

New devices raise eyebrows

Series: St. Lucie West
Underground

Storm water seems to
magically disappear from
the roads in St. Lucie West.

But it's not magic
— it's infrastructure.

Turning on a faucet in, say,
Lake Forest Pointe activates
another huge infrastructure
that costs millions to
build, maintain and run.

Your Voice News & Views is
taking a tour of the St. Lucie
West Services District which
is responsible for
all things water.

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ST. LUCIE WEST — They're
boxy, they're green, they're
getting negative attention, and
they're making the water better.
They're automatic potable water
flushing devices.

At the St. Lucie West Services
District's Board of Supervisors
last regular meeting — Tuesday,
May 3 — Dennis Pickle, manager
and utilities director, said new
flushing systems that are mostly
on cul-de-sacs have generated
phone calls.

"We're getting a few complaints
they're ugly," Pickle said at the
meeting.

The new flushing systems are
in enclosures made by Channell
Corporation. They're about 28 by
18 inches, and about 15 inches
tall. Pickle said the district
picked green rather than the
conventional potable-water indi-
cator of blue, so the boxes would
be better camouflaged. Still, they
are hard to miss. But, the flush-
ing devices aren't just generating



Photo courtesy of the
St. Lucie West Services District
Green boxes have popped up around St.
Lucie West generating some complaints.
They're also generating compliments.
The boxes cover automatic potable water
flushing devices that are ridding dead-
end lines of sitting water. Some have
called the district to say they're ugly. Oth-
ers have called to say the water tastes
better.

complaints.

"We're getting word the water
tastes better," Pickle said at the
meeting.

In a phone interview, Pickle
said water taste is largely sub-
jective and the flushing system
isn't for pleasing the palate. But,
he said, if folks like the water
better, the district is pleased.
The new flushing systems are in-
creasing the quality of the water,
however.

At the meeting and in the in-
terview, Pickle said when water-
lines were laid in St. Lucie West
some were dead-ends, lines that
don't loop to others.

"When you have a looped sys-
tem you typically don't have a
line where water can build up
and get stagnate," Pickle said.

Because waterlines are perpet-
ually pressurized, water can sit
in dead-end lines indefinitely.
That's especially so in St. Lucie

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West, because many residents are seasonal and not around to, say, take showers part of the year. Every use helps move the water.

"What we've been doing in the past is going out there every quarter and flushing (dead-end lines) by hand," Pickle said in the interview.

The flushing systems are increasing the line flushing, and reducing the labor time doing it.

"You just go by periodically and check on it to see that it's doing what it's supposed to be doing," Pickle said.

The flushing systems are battery operated. Pickle said they'll last about a year each. They're set up to flush weekly in early morning hours. For example, one at 571 Sanctuary Drive will flush at 3:30 a.m. Some will flush at 3 a.m., such as on at 340 N.W. Millpond Cove. Most will flush at 4 and 4:30 a.m. About a dozen of the flushing devices have been set up so far, and more will follow.

There is a downside — the flushes are set up on timers that don't pay attention to weather conditions. Pickle said at the meeting there's likelihood that the flushers will sometimes do their thing during storms. He

doesn't anticipate that would be much noticed.

But, people are noticing the flushers, and some find them aesthetically displeasing. Pickle said he hopes that the district's customers who see them as monstrosities will see the beauty in the beasts.

"To me it's not that ugly and it provides a valuable tool to keep our man hours in other places," Pickle said.

Meaning the district has one less expense to add to the chances it can go more fiscal years without raising utility rates. There hasn't been a rate increase from the district since 2010.

The district is a Community Development District, which is a hybrid creation of the State Legislature. The districts operate as governmental bodies to deliver some municipal services, such as water and sewer. It doesn't gain any revenue from property taxes, although some assessments to pay debt on certain projects are paid along with property taxes.

The St. Lucie West Services District handles water, sewer and storm-water management for St. Lucie West's residential and commercial areas.

*Next Up - Aqua Harvesters:
'What is that strange thing in the water?'*