

Indian River seeks aid for water

By Henry A. Stephens staff writer

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY — Residents of West Wabasso, a small community north of County Road 510 and west of 58th Avenue, could get county water — if state lawmakers will pay for it.

In a 5-0 vote Tuesday, the County Commission approved the project in concept and awarded a \$10,300 contract to the Vero Beach engineering firm Masteller, Moler & Reed to design the layout.

"Our next step will be to go before the Legislature and ask for \$500,000, and that would be next year," county Environmental Health Specialist Julianne Renk said.

Renk said she has been working for the county Health Department since January on a \$30,000 federal grant to assess community problems and find money for solutions.

Tuesday Renk brought a bottle of water to the County Commission meeting.

It was not clear water, however. It was the color of pale rust.

Such water had come from the kitchen faucet of a West Wabasso resident, Renk said.

Neighbors there have spoken of the local well water being only usable for bathing. For drinking, they go to the nearest store and buy water in bottles.

Before the county can lay water pipes, however, it must have a path to bury them, county Utilities Director Erik Olson has said.

Laying straight pipes where the dirt roads aren't straight is the challenge in West Wabasso, Renk said.

The roads aren't paved, graded or even maintained. To prevent getting stuck in sugar sand or bogged down in mud, some residents have put down carpeting.

Renk said she plans to be in West Wabasso today help get residents to agree to donate easements along the proposed water line.