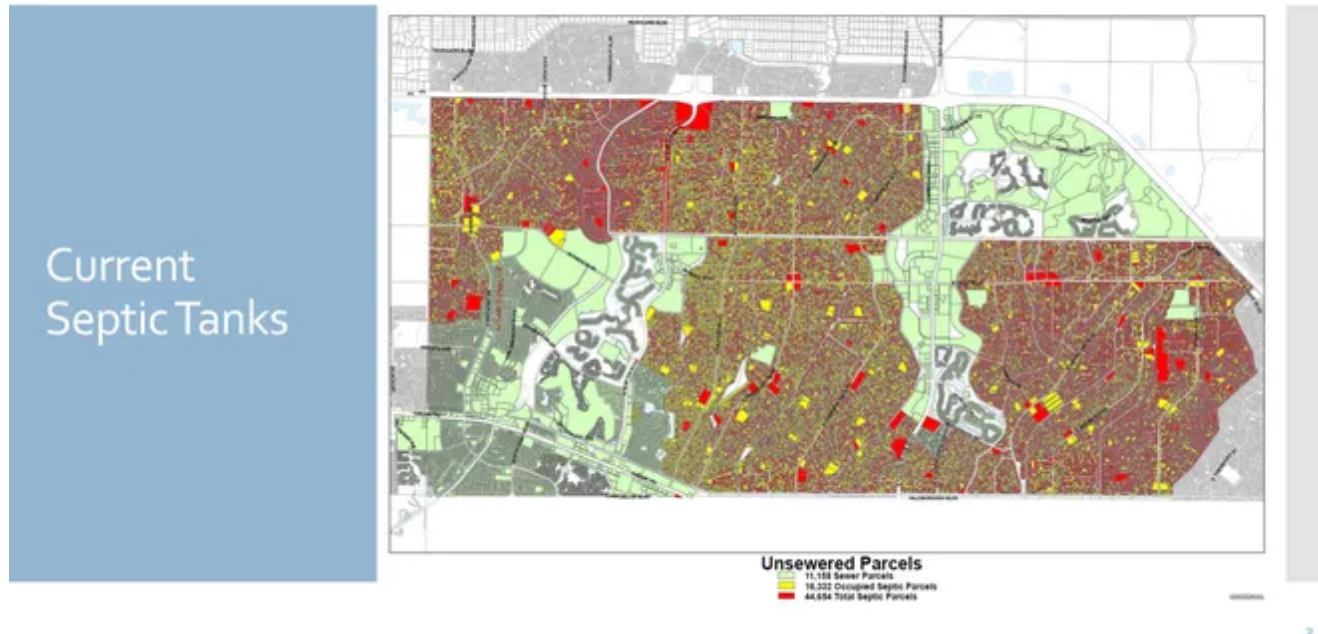


North Port City Commission to discuss septic to sewer conversion costs for existing homes

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NORTH PORT – North Port city commissioners will revisit the concept of expanding wastewater and water services to homes within the city, as well as discuss potential hookup costs, Tuesday, at their last scheduled meeting in 2021.

The board last discussed a plan to bring water and sewer to 29 areas of the city originally platted by General Development Corp. in May.

Earlier: North Port Commission takes initial steps toward citywide water and sewer

On a 3-2 vote at that meeting, the commission approved both a plan for water and sewer expansion and a \$474,796 design contract for the first phase of expansion with Kimley Horn & Associates. But all three board members who approved that step – then-mayor Jill Luke, Barbara Langdon and Alice White – also pledged to approve the expansion, if it proved too costly for the residents.

The most current reference available as part of the proposal – from May 2019 – noted that there are 11,158 parcels on sewer in that part of North Port, 16,332 occupied parcels on septic; and 28,332 undeveloped parcels that are grandfathered in for well and septic service, should the owners choose to build there.

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The state Clean Waterways Act, prompted in part by an 18-month-long bloom of red tide and blue green algae in Southwest Florida in 2017-18, was signed into law in June 2020 and calls for a reduction of nutrients in state waterways.



Locally, the Gulf Coast Community Foundation commissioned the creation of a Water Quality Playbook that was released online in January. Though available for statewide use, the playbook uses the waters around Sarasota County as a model.

[Earlier: Gulf Coast Community Foundation releases online water quality playbook](#)

More than one-third of the 47,864 septic systems in Sarasota County are in North Port.

Sarasota County is in the midst of upgrading its sewer plants to advanced wastewater treatment standards to excess nitrogen and phosphorous.

Both the city and county have been pushing forward, in part, to create eligibility for state or federal grants to subsidize construction.

[Related: Septic to sewer conversion eyed as one solution to reduce nutrients to combat red tide](#)

Ironically, well-designed septic systems can clean wastewater better than non-AWT sewer plants. The state is Department of Environmental Protection must adopt new rules regarding the installation of new septic tanks by July 1, 2022.

Older, traditional septic systems, designed to clean bacteria and pathogens from wastewater aren't necessarily optimized to reduce excess nutrients, though many who question the cost-effectiveness of septic to sewer conversion, suggest that remedial cleaning methods, such as filtering the wastewater through wood chips and sawdust, can significantly remove nutrients and be more cost-effective than hooking homes and businesses on septic systems into central sewer.

[Related: Organic carbon can reduce nitrates in wastewater](#)

Tuesday, the City Commission will discuss conversion with a framework that estimates the cost of hooking into central wastewater at \$21,000 per home and water at \$13,000 per home.

They will discuss options that would cap the cost for an existing homeowner to hook in to water and sewer at a maximum of \$11,000 and for homes with septic and city water at \$6,000.

In addition, the board will discuss the merits of hardship programs that would defer payment of that cost until a property is sold or transferred and reduction of up to half the annual payments if income eligibility guidelines are met.

The commission meets at 10 a.m. in North Port City Hall, 4970 City Hall Boulevard.

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