

# CITY OF APOPKA/ ONSYTE ZOOM MEETING

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

***Did Apopka investigate any other systems, like STEP and "Bold and Gold"?***

No. A public procurement was published by the City in mid-2019 requesting FDEP-permitted Distributed Wastewater Treatment System proposals. OnSyte was the only respondent.

***Is the monthly cost a fixed cost or is it tied to water usage?***

There will be a public meeting Jan. 20<sup>th</sup> to set the rate of the cost.

***The Onsyte system is terrifically complicated and has a warranty of one year. What happens when components fail after that year?***

The treatment unit will be owned and operated by the City Utility, and the City has initially contracted with OnSyte Performance to be responsible for all maintenance and repairs of the unit. It can be thought of as an extended warranty since the service contract includes all parts and labor.

***What happens if not enough people sign up to meet the BMAP standards?***

The BMAP is a 20-year restoration plan for Wekiva Springs, and many other sources of Nitrogen are identified in the plan to be addressed over the years. Septic tanks are only a component of the plan, and the Wekiva Glen neighborhood does not have any specific obligation under the plan. If the combined effect of the moratorium on new septic tanks and the conversion of existing septic tanks is not enough to achieve the BMAP requirements, other measures could be taken to make up the difference, such as reducing fertilizer runoff from residential and agricultural lands, improving stormwater treatment, etc.

***How much does the installation cost?***

The treatment unit installation was awarded to OnSyte at a per-home cost of \$12,500. The City has secured funding to cover that amount. If needed, resodding at the treatment unit installation site is also covered by the City. However, more extensive landscaping or site restoration costs will be the responsibility of the homeowner. If a new drainfield is determined during the inspection to be required, the homeowner will be responsible for the

cost to bring the drainfield up to current standards. The homeowner will be provided with a written quote for any costs outside of what will be covered by the City, and the homeowner is under no obligation to proceed. The typical cost of a drainfield replacement is \$3000 - \$5000. If the system fails and there is damage to my property/home, who claims the liability for damage costs to my home?

If the treatment unit is determined to be the cause of damage to a homeowner's property, then the City will be responsible for the damage.

***If the homeowner is liable this could raise your insurance. Has anyone checked into this?***

If the treatment unit is determined to be the cause of damage to a homeowner's property, then the City will be responsible for the damage.

***Everyone should be aware of the fact that your electric bill will increase significantly in addition to the "sewer bill" of \$47.00 per month.***

The unit will use an estimated \$3-\$6 of electricity per month.

***Will there be exposed covers in the yard?***

The treatment unit will be buried underground, just like the current septic tank. At the surface, 1 or 2 access hatches, 24" in diameter, may be visible. The lids will be green but can be painted if the homeowner decides to do so.

***And your old electric service may not be able to handle the load and need a new service board installed.***

A detailed inspection of your electrical service will be conducted by a Licensed Electrician to determine the capability of your current electrical service.

***If it is decided these don't work and this project is abandoned what happens?***

Every homeowner who takes part in the program will become a sewer customer of the City. The City will assure that the homeowner continues to receive sewer service.

***How many homeowners have to sign up to meet the BMAP guidelines?***

There are no specific number of Wekiva Glen homeowners identified in the BMAP.

***Will we need to grant a right of way to our property for installation and maintenance?***

Homeowner property access will be granted to the City through a Service Agreement as a condition of accepting sewer service from the City. All maintenance will be conducted during normal business hours. Before the City, or its agent, enters a homeowner's property,

an attempt will be made to notify the homeowner. All service vehicles and personnel will be clearly identified.

***So if not enough people sign up and the BMAP goals are not met, then will the other then be forced to buy one?***

This program is 100% voluntary. Homeowners may continue to use their existing septic system if they choose. There is not a specific requirement in the BMAP for Wekiva Glen residents to remove their septic tanks.

***Heard there will be an odor that will saturate the neighborhood!***

The OnSyte treatment unit is not a septic tank, and it produces no noticeable odor.

***How much smell does the vent exude? Our family spends a lot of time outside and we have wildlife that roam our yards. How would that affect our air?***

The OnSyte unit produces no noticeable odor.

***Since I've been in my house my entire neighborhood has experienced power outages that lasted from one to as many as two weeks, often coupled with flooding. Imagine every house in the neighborhood of Wekiva Glen and surrounding neighborhoods with backed up septic tanks at the same time. Even though the City says they will maintain them I know that the City does not have the manpower to handle a disaster of this proportion***

If the unit loses power, or temporarily stops functioning, the homeowner can continue normal water usage. The OnSyte treatment unit will continue to provide passive treatment in such circumstances. Even during an extended power outage event such as a hurricane, , the unit will continue to treat the wastewater passively and the homeowner will be able to continue normal water and sanitary fixture uses.

***Who exactly is absorbing all these installation and maintenance costs?***

The treatment unit installation was competitively procured and awarded to OnSyte at a per-home cost of \$12,500. The City has secured funding to cover that amount. If needed, resodding at the treatment unit installation site is also covered by the City. However, more extensive landscaping or site restoration costs will be the responsibility of the homeowner.

***If Onsyte goes out of business down the line, who absorbs the costs then?***

The City is assuming responsibility for the success of the program, and the City can contract with another service company if OnSyte does not meet its contractual obligations

to the City. OnSyte performance is an American company, headquartered in Buford, Georgia. OnSyte has offices in Florida and manufactures its treatment units in Florida.

***Who is responsible for the cost of sod replacement?***

The city will handle up to \$500 for landscape replacement. Anything above that will be the responsibility of the homeowner.

***What do the commercial Wi-Fi receivers look like? Will we have mini cell towers in the neighborhood?***

On the side of the house, a non-descript, 18”x18” control box will be placed next to a power cut off switch. This box provides the cellular connection for remote monitoring and operation. No other components will be visible to the homeowner.

Mini cell towers will not be necessary or placed around the neighborhood.

***How much is service calls and repairs***

Routine maintenance and service calls/repairs are included and covered under the monthly sewer bill.

***What happens if this test system does not function and another test system is needed????***

The City is not implementing a “test” system. The selected system was fully tested by FDEP for over three years and has been approved by the state for this use.

***How much will the monthly sewer bill be?***

There will be a public meeting Jan. 20<sup>th</sup> to set the rate of the cost.

***How much is the homeowner costs for the installation besides the \$300.00 inspection?***

Drainfield replacement/repair and extensive landscaping will be the responsibility of the homeowner. After your house has been screened, a detailed inspection will take place, costing \$300. During the inspection, a licensed installer and electrician will determine any additional expenses not covered by the City program. The homeowner will receive a written inspection report and estimate of any additional expenses.

***How much does the drainfield cost?***

Drainfield replacements usually cost \$3000-\$6000.

***What other options does homeowners have besides this program?***

You may keep your current septic tank. Or, if you choose, you can purchase an ATU through a local distributor.

***What happens when there are power outage and hurricanes?***

If the unit loses power, or temporarily stops functioning, the homeowner can continue normal water usage. The OnSyte treatment unit will continue to provide passive treatment in such circumstances. Even during an extended power outage event such as a hurricane, , the unit will continue to treat the wastewater passively and the homeowner will be able to continue normal water and sanitary fixture uses.

***How long is the warranty on this system?***

The treatment unit will be owned and operated by the City Utility, and the City has initially contracted with OnSyte Performance to be responsible for all maintenance and repairs of the unit. It can be thought of as an extended warranty since the service contract includes all parts and labor.

***How long is your warranty***

The treatment unit will be owned and operated by the City Utility, and the City has initially contracted with OnSyte Performance to be responsible for all maintenance and repairs of the unit. It can be thought of as an extended warranty since the service contract includes all parts and labor.

***What happens if we choose not to use this system?***

You may keep your current septic tank. Or, if you choose, you can purchase and install an alternative technology, such as a nutrient removing septic tank.

***What is the estimate cost if drain field repairs are required?***

Drainfield replacements usually cost \$3000-\$6000.

***Can you share all the costs for the homeowner in this installation and maintenance? Would like a PP slide***

The treatment unit installation was awarded to OnSyte at a per-home cost of \$12,500. The City has secured funding to cover that amount. If needed, resodding at the treatment unit installation site is also covered by the City. Drainfield replacement/repair and extensive landscaping will be the responsibility of the homeowner. After your house has been screened, a detailed inspection will take place, costing \$300. During the inspection a

licensed installer and electrician will determine any additional expenses that the homeowner will be responsible for.

If a new drainfield is determined during the inspection to be required, the homeowner will be responsible for the cost to bring the drainfield up to current standards. The homeowner will be provided with a written quote for any costs outside of what will be covered by the City, and the homeowner is under no obligation to proceed. The typical cost of a drainfield replacement is \$3000 - \$5000.

***What if the inspection reflects that my drain field and septic are in PERFECT working condition and my soil test is showing an excellent drainage and not harming anyone or anything?***

If your drainfield and septic tank are in perfect working condition, the Nitrogen removed from your wastewater is estimated to be approximately 30%. The OnSyte treatment unit is required to achieve a minimum of 80% Nitrogen removal and in testing has achieved removal in excess of 90% of the Nitrogen from wastewater. However, in any case, this is a voluntary program and you may continue to use your septic system.

***When does this program support dollars expire?***

Funding is immediately available for up to 20 septic to distributed sewer conversions. However, additional funding is available through an existing grant program to convert an additional 150-180 septic tanks.

***But if we don't meet the standards then we will be forced to participate - correct?***

This program is completely voluntary.

***Mayor, why do we need to rush to change if we are compliant with BMAP?***

Even with the recent improvements to the City's wastewater treatment plant, additional Nitrogen removal is needed to fully restore Wekiva Spring. Every septic tank removed brings us one step closer to that goal.

***Can the state, county and water management pay for a sewer instead of this project?***

No

***EPA can issue fines for 1,000 gallons or more of raw or even partially treated sewage into any waterway or aquifer.***

Since there are no uncontrolled discharges to waterways or aquifers, there will be no EPA fines. However, any regulatory fines will be the responsibility of the City.

***Who is liable for these fines the City or homeowner?***

Since there are no uncontrolled discharges to waterways or aquifers, there will be no EPA fines. However, any regulatory fines will be the responsibility of the City.

***In the case of a two-week power outage and the flooding that accompanied many of our hurricanes, every house in the neighborhood could easily experience this event.***

If the unit loses power, or temporarily stops functioning, the homeowner can continue normal water usage. The OnSyte treatment unit will continue to provide passive treatment in such circumstances. Even during an extended power outage event such as a hurricane, , the unit will continue to treat the wastewater passively and the homeowner will be able to continue normal water and sanitary fixture uses.

***What is our choice besides this project? What happens if we don't participate?***

You may keep your current septic tank. Or, if you choose, you can purchase and install an alternative technology, such as a nutrient removing septic tank.

***Where is the evidence of longevity claims, service record histories, nitrogen removal performance over time in home installations? If it is city owned and serviced, are the rates subject to the same Public Service Commission approval that municipal service rates are subject to?***

The OnSyte system selected by the City was fully field-tested by FDEP at a test site near Lake Apopka for over three years and has been approved by the state for this use. The treatment methodology has been in use in the wastewater industry for over 80 years, and the mechanical components are industry standard with excellent track records of performance and ease of maintenance.

In the City of Apopka, the City Council sets the rates for utility services at a public meeting.

***Is this tech being used in the new developments in Apopka?***

Currently, one new development in Apopka will utilize this technology. However, new development is not eligible for the cost share funding and the developer is responsible for the costs.

***What happens if the computer in the system malfunctions? How do we know when the system malfunctions?***

Notification will be provided to the homeowner by the City, or its agent, in the event that a component in the unit needs to be replaced or repaired. If the unit loses power, or stops

functioning properly, the homeowner can continue normal water usage and the unit will revert to passive treatment. Routine repairs and replacement costs will be handled by the City through its contract with OnSyte. No homeowner intervention is needed.

***Will the city prioritize homes that may be generating more waste?***

Current prioritization is being given to the homes and homeowners who are most willing to convert from septic to distributed sewer.

***Is there a deadline date to determine to participate in this project?***

Although there is no deadline to participate, there is a limited amount of grant funding available. Interested homeowners are encouraged to sign up as soon as possible to be considered.

***Where is the test facility and can we go check it out?***

The test facility is at the St. Johns River Water Management District field station at Lake Apopka. The field station is not normally open to the public for visitation, but a visit can be arranged for interested homeowners. Please contact Jeff Littlejohn at [jlittlejohn@onsyte.com](mailto:jlittlejohn@onsyte.com) for more information.

***Why didn't we get an American company instead of Siemens (based in Germany)?***

OnSyte Performance is an American company, headquartered in Suwanee, Georgia. OnSyte has offices in Florida and manufactures its treatment units in Florida. The industrial computer and communications equipment are manufactured by Siemens, but the control panel is manufactured in Jacksonville FL.

***How would you install a generator?***

Generator installation is not required to take part in the program. If the homeowner desires to power the unit with a generator, that opportunity can be discussed with the licensed electrician during the inspection or installation phase.

***Is there a maximum number that you will install?***

Funding is immediately available for up to 20 septic to distributed sewer conversions. However, additional funding is available through an existing grant program to convert an additional 150-180 septic tanks.

***Will this system work with my lift station that pumps liquids to my drain field?***



Yes, the treatment unit can be installed to work with a pre-existing pump tank. However, in the event of a power outage, the pump tank may cause a back-up inside the treatment unit and eventually, the home. In this scenario, a backup generator is recommended. Please contact the OnSyte installation technician during your inspection if you want to learn more.

***Will the whole neighborhood see the answers to the questions that were not answered in the Zoom meeting?***

The Q&A document will be provided on the City's Septic-to-Distributed Sewer Program website, and available to anyone who wants a copy.