



Levy County Board of County Commissioners

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To: The Board of County Commissioners
From: Mary-Ellen Harper, County Manager
Date: August 19, 2025
Subject: W3C staff Reports

Commissioners,

The Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) received a presentation about the W3C Project at the last BoCC meeting on August 5, 2025. During that meeting, the Board requested a report from Staff on the potential impacts of the project on the County.

The following reports on the project are included for your review:

1. Staff Report: Ryan Asmus, Contract County Engineer
2. Staff Report: Tara Howell, Contract Interim Zoning Official
3. For your reference, I am also including a staff report that was presented by County Attorney Nicolle Shalley, County Engineer Andrew Carswell, Planning and Zoning Director Stacey Hectus, Budget Officer Jared Blanton and County Coordinator Wilbur Dean at the April 25, 2024 BoCC Meeting.

I have asked Ms. Shalley, Mr. Asmus, and Ms. Howell to attend the BoCC Meeting to answer any questions you may have about their reports.



Commissioners

Charlie Kennedy, District 1

Rock Meeks, District 2

Desiree Mills, Chair, District 3

Tim Hodge, Vice Chair, District 4

Johnny Hiers, District 5



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W3C

With a project cost of \$139 M, it will take several years to acquire the funding needed to complete the project. The grants, as received, will be tied to a collateral type of need either based on resiliency, job growth or water quality, which the county will have to support and be a co-partner. The funding will likely come in phases which would start with the connections to Bronson. As the phases are built out, maintenance and operations will become an additional financial consideration that will need to be quantified.

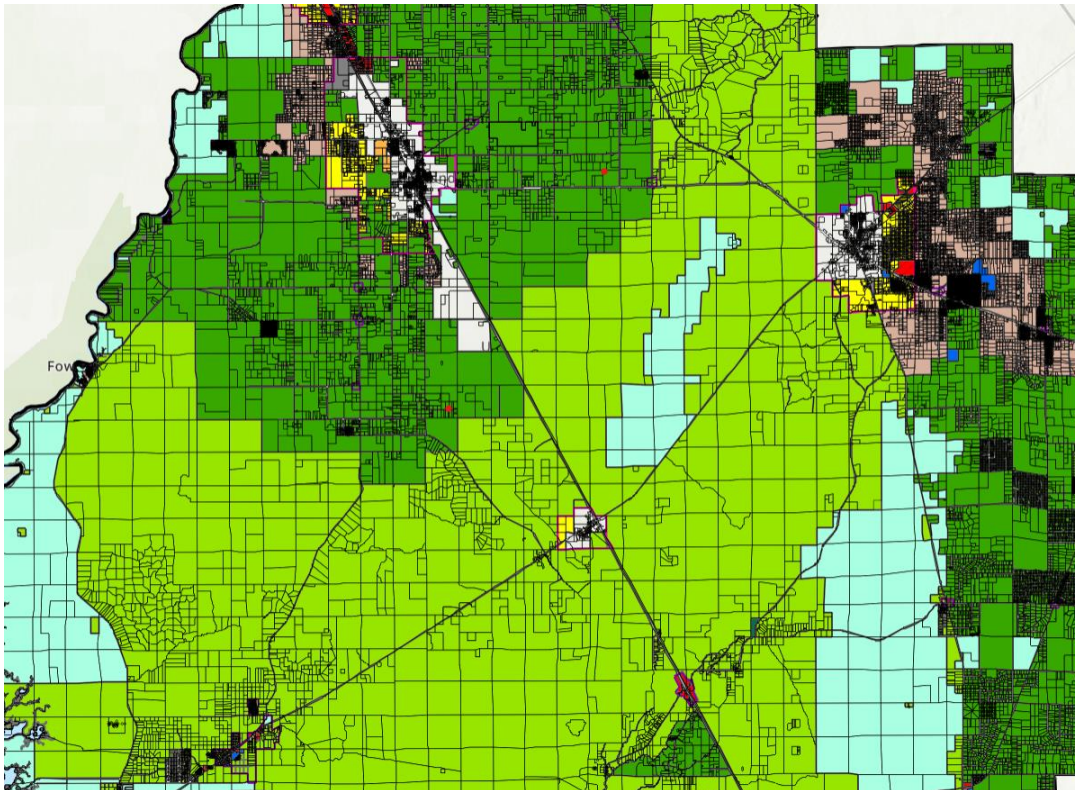
Bronson Considerations:

Water Purchase from W3C The rate study is still to be determined, however due to the startup cost and O&M, the rates are anticipated to increase. With the proposed operation model of a water wholesaler/provider and city operations, the system operations and maintenance expenditure will not provide cost sharing or saving. For example, Bronson will staff currently provides the water plant operations, service and repair, new hook-ups and billing. After purchasing the water from W3C as a wholesale, Bronson will continue to need an operator to service and check meters, adjust and repairs to lines, new hooks and for billing. This would be in addition to the operator that is monitoring the W3C water plant.

To address future water supply needs in Bronson, a possible option is to incorporate the University Oaks Water Plant into the water supply inventory. This system has a current consumption of 53,000 GPD. The system is permitted for 220K GPD. With the average consumption of 280 GPD per household, the University Oaks Water Plant could provide an additional 600 Residential connections, with the town currently servicing 650 connections, based on the water demand of 180K GPD. If both systems are left operational, the town could support a total of 1250 connections. Based on population growth rates of 2%, the growth in Bronson is not expected to reach 1250 connections until 2055.

Land Use Considerations:

Based on the land use, the optimal location of a water/wastewater plant would be near a population center that is expected to grow. Below is the Levy County Land Use and Zoning Map. The growth trends observed from the map consider both Bronson and Chiefland. The current population of Bronson and Chiefland is 1145 and 2318. Growth rates for Bronson and Chiefland are 2.10% and 3.08%. The land use map illustrates the development of Chiefland as compared to Bronson. Chiefland rural development and parcel counts exceed those of Bronson. A contributing factor in the lack of development in Bronson, is the southwest boundary has environmental conditions that limit land use. This is illustrated by the attached wetland inventory from the National Wetland.



National Wetland Inventory Map

Options for Cedar Key Water



Water Plant Rebuild

There are a couple of alternative options for Cedar Key Water that could be used as a long term or as an interim option. These options are in line with the available funding opportunities through grants and appropriations. One option is to upgrade the existing system to provide a closed system treatment and distribution system. This would include the construction of new water treatment tanks and a reverse osmosis system at the current site. The estimated cost for the entire new system is between \$3-7M. This system will remove all the salinity and organic concerns that are experienced at the current water plant.

Desalination System

Desalination systems have been used in several coastal communities and towns for decades. For example, Tampa Bay has operated the Tampa Bay Seawater Desalination Plant for 20 years. This facility has a maximum capacity of 28.75 MGD. A desalination plant to meet the needs of Cedar Key would be much smaller with a maximum capacity of 1 MGD. The estimated cost of a desalination water plant in Cedar Key is \$9-15M.



Tampa Bay Seawater Desalination Plant