

Owners to decide on sewer hookup



THOMAS CORDY/Staff Photographer

owners who are voting on whether to tie into the Loxahatchee River District's sewer system or retain their private septic systems. Stelluto, who's stand-ground septic tank, is in favor of the hookups because he wants to increase its value.

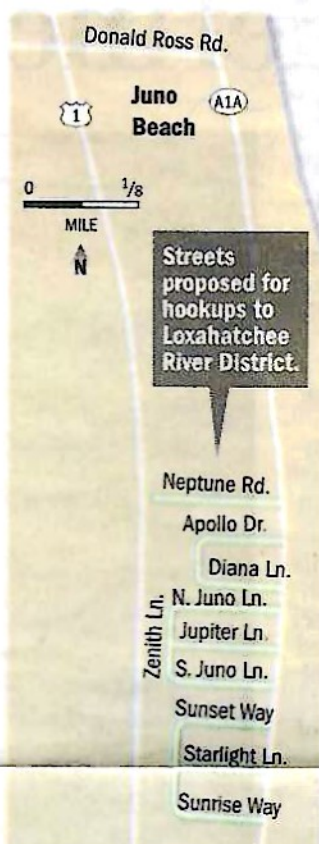
second floor for Stuluto has at least one more, but his private septic system is not large enough to handle another one. And he can't expand the drain for his septic system because his lot is too small. "I want a second floor to the ocean. Without a public system, I can't get a permit to build," said Stelluto, an art teacher at William T. Dwyer High School.

Elizabeth Brown, who lives on Neptune Road, has a different viewpoint. Reconstruction on Mars Road just north of her home has brought a lot of noise and traffic tie-ups. She fears 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.



MARK HEMPHILL/Staff Artist

Persuading customers in Juno Beach to buy new sewers will be a tough sell, said Rim Bishop, executive director of Seacoast Utility Authority, which supplies drinking water and sewer systems to about 38,000 customers in north Palm Beach county.

"If your septic tank is working fine, why pay anything to fix it?" said Bishop.

During a recent meeting at Juno Beach Town Hall, several residents asked about mail and garbage collection during construction. A central collection point would be set up for both, said Paul Brienza, the Loxahatchee River District's director of engineering services. Others

Cost for two-bathroom house

Assessment: \$12,000
(payable over 20 years)
Pipe from house to property line: \$1,400
Abandon septic tank: \$700
Connection charge: \$1,772
Total: \$15,872

asked about landscaping and sidewalk replacement. Videos would be taken before construction to make sure that everything is replaced to look like it did before the work, said Brienza. One resident suggested the town contribute to the cost, reducing the costs to property owners.

"Not in this tight budget year," Mayor Linda Hodgkins said outside the meeting.

Property values won't be significantly affected, said Realtor Bill Kollmer, a former Juno Beach mayor.

"A home with public septic won't sell for much more. But it will sell first," Kollmer said.

The ballots will be counted after Monday's voting deadline. If a majority of residents in the north or south sections of the proposed project area vote for the hookups, that section could be done separately. If the hookups are approved, homeowners who voted no still must pay to hook up. Owners of vacant lots would pay only the assessment, but not other charges associated with the project.

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