

Bonita puts about 80 homeowners on notice for sewer hookups

By TARA E. McLAUGHLIN

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BONITA SPRINGS — The deadline is approaching for some Bonita Springs homeowners who have yet to ditch their septic systems for sewer hookups.

Bonita Springs Utilities put about 80 homeowners on notice that they need to sign up or pay up.

Letters mailed in May notified residents that if they responded within 90 days, they could finance the \$5,600 price tag over 30 years at 6.5 percent interest. If not, the total bill will be due in a lump sum.

"Septic tanks are a source of pollution that threatens the environment and our potable water supply," said utilities spokeswoman Laurel Smith.

At the same time, the City Council is preparing to enforce state and local laws that require hookups where available.

Draft language to be reviewed at Wednesday's meeting would impose fines of \$1,000 per day for those who are out of compliance, which would constitute a second-degree misdemeanor.

In the past 15 years, more than 4,000 homes converted to sewer from septic tanks, the letter to homeowners said.

In other matters, city staff will ask council members for direction on requests for impact fee refunds. The fees are charged to developers to help pay for improvements such as traffic signals.

A city document said suggested refunds should only be paid when requested by the same person who paid the fee if there are no liens or foreclosure actions on

the property if the money is available.

“If the city relied in good faith in collection and use of the funds, it seems inappropriate to return funds because its calculations were based on the impact of the property and that impact will occur eventually,” the document said.

John Dulmer, the city’s planning and zoning manager, said he has only heard of one fee refund request.

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