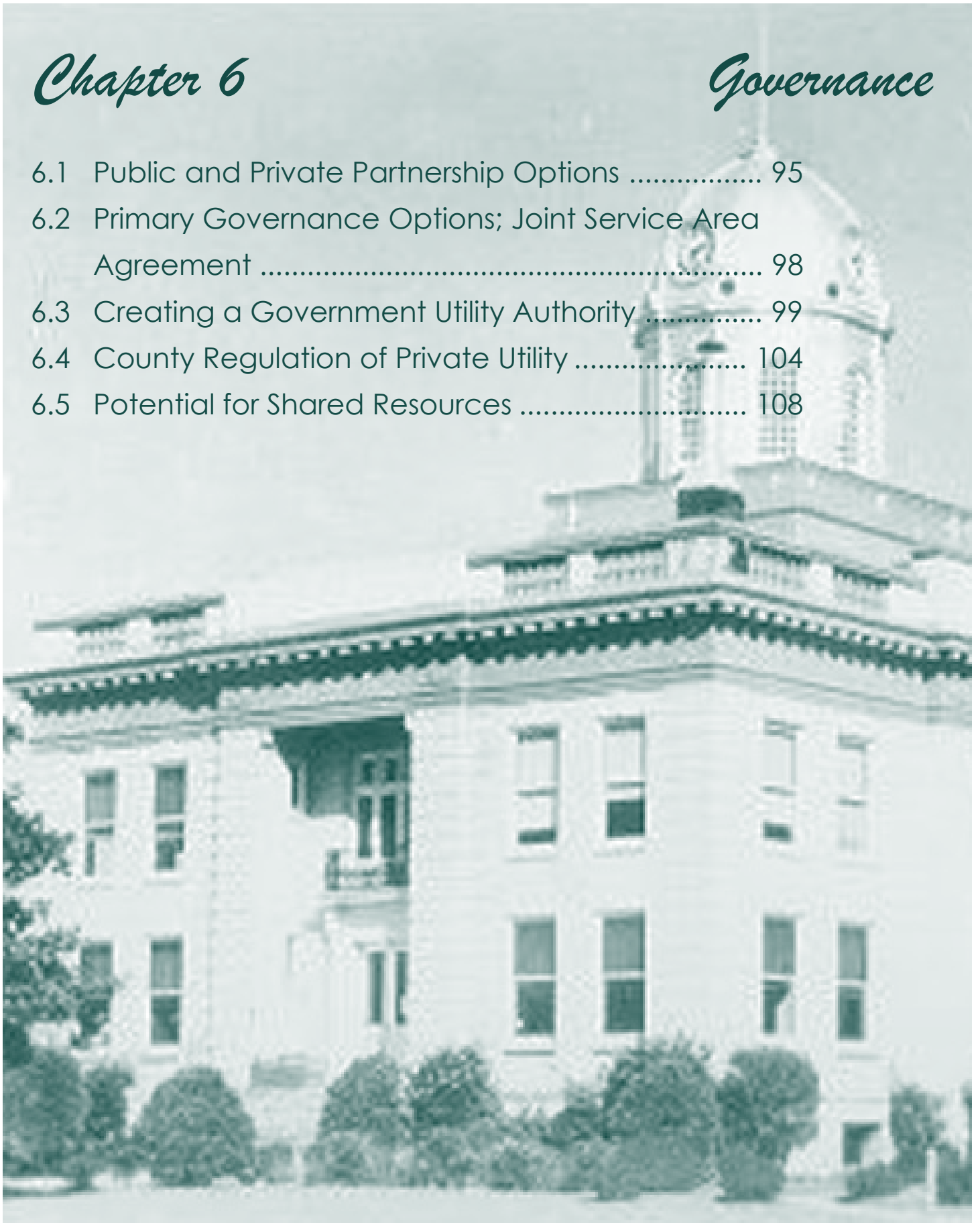


Chapter 6

Governance

6.1	Public and Private Partnership Options	95
6.2	Primary Governance Options; Joint Service Area Agreement	98
6.3	Creating a Government Utility Authority	99
6.4	County Regulation of Private Utility	104
6.5	Potential for Shared Resources	108



6.1 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP OPTIONS

There are a number of ways for the County to address the need for coordinated, long-range planning of utility services throughout the County. The options range from (a) securing funding or assisting utility providers within the County in securing funding for centralized water and wastewater facilities; to (b) County ownership of utilities, directly or through a special district or authority; to (c) County regulation of utilities operating within the County borders (see section 6.4 of this report); to (d) facilitation by the County of the ownership/operation of utilities by qualified utility operators which have achieved economies of scale through large utility operations (not “Mom and Pops”).

COUNTY OWNERSHIP

Below in Table 6.1A is a one page list of some of the principal reasons in favor of the County’s utility ownership. The list also identifies several utility ownership mechanisms as well as methods for expanding utility service in the County.

Counties like Gadsden County which are anticipating or actually experiencing growth may consider taking steps toward establishing a County-owned utility. The range of creative financing mechanisms available to the County, i.e., bonding of special assessments, as well as the typical utility financing procedures which would be available, i.e., (i) the collection of connection charges, and (ii) entry into developer agreements requiring developers to construct and donate utility facilities to the County, should be understood by a County considering entry into the water and/or wastewater utility business.

A simplified plan for the assumption of utility ownership may consist of the following steps:

County Direct Ownership of Utilities

1. Identification of administrative, clerical, customer service and operations personnel necessary to run the utility business;
2. Identification of area(s) to be served, customers existing in the area and projection of rate and build out of customer growth;
3. Projection of utility revenue/expenses and capital investment needs;
4. Utility policies, rules and procedures to be adopted by the County; and
5. In lieu of County personnel, the County may consider contracting with a third party for utility management, billing and operations services.

County Indirect Ownership of Utilities through Special District

In lieu of creating a utility department within the existing County structure, the County could create an independent or dependent special district to own and operate the utility.

The Board of County Commissioners could sit as the governing board of the special district, retain control over the appointment and termination of the directors of the special district or simply retain budget setting authority to establish a dependent special district.

If the Board of County Commissioners wishes to place control of utility operations in the hands of individuals with expertise that the Board may not currently possess, the Board may pursue the creation of an independent special district. A significant difference between the dependent and independent special district mecha-

6.1 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP OPTIONS

nisms would be the retention of rate-setting and utility management authority by either the Board (dependent district) or the new district directors (independent special district).

Basically, the only additional steps required under this option for indirect utility ownership as opposed to direct County ownership is the process required to create a dependent special district (typically, by resolution) or an independent special district (by special law).

Approximately two-thirds of the County's population resides in unincorporated areas of the County. Large portions of these areas are not served by the Cities, Towns or Talquin. The County could enter the utility business directly, however, after reviewing the utility operations of the Cities, Towns and Talquin, the Study Team recommends that the County not take steps to do so but rather that the County engage itself in the processes and relationships required to implement the recommendations described in this report.

As described in Section 6.3, the County should consider engaging in the utility business together with other existing utility purveyors through a governmental utility authority as the advantages to the County identified in that section provide the County with the closest thing to a “no lose” proposition while concentrating utility ownership and operation in the hands of professionals currently providing such service either in an existing authority or on behalf of the Cities and Towns which may elect to participate in such an authority.

County Membership in a Regional Utility Authority

The County could participate in utility ownership by entering an interlocal agreement with at least one other city, county or special dis-

trict. The interlocal agreement would constitute the “charter” of the authority. The advantage to this mechanism is that the Board would be able to reserve certain rights and powers concerning the authority's operation of the utility, i.e., the right to purchase utility systems in the future, obtain revenue from utility operations, appoint members of the authority board, while the County would have no obligations or liabilities concerning the utility's operation or debt. The alternative processes for establishing a governmental utility authority and the pros and cons for establishing such an authority are discussed in Section 6.3

Search For Private Owner/Operators

There are a couple of investor-owned utilities operating in Florida which possess sufficient economies of scale to be able to provide appropriate, cost-effective operations and expertise. The County could approach such companies to discuss their interest in providing utility service in the County. However, during the past decade or so, the trend in Florida has been for local governments to acquire investor-owned utilities. Considerations of growth management, service quality, rates and local control of critical water supplies and wastewater treatment and disposal have overcome arguments suggesting that private utilities regulated by a state agency, the Florida Public Service Commission, constitute the optimum method for providing these services. Also, a number of counties have experienced difficulties with private utilities in terms of coordination and cooperation with the County and other utility providers – the principal goals which the County seeks to achieve in the areas of water and wastewater service. For these reasons, at present, we would not recommend that the County approach private utilities to assist in meeting these goals.

6.1 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP OPTIONS

TABLE 6.1A
Ownning and Expanding Utilities

A. Principal Reasons for Government Ownership

- A Public Service
- Serving Constituents Versus Profiting Shareholders
- Growth Management
- Economies of Scale: Allocation of Cost of Government – utility operations contributions to general revenue

B. Forms of Ownership or Control

- Direct Ownership
- Dependent and Independent Districts: Chapters 153 and 189, Florida Statutes
- Regional Authorities
- Utility Regulation

C. Methods for Expanding Services Once Government Owns Utility Systems

- Standard Revenue Financing
- Developer Agreements
- Connection Charges and Impact Fees
- Refundable Advances
- Special Assessment Funding
- Territory Agreements
- Acquisitions

6.2 PRIMARY GOVERNANCE OPTIONS: JOINT SERVICE AREA AGREEMENT

From a truly county-wide perspective, and in order to achieve the most efficient and economical water and wastewater service, it would be most advantageous for each of the utility providers to be a party to a Joint Service Area Agreement. The Joint Service Area Agreement (the “JSAA”) would identify the service areas which each utility provider would possess the exclusive authority to serve. To be most effective, the JSAA also should obligate each provider to provide for both central water and wastewater service for new developments within their respective service areas. The creation of a JSAA would provide certainty to each utility provider as to the area which they must include in their long-term capital improvement plans. A JSAA also would provide clarity to residents, developers and other commercial interests interested in locating in Gadsden County as to which entity is responsible for providing them with water and wastewater service. Another benefit of such an agreement is the assistance which such an agreement would provide during the comprehensive plan review process as the County, Cities and Towns strive to satisfy the 10 year water planning and concurrency requirement.

As indicated in this Report, there are portions of the County where the service is provided, or could be provided, by more than one provider. Discussions with the utility provider ranged from full support of the creation of exclusive service areas to some concern that attempts to identify such areas could interfere with achieving the cooperation and coordination in long-term planning desired by the County. It should be emphasized that the creation of exclusive service areas for each utility provider does not eliminate the ability of the providers to coordinate and cooperate with each other in the provision of service for each other’s benefit, as typified by wholesale water or wastewater service agreements. In fact,

the JSAA includes provisions consistent with the obligations which the County would place on private utilities if the County assumes regulatory authority. These provisions include an obligation to notify the other parties before beginning the design and permitting of new, expanded or replacement facilities regarding treatment plants, wellfields or effluent disposal sites.

Attached as Appendix 6.2 is a draft of a Joint Service Area Agreement. In addition to addressing the issues identified above, this draft includes a provision whereby a utility provider may forfeit the exclusive right to serve an area if the provider cannot timely and economically provide service to residents, developers or other commercial interests.

As with the other forms of documents provided with this Report for consideration, the terms of the draft JSAA are subject to comment and negotiation between and among the parties. The County may wish to consider whether there are any incentives or disincentives, the “carrots and sticks,” which could be identified to encourage all utility providers to sign this type of agreement.

It should be noted that while the Florida Public Service Commission (the “FPSC”) retains authority to regulate private utilities in the County, the FPSC identifies the specific service area, by legal descriptions and by map designation, for private utilities and these areas are exclusive and protected by law. Should the County assume regulatory authority over the private utilities, the County would be required to grandfather-in the service area authorized by the FPSC. However, there are factors which could authorize the County to delete portions of the private utilities’ service area in the future. The potential deletion of such areas is addressed in the draft regulatory ordinance discussed in Section 6.4.

6.3 CREATING A GOVERNMENT UTILITY AUTHORITY

There are a few ways that Gadsden County could initiate a Government Utility Authority (“GUA”) and there are advantages and disadvantages of using the authority structure. The charts below identify the various processes for entering a GUA and the advantages and disadvantages of each process.

An additional chart below describes the advantages and disadvantages of creating a GUA.

I. ALTERNATIVE GUA PROCESSES

- a. special legislation
- b. creation of a new GUA by Interlocal Agreement
- c. joining an existing GUA, such as the Florida Governmental Utility Authority

6.3 CREATING A GOVERNMENT UTILITY AUTHORITY

A. Special Legislation.

The County can contact its Legislative delegation and request that a special law be presented to the 2008 Legislature establishing a Governmental Utility Authority.

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
1. State Legislators, who may be asked for funding assistance in the future, are informed about the Authority's creation from its inception	1. The legislative process is uncertain
2. Involving State Legislators in the Authority's creation may provide a level of "buy in" that could generate an additional desire to assist the Authority once created	2. Legislators from all over the state will have an opportunity to modify the governance and powers of the Gadsden County GUA
3. Any change to the Authority, its governance structure or powers may take longer to accomplish by amending legislation, thus extending the time for scrutiny of such changes	3. Legislators could amend the terms of the special law drafted by the County in ways not desired by the County
4. The County can be the sole local government involved in the Authority's creation	4. If the County desires changes to the GUA in the future, such changes may require legislative amendments to the special law which could result in undesired amendments
	5. Creation of an Authority by special law, as well as changes to the Authority's governance, scope of activities or powers in the future will take longer to accomplish and be subject to the dictates of Legislators from other parts of the State of Florida
	6. The legislative process permits individuals or entities who may have no, or only indirect, interest in the Authority's creation to impact the special legislation for reasons having nothing to do with the merits of the Authority
	7. The County may not be able to retain powers over the Authority, once created, in contrast to the undisputed ability of the County to retain certain powers if the Authority is created by Interlocal Agreement

6.3 CREATING A GOVERNMENT UTILITY AUTHORITY

B. Creation of a new GUA by Interlocal Agreement

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
1.The County retains maximum control over the terms of governance, powers and processes of the Authority	1.At least one other city, county or special district must agree to be a member of the Authority
2.The Authority can be established quickly if at least one partner (city, county or special district) can be identified which agrees with the creation of an Authority	
3.Assuming that the partner or partners identified are local entities, the Authority remains exclusively in local control	
4.A city participating in this study may be a willing partner in the Authority’s creation	
5.The terms of the County’s involvement in the Authority will be established by the County without fear of amendment by State Legislators	

C. Join an existing GUA by Interlocal Agreement

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
1.The Authority will already be operating which removes any ambiguities concerning its structure or operation	1.There is no existing GUA operating in proximity to Gadsden County
2. Utility professionals are under contract thus eliminating the time required for requests for proposals, bidding, etc.	2. If the County desires terms different from the terms of the GUA’s existing interlocal agreement, a second Interlocal Agreement between the County and the GUA would be required
3.An existing Authority likely will have a track record with state regulators and funding personnel and agencies as well as bond markets and other lenders	3.The County would share control of the Authority with its other government members, none of which are located in proximity to Gadsden County
4.Joining an existing GUA may be a quick process since the Interlocal Agreement already exists - passage of a membership resolution could be all that is required	

6.3 CREATING A GOVERNMENT UTILITY AUTHORITY

II. THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF A GOVERNMENT UTILITY AUTHORITY IN GENERAL

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
1. Initiation of service through a GUA would be transparent to customers as the County was never previously in the utility business. Participation of any of the Cities and Towns should be seamless to customers as the Authority will provide only wholesale service to its members or other Cities, Towns and Talquin.	1. The Board of County Commissioners (“Board”), County administration and customers are not familiar with how an Authority operates
2. A separate legal entity with authority to issue debt (bonds), create special assessment programs and obtain state funding	2. The County, other City members and the Authority must address how shared services and associated costs will be addressed upon and after creation
3. GUA liabilities never appear on the County’s books and records or those of other member governments	3. The Board and City members will not possess direct control of utility operations (although substantial control would remain through appointment of the Authority’s directors and continued oversight rights)
4. County removed from any liability for utility operations	4. Some power over Authority, administration and operations will be shared with at least one other government member of the Authority
5. County and other members may receive a revenue stream from Authority operations	5. The Board and Cities and Towns would not be directly responsible for setting utility rates, connection charges and policies
6. Depending upon utility cash flows, Cities and Towns which join a GUA and transfer assets to the GUA may be able to recover equity from such assets upon transfer to the GUA	
7. County and potential City members establish the governance method for Authority and can retain certain rights concerning Authority operations, for example, review of utility rates and approval of capital improvements for consistency with comprehensive plan	
8. Utility rate-setting is the responsibility of the Authority, not the County	
9. As a single purpose unit of government, the Authority focuses solely on the safe, sufficient and efficient provision of water and wastewater services	
10. Authority remains subject to Florida Sunshine Law, public records law, annual audit requirement and other obligations of local government	
11. County government would not be impacted as utility debt, budgets, operations and personnel are responsibilities solely of the Authority	

6.3 CREATING A GOVERNMENT UTILITY AUTHORITY

The following advantages and disadvantages are the principal considerations, in the opinion of the Study Team, which address specifically the creation of a GUA solely to provide wholesale wastewater service from an advanced wastewater treatment plant, and to locate another source of water supply which potentially could be used by the County, Cities, Towns and Talquin.

CREATION OF A REGIONAL GOVERNMENTAL UTILITY AUTHORITY TO ADDRESS WATER SUPPLY AND WASTEWATER ISSUES

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
1. Addressing needs on a regional basis creates economies of scale	1. As a member of an Authority, each local government's power is shared to some extent
2. All effected Authority Members can be involved in governance and decision making	2. Participation in an Authority could cause concern about delays in implementation of service required by local government
3. State agencies favor regional approaches to water/wastewater issues	3. As an Authority Member, local government must permit rates to be established which comply with Authority's debt covenants
4. An Authority is a single purpose form of government: the sole focus of the Authority and all working with it will be utility issues	4. Local government must rely on their designated Director to represent government's interest in Authority operations – Authority utility personnel do not report directly to County/City governing body
5. Combining wastewater flows facilitates use of advanced treatment systems and disposal of treated wastewater by reuse	
6. Access to state/federal funding may be facilitated by an Authority approach or at least a cooperative approach both to the construction of an advanced wastewater treatment plant and the identification of a new supplemental source of water	
7. An Authority can include other county governments, special districts or municipalities located in an adjacent county where additional water supplies may be located	

6.3 CREATING A GOVERNMENT UTILITY AUTHORITY

In the event that the County, Cities and Towns are interested in creating a GUA, an interlocal agreement specifically designed for this purpose is attached to this Report as Appendix 6.3A. Also attached to this Report, as Appendix 6.3B, is a draft of a wholesale wastewater service agreement between a prospective GUA and a City. It should be noted that Talquin has identified the need to construct an additional waste-

water treatment plant in the vicinity where Quincy also requires such a plant, near the I-10 / SR267 interchange. Neither the anticipated flows from Quincy nor Talquin, if not combined in a regional system, likely would be of sufficient quantity to make construction of a more expensive advanced wastewater treatment plant economical or affordable to their customers.

6.4 COUNTY REGULATION OF PRIVATE UTILITY

County Regulation of Private Utilities

The County possesses authority under Chapter 367, Florida Statutes, to regulate the investor-owned utilities operating within its borders. A resolution taking such jurisdiction away from the Florida Public Service Commission would need to be passed. The benefit of this action is that the County could obtain additional powers to decide which areas of the County are to be served by investor-owned utilities and under what conditions. This power would create additional County authority over growth within the County and present an alternative means by which the County could directly protect its residents, i.e., regulating the rates which residents must pay for utility service and ensuring that the public health and safety and well-being of the environment are protected. The County would not regulate the City utilities or Talquin Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Another benefit from assuming regulatory authority is the ability to include investor-owned utilities in the comprehensive, coordinated long-range planning for water and wastewater service throughout the County.

County officials recognize the important role that water and wastewater services play in envi-

ronmental and growth planning considerations, among others. The role of central water and wastewater service in protecting the environment, as well as the public health, is no more evident than in our pristine Gulf Coast. It is with these facts in mind that the Board may wish to consider assuming regulatory authority over private water and wastewater utilities now operating, or considering operating, in the County. Assuming such regulatory control would permit the County to most effectively implement its environmental and growth plans as well as meet existing concurrency requirements.

Below is a brief description of the pros and cons regarding assumption by the County of regulatory authority over private utilities operating or planning in the future to operate within County borders:

PROS

1. County regulation permits consideration of local issues to a greater extent than currently available by state regulation from Tallahassee.
2. County regulation provides local access to information concerning the water and wastewater facilities serving county resi-

6.4 COUNTY REGULATION OF PRIVATE UTILITY

dents. Local access to this information will assist the County in early identification of concerns, i.e., financial, technical or otherwise, which may arise concerning the private water and wastewater providers. Under County regulation, the private utilities will be required to file annual financial reports and such other reports as designated by the County, i.e., monthly system operating reports, five year capital plans, etc.

3. County regulation can assist the County in “standardizing” the agreements between utility providers and their customers.
4. County regulation can assist the County in “standardizing” the utility facilities to be placed into service in the future by private utilities through the identification of minimum standards and designs in appropriate ordinances.
5. County regulation can facilitate cost-efficient, safe and, thus, customer friendly, construction of utility facilities, i.e., by requiring utilities to produce evidence of the exploration of potentially lower cost interconnects with neighboring utility providers before the cost of facility construction or expansion will be included in the utility’s rates.
6. County regulation permits more speedy and efficient resolution of economic and operational issues as the economic and operational aspects concerning other facilities which may be operated by the utility provider in other counties will not need to be considered.
7. County regulation provides residents with local accountability for issues regarding utility regulation and operation of the utility under such regulation, including rates to be charged to County residents.
8. County regulation facilitates settlements between utility providers and customers to avoid costly and often unnecessary litigation.
9. County regulation insures that the regulatory assessment fees paid by County residents are used solely to provide local regulation of the utility provider.
10. County regulation of utility providers will permit the County to hold utilities accountable, i.e., by reductions to the profit margin which a utility would be authorized to earn if the quality of water and wastewater service as well as the treatment of customers by the utility is deficient.
11. County regulation will permit the County to insure consistency of utility infrastructure development within the County growth management plans. The Florida Public Service Commission is not required to do anything more than considers the existence of growth management plans when authorizing utility construction and service area expansions.
12. County regulation is the best means of insuring utility compliance with issues such as compliance with fire flow ordinances, hydrant inspection and other safety related activities.
13. County regulation gives the County a mechanism to require that customer friendly policies and procedures are followed by the utility, i.e., treatment of

6.4 COUNTY REGULATION OF PRIVATE UTILITY

customer deposits and interest earned thereon, requirement for a local office, reasonableness of connection charges assessed when customers hook-up to a utility system, etc.

14. County regulation insures that rates and charges assessed by the utility provider compensate the utility only for investments made and costs incurred to operate the facilities actually serving customers residing in the County.
15. County regulation provides much greater accessibility of County residents to the regulatory process than state regulation from Tallahassee.
16. Relatively recent legislation provides the County and its residents with the services, if requested, of the Office of Public Counsel, the state agency authorized to represent customers in utility matters. Previously, the Office of Public Counsel was only authorized to represent customers before the Public Service Commission.
17. In the past, attempts have been made in the Florida Legislature to remove the Public Service Commission's obligation to identify specific service areas in which a private utility is authorized to operate. The specter of private utilities, upon securing or having in the past secured an original certificate to operate in the County, now being permitted to build utility facilities and run utility lines to areas anywhere outside of their existing delineated service areas is, at the least, troublesome. The Public Service Commission is not required to insure compliance of utility facilities or expansion plans with County growth management plans. Pas-

sage of this type of legislation can be expected to have a materially adverse impact on growth management efforts by the County. If the County assumes regulation, consistency with growth management plans can be required and service areas may continue to be specifically delineated.

Finally, as the County is well aware, the availability of water is now a concurrency requirement in a county's growth management plans. What is important to note in this regard is that (1) the Public Service Commission is not required to insure strict compliance of the activities of the private utilities it regulates with County growth management plans; and (2) private utilities operating in the County under PSC regulation, and potentially without restrictions as to where they can place water lines, could thwart the County's attempts to enforce the water concurrency requirement.

CONS TO COUNTY REGULATION

1. Local officials must be involved in rate setting proceedings as opposed to having a choice of whether to intervene in Public Service Commission proceedings (note: the Public Service Commission is not required to permit County intervention even if a County desires to intervene).
2. Rate proceedings can be contentious. The Board will be required to follow established procedures as well as federal and state constitutional law requirements regarding rate setting, i.e., the utility must be permitted to charge rates

6.4 COUNTY REGULATION OF PRIVATE UTILITY

which give the utility an opportunity to earn a reasonable return on its utility investment as long as it is providing good service to its customers. While most utility customers are satisfied if a thorough examination of the facts is performed after sufficient notice and opportunity to participate is provided to them, historically, some customers will retain an opinion that a rate increase is never justified.

3. If the County enters the business as a water and wastewater service provider, a perception of conflict of interest may be created as the County, to some extent, may be viewed as a competitor of the private utility. In the past, a bill or two has been introduced in the Legislature, but never passed, which would remove the County's power to condemn any private utility which it regulates unless (1) there is a danger to the public health or the environment if the utility were to continue to operate or (2) the utility has been abandoned. The private utility which lobbied for this legislation no longer exists. If such legislation were to be passed, which does not appear likely at this time, by taking jurisdiction over private utilities the County could forfeit the right to condemn them except under the two circumstances indicated above.
4. Assuming the obligation of local regulation of private utilities carries the additional expense and potential for legal actions and liabilities arising from such regulation. The laws and procedures for regulation are comprehensive and the constitutional requirements clearly must

be followed to minimize the likelihood of appeals of County decisions or other resort to the courts by regulated utilities. The utility regulatory ordinance could address this issue by providing for the utility to reimburse the county, acting as regulator, for the costs of conducting regulatory activities, as long as the utility is provided the opportunity to recover such costs from its customers.

While the "pros" identified above outnumber the "cons", it is not intended to suggest that superiority of numbers should be the determining factor in the Board's decision. The cons bear equal consideration. However, the County can take steps to minimize the magnitude of potential adverse impacts from the "cons".

The steps required to assume regulatory authority are:

1. Pass resolution rescinding Florida Public Service Commission jurisdiction over investor-owned utilities and assuming such authority. (A draft of such a resolution is provided in Appendix 6.4A).
2. Passage of ordinances, policies and rules concerning utility regulation of rates, service areas, customer service, etc. (A draft of a regulatory ordinance is provided in Appendix 6.4B)
3. Notification to the Florida Public Service Commission using the letter provided in Appendix 6.4C.
4. Establish regulatory apparatus and responsibilities. The Board could function as regulator directly or a citizen regulatory board could be appointed by the County.

6.5 POTENTIAL FOR SHARED RESOURCES

The Study Team identified the potential for the Cities, Towns and Talquin to join with the County in the joint purchase of goods and services in an effort to achieve cost savings and efficiencies from such a sharing of resources.

During the study process, no City or Talquin expressed much interest in this potential and given the breadth and complexity of instituting the other long term recommendations of the Study Team in this report, the Study Team suggests that focusing time and effort on identifying areas for shared purchasing or utilization of existing resources would not satisfy a cost / benefit analysis at this time.

However, a coordinated county-wide approach to the provision of water and wastewater service should include an agreement between the various utility providers to render assistance to each other in the event of an emergency situation or to achieve maximum economic efficiency whenever feasible.

As indicated elsewhere in this Report, large portions of the County's population are at risk of being without water if the water trunk lines which move water from the well field in the

north of the county to consumers in the central and southern portions of the County are damaged or suffer a break for any reason. Appendix 6.5A to this Report provides a draft of a sample emergency interconnect agreement which could be entered by utility providers to provide for the construction of interconnects between their respective facilities.

At times, a utility provider may experience other types of emergency situations which the provider alone cannot address expeditiously using only the employees and equipment at its disposal. A mutual aid agreement between the utility providers in the County pursuant to which they each would render assistance to the other in times of emergency is prudent. Attached as Appendix 6.5B to the Report is a draft of the "Mutual Aid Agreement for Water/Wastewater" which has been prepared and approved by an organization known as FLAWARN. This Agreement previously has been forwarded to each of the Cities, Towns and Talquin for their consideration as an immediate step toward securing assistance and pledging to assist each other during times of emergency.