

IN FOCUS

Juno Beach homeowners to decide on

Residents in eight-block area have until Monday to cast votes.

By BILL DIPAOLO
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

JUNO BEACH — Public potties or private?

That's the question being pondered by about 120 homeowners between Neptune Drive and Sunrise Way. They have until Monday to cast their ballot on whether to hook up to the Loxahatchee River District sewer system or stay on their own septic systems.

If most vote "yes," the district will dig up the streets next spring to install the pipes and finish about six months later. The cost per homeowner would be about \$15,900, most of which can be paid over 20 years.

If most vote "no," the private sewers stay. Along with Jupiter Inlet Colony, the residents would be in one of the few local coastal residential areas that's still on private septic systems.

The district has not sought to connect the Juno Beach homes because the houses sit on a sandy natural ridge that filters the wastewater, said Rick Dent, executive director of the district.

"It's totally up to the residents. If they don't want the hookups, we'll walk away," said Dent. Drinking water will not be affected. Most homes in the eight-block area are hooked up to Jupiter Utilities, and the rest are on private wells, he said.

When several residents of the neighborhood



THOMAS CORDY/Staff Photographer

John Stuluto is one of about 120 homeowners who are voting on whether to tie into the Loxahatchee River District's sewer system or retain their private septic systems. Stuluto, who's standing in his back yard on top of his underground septic tank, is in favor of the hookups because he wants to build an addition to his home to increase its value.

requested the hookups, ballots were sent out by the district, an elected five-member board that promotes sewer hookups to protect the Loxahatchee River. More than 95 percent of the 30,000 residences and businesses in the district are hooked into the gravity sewer system's 11 million gallon plant near Busch Wildlife Sanctuary in Jupiter. The district covers 73 square miles, east of Jupiter Farms Road, generally from Juno Beach north through southern Martin County.

Most of the Juno Beach homes are on small lots built about 50 years ago. Many residents, such as John Stuluto, want to add on to their homes to increase their value. Adding

a second floor for Stuluto means at least one more toilet, but his private septic system is not large enough to handle another one. And he can't expand the drain field for his septic system because his lot is too small.

"I want a second floor to see the ocean. Without the public system, I can't get a permit to build," said Stuluto, an art teacher at William T. Dwyer High School.

Suzanne Brown, who lives on Neptune Road, has a different viewpoint. Recent construction on Mars Way just north of her home brought a lot of noise and traffic tie-ups. She fears that the sewer work would damage her home's foundation, and says the cost and inconvenience are not

worth the trouble.

"The recent construction had my pictures rattling. Plus, my street is on a steep hill. I'm nervous about how I would get in and out during the construction," she said.

During the past 15 years, the district has hooked up about 5,000 homes and businesses. Some neighborhoods, such as Zephyr Way in Juno Beach, voluntarily hooked up about a decade ago. Other areas, such as the Tequesta Country Club, opposed tying into the system. Contending the homes were polluting the Loxahatchee River, the district took the development to court, which ruled that residents there must hook up to the public system.

Persuading homeowners in Juno Beach to hook up to the district's sewer system is a challenge, said Rick Dent, executive director of the district. "If you're not working anything out with Bishop," he said.

During the past 15 years, the district has hooked up about 5,000 homes and businesses. Some neighborhoods, such as Zephyr Way in Juno Beach, voluntarily hooked up about a decade ago. Other areas, such as the Tequesta Country Club, opposed tying into the system. Contending the homes were polluting the Loxahatchee River, the district took the development to court, which ruled that residents there must hook up to the public system.

Need A New 'Do?

THE LARGEST HAIR SHOPPER