the future growth of the county.

As part of this capital planning process, an expansion is underway at the East Port plant, a temporary expansion and a permanent expansion (design) is underway at the Burnt Store plant and staff is in design for a future expansion at the West Port plant.

For potable water, the county, as a member of the PRMRWA, is participating in the development of a new reservoir and is planned to take an additional 3 million gallons per day (mgd) of allocation when the project is complete.

The Burnt Store potable water treatment plant currently operates 8 hours per day and could easily be transitioned to a 24-hour plant to increase production.

## Analysis

- 1) **Timing and Logistics.** The bill proposes the immediate transfer of potable water utility functions to the county. The county does not have any direct interconnects with the Punta Gorda Utilities District. Modeling, planning, design and construction of a combination of interconnects, new lines and associated infrastructure would be needed to ensure a smooth transition for the users.

Logistically, staff would explore a combination of connections utilizing both the allocation from PRMWSA, and expansion of potable water production at the Burnt Store plant through extension of hours of operation.

The bill does defer the transfer of wastewater utilities functions to a later date following one or more interlocal agreements to define the terms, conditions and transition procedures. Staff would anticipate the Burnt Store plant would handle the

wastewater from this area. This would include new lines and assessment and possible acceleration of future plant expansions to ensure adequate capacity.

In both cases, much more information is needed to determine the best strategy for transfer of the service area. Time is needed for transfer of both potable water and wastewater functions to effectively plan and implement the necessary logistics needed to ensure a smooth, well planned and comprehensive transition.

2) **Unknowns.** Although some information is available, to fully assess the implications, logistics, impact and risks of this proposed transfer, both the City and County would need to work collaboratively to transfer knowledge and data. This would include (but is not limited to):

- a. Asset data to include maps, design, easements, condition assessments, maintenance history and any planned maintenance and/or replacement schedules.
- b. Customer data to include quantity, address, type, usage, and billing history.
- c. Planned expansions and capital improvements for the area in question.
- d. Developers' agreements, future commitments and any cost share agreements for new and expansionary infrastructure.
- e. Any required mandatory connections, compliance issues etc.
- f. Any permitting applicable to the transfer area.

3) **Fees.** The County and the City have very different fee structures, and it is anticipated that there will be impacts to both existing users and proposed users within the proposed transfer area. A detailed analysis is needed to determine the fiscal impact of this transfer on the customers of the system.

4) **Cost.** The costs of implementing the transfer are, as yet, unknown. Some potential costs are as follows (not an exhaustive list):

- a. Planning, modeling, design, permitting and construction of infrastructure needed for both potable water and wastewater systems.
- b. Staffing costs to add additional operating time to the Burnt Store Potable Water Treatment Plant (minimum of two additional FTE)
- c. Impacts/ cost implications on both the existing expansion project for the Burnt Store Water Treatment Plan and future expansions.

- d. Operational costs associated with adding a new area and several thousand customers to include metering, billing, maintenance and operations.

A transfer of this type is complex and thorough planning is critical to success. The provision of services to existing customers and the availability of services to new customers is of utmost importance and to ensure minimal impact and continuity of service, time would be needed to properly plan any transfer.

### **Proposed amendments to the Bill language.**

To ensure the County can effectively implement any bill the legislature may approve, we would recommend the following changes:

- 1) Add language to clarify that the City can continue to own and must maintain its assets outside of the new District limits so long as necessary to provide continuity of service for their customers.
- 2) Require that the City and the County, within 180 days of the bill becoming law, enter into one or more interlocal agreements to effectuate the transfer. The first interlocal agreement should memorialize the steps needed to develop a fully executable transition plan.
- 3) Require, within 365 days of the act becoming law, joint or separate reports to the Charlotte County Legislative Delegation including the fully executable transition plans for both potable water and wastewater utility functions including a funding plan.
- 4) Require that the City of Punta Gorda continue to provide service to both existing and new customers until such time that the transfer is complete and allow for interlocal agreements between the City and County as needed. This section is to recognize there may be needed interlocal agreements to allow for bulk service of water in the interim.

The purpose of these suggestions is to ensure there is a clearly defined process for the City and the County to work cooperatively, share information and collaboratively develop a transition plan to implement the transfer required by the bill. It is also to ensure the Charlotte County Legislative Delegation is fully aware of the transition plan, costs and impacts to the customers in the service area as part of this process.