

County: West Wabasso will say goodbye to 'brown water'

By HENRY A. STEPHENS

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY — County officials are going forward to construction for cleaner water in West Wabasso but back to the drawing board for increased security in Gifford Park.

County commissioners Tuesday awarded a \$575,000 contract to Sheltra & Son Construction Co. Inc. of Indiantown to lay more than 7,200 feet of water mains and install eight fire hydrants and 123 water meters in West Wabasso, an economically challenged community north of County Road 510 and between 61st Drive and 66th Avenue.

Contracts show the project is to be completed within a year.

"I'm just tickled this is finally going through," county Environmental Health Specialist Julianne Price said Friday. "It's really going. No more planning involved. ... And this means no more brown water."

West Wabasso surprises many visitors with its stark contrast from the county's more famous high quality of life.

The water from private wells has 10 times the acceptable level of iron.

An \$825,000 block grant is covering the construction plus charges of \$130 per customer to install a meter.

In addition, the County Commission in October advanced \$102,700 to cover fees for connecting meters to homes.

This leaves the customer paying \$50 each, records show.

Sheltra, with the low bid, beat out Ric-Man International Inc. of Pompano Beach, which submitted the high bid of \$698,895, and Maxwell Contracting Inc. of Cocoa, which bid \$693,000.

Thirteen companies, meanwhile, had requested the county's specifications for a project building a concrete-block house for security personnel in Gifford Park, records show.

But only one, Twenty-First Century Engineering of Vero Beach, submitted a bid by the March 1 opening. And that was \$193,100, prompting commissioners to reject it as too high.

The Gifford Progressive Civic League has sought such a structure so a sheriff's deputy, preferably Detective Teddy Floyd, a Gifford resident, could keep after-hours watch on the 41-acre park, southwest of 49th Street and 43rd Avenue.

"So where are we going from here? We'll look at other options," Assistant County Administrator Mike Zito said Friday. "We're looking at maybe a portable, similar to the portable classrooms or the offices of (Supervisor of Elections) Kay Clem."

Public Works Director Jim Davis has estimated it would cost about \$150,000 to build the house and connect it to utilities, but has said bids could come in higher.

The project, however, was officially budgeted at \$74,241.