

High Springs' Water Passes the Test

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"The Observer"

HIGH SPRINGS – The city's water testing results are right where they should be and the city is now back on the normal annual schedule for the testing of public water systems.

The city was notified of the determination by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in a November 19 letter to City Manager Joel Decoursey after DEP received the city's September 19, 2019 sampling results. With those results the city met the DEP's required readings for the running- annual average.

The letter noted that the city had met all requirements "and the Department considers this case closed. Thank you for your cooperation in resolving this matter. "

The DEP case had been triggered by the city's high readings for disinfection byproducts which are formed in reaction to the chlorine that must be used to help purify the water. The byproducts have been determined to be a health hazard if consumed in large quantities over a long period of time.

Because of the high disinfection byproducts reading, the city was required to submit quarterly water samples. Then began the work to reduce the byproducts and bring them down to acceptable levels.

The matter has been resolved over a period of three years during which the city's Public Works Department staff worked vigorously to understand the causes of the problem and to devise solutions. During that time the form of chlorine used was changed from gas to liquid, a regimen of regular flushing of the water lines was developed, and the addition of a small quantity of hydrogen peroxide became part of the water treatment routine.

The Public Works effort was headed by staff member Rodney Hoffman who has earned Florida water plant operator certification.

In a recent interview, Hoffman said flushing the lines to keep the water moving is the key to preventing the formation of the byproducts. He particularly wanted to thank former city employee Michael Everett for his work in keeping the water moving and current employee Jason Kytle for his diligence in routinely flushing the lines.

Hoffman also acknowledged the ongoing help of Florida Rural Water Association and its representative Fred Handy who worked closely with Hoffman to experiment and find effective solutions. Handy, Hoffman said, was "available 24/7".

He also thanked Ron Trygar, the Senior Training Specialist at the University of Florida's TREEO Center, who offered informal advice and support as Hoffman was working to resolve the situation. Trygar is also a High Springs resident.

Hoffman said, too, he worked closely with representatives of DEP who were instrumental in helping him understand the reporting process and procedures.

"High Springs' water continues to get better," he said. But then cautioned it could change at any time because rainfall and river flow are variables that can and do impact the testing readings. More organics in the river might require the use of more disinfection products and more disinfection products increase byproducts. It's a cycle High Springs will continue to monitor and deal with as do other municipalities in similar situations.

DEP now requires annual reporting of disinfection byproducts but Hoffman will continue frequent, informal sampling and monitoring to make sure the city's water is of the quality it needs to be.