



City of Green Cove Springs

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January 26, 2026

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
2025 Plant Excellence Awards
Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-3000

**RE: FDEP Plant Excellence Awards Nomination, 2025
Harbor Road Water Reclamation Facility, FL 0020915
Williams Industrial Services LLC, Bankruptcy Implications**

Dear FDEP Awards Nominee Representative:

Follows is some background to the abandonment, and subsequent bankruptcy, of the prime contractor, Williams Industrial Service, on July 25, 2023, during the middle of the construction project. The subsequent activities that were taken by the staff and management of the Harbor Road facility, to maintain the existing conditions of the site, negotiate with the surety (bonding insurance company), and work with a secondary contractor to complete the project, is the subject of the award nomination.

Background:

Williams Industrial Services LLC (Williams) was chosen by the normal bidding process as the prime contractor to construct / complete the \$16 million project. During the infancy of the project Williams struggled with project management, material procurement and obtaining experienced personnel. City staff spent far more time than should have been required to support Williams and complete the project. As the project inadequately progressed, liquidated damages due to contract completion time frame were implemented on March 1, 2023. In further efforts to assist Williams, the city offered to possibly withhold the damages if they improved their performance and brought more qualified personnel on site.

Around mid-July Williams notified the city the company was up for sale and a potential buyer identified. Purportedly the buyer was an experienced contractor and had the resources to complete the project. When staff reported to the plant / construction site on Thursday, July 20, 2023, we were notified that the sale did not go through and that Williams was closing the company. All the Williams employees stopped what they were doing and left the site. Approximately one week later we were notified that Williams had filed bankruptcy in New Jersey, and the bankruptcy judge informed us we were to secure the site and not allow anyone or any company to remove anything.

Project Preservation:

Williams literally walked off the job. All work areas were left in the condition they were at that precise moment. Equipment, tools and materials were left unattended. Various excavations were left open without proper shoring, safety considerations and protection from dirt infiltration. Materials and equipment were stored in an unorganized manner throughout the plant site (a constant topic of discussion during project meetings). City staff retrieved and stored all smaller materials that had been paid for through the project funds. Staff also collected equipment and larger materials and organized them on pallets and covered them for proper preservation. All excavations, and the associated piping were sealed and covered. The site was completely mowed, trimmed and cleaned to retain the appearance of a properly managed project site and overall facility. The goal was for the potential project completion bidders to feel comfortable assuming another contractors unfinished work.

Performance Bond:

The city required a performance bond as part of awarding the project to Williams. The surety (organization providing the bond) became responsible to complete the project. After some lengthy legal shuffling by the surety to avoid financial responsibility, they finally agreed to assume responsibility for the project. The surety conducted a Request for Proposals (RFP) from contractors to finish the project. Only one bid response was received, and it was several million dollars above the funds remaining in the project. The response from the bidders was that the condition of the site, and the fact that much of the work was underground and could not be evaluated, they had to bid a high price to cover their responsibility.

Staff suggested that, with the help of plant staff, the surety hire the one responding contractor to do a review of the site conditions and identify areas of concern and see if the quote could be lowered. The surety agreed, and plant staff provided some of the equipment and labor to evaluate the construction conditions. This process allowed the contractor to modify and lower the estimate to finish the project.

Plant staff worked with the surety to bring all associated vendors and subcontractors outstanding accounts up to date. Staff encouraged the main subcontractors to stay in place and work with the new contractor to finish the project. Finally, after eight months, the construction resumed.

Project Equipment Warranties:

Due to the equipment that was supplied by vendors for the project having sat on site for almost two years, all warranties were eliminated. Staff worked with the city's legal team to determine how the surety would cover warranties. Some equipment was shipped back to the manufacturer for evaluation and reinstating warranty. A list of spares were identified for some of the smaller equipment. A sum of cash was also required for the unknown. These discussions were very intense with the surety as they were already at a loss of over \$6 million between the funds left in the project and the funds required to complete the project.

Liquidated Damages:

The original construction contract had a clause for the city to collect liquidated damages for every day the project went over the project completion date. Liquidated damages are there to help pay for all the activities staff conducted that are outlined above (site preservation, loss of warranties, legal fees, etc.). Many hours were spent by plant leadership staff negotiating with attorneys to reach a settlement and avoid loss by the city.

Summary:

Plant staff and leadership spent hundreds of hours protecting the abandoned site, dealing with irate vendors that were not allowed to retrieve their equipment, negotiating with the surety and their attorneys, assisting the procurement of a contractor to finish the project, and negotiating the replacement of warranties and losses due to damage and extended project completion date. As this project was financed by the FDEP State Revolving Fund Program, staff was also protecting the interests of FDEP. In addition, plant staff had to maintain regulatory compliance with the existing plant which was limited in its operation by all of the construction activities.

In short, this plant award application is on behalf of the tireless effort by plant staff to maintain compliance with the existing plant and bring the construction project to closure. All of these activities cost the city additional funds and set back the timeline for planned capital improvement projects. The city council and executive staff of the city fully supported the staff during these trying times. Clearly an example of fantastic teamwork.

If I can provide additional information feel free to contact me at (904) 219-7540 or via e-mail at sschultz@greencovesprings.com.



Scott Schultz
Water Utilities Director