

Project Update – Oct 28, 2019
Initiative to reduce outdoor lighting costs
for Plantation Lakes

Submitted by: The Street Lights Committee

Two items of encouraging news:

First, word has come from Santee Cooper (SC) that last week their crews straightened ***all 41 poles*** we designated for them, plus several more.

Secondly, after discussions with a local commercial electric contractor, ***it appears highly unlikely we will have to establish an ongoing service contract***, but rather simply call them (or another contractor) on an as-needed basis to repair/replace non-functioning lights. They estimate the per-visit cost to be only \$250-\$300 to swap out a non-functioning conventional light with an equivalent LED light...which Santee Cooper already began doing several months ago for a few of our lights.

Where we stand with Santee Cooper:

Carlita Goff owes us specific info she's previously promised and twice has asked us to extend the estimated date she'd given to get the info/data to us. We'll gently press her again for it and hope to have definitive data within a week on matters such as original cost of our outdoor lighting system (about \$750M), current value based on 30-year straight-line depreciation (about \$330M), etc.

Two BIG ITEMS surfaced at our Oct 4th meeting with three Santee Cooper reps:

1. We were verbally assured that the underground wiring is sheathed in conduit and that ***our entire outdoor lighting system would meet U.S. electrical code requirements***. This was a major revelation for us and the focus of specific questions we'd recently posed to SC. (We had previously learned that systems installed, serviced, maintained, and owned by a single electric utility are ***not*** subject to initial electrical inspection, but all privately owned systems are.) We intend to ask for this assurance in writing and include a statement in an ownership transfer document that ***SC would be responsible for rectifying anything found not to be in compliance***.

2. SC stated that private ownership of the system will require installing 188 meters to monitor our approx 220 poles/lights at \$25 per meter per month. ***That's \$4,700 a month! Plus, we would be required to install the wiring and platform to mount the meters.*** (A local commercial electric contractor estimates the cost to do so at approx \$1,000 per meter, ***or \$188,000 total!***)

We immediately responded to the SC officials that this is an unacceptable condition for us. What makes sense for a newly constructed residence with unknown and variable energy requirements simply doesn't apply to Plantation Lakes for the following reasons:

1. Each light has an identical energy consumption that's highly predictable based on published hours of darkness for each month.
2. Santee Cooper devised the current formula for determining our energy use, negating the need for meters to be previously installed.
3. We have willingly paid the requested amount, (just over \$1100 per month).
4. This arrangement has worked satisfactorily for over 17 years.
5. No change in energy consumption would occur after transfer of system ownership.
6. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Therefore, installing meters now for our outdoor lighting would create an absolutely unnecessary \$4,700/month burden on our community!

We hope the upcoming response from SC will address this matter, as they, understandably, were non-committal during the meeting where this info--and our objections--were first raised.

Whether or not they address this matter in their upcoming response, ***it now seems the time for us to take the initiative and propose a solution to Santee Cooper along the following lines:***

1. * Given that the initial cost of the entire system was approximately \$750M,
* and given that we have contributed over 1.4 million in lease payments, we ask for full ownership of the outdoor lighting system and full responsibility for maintenance ***without further payment to SC.***
2. * Given that we have been under an energy payment arraignment that has been acceptable to Santee Cooper and to us for over 17 years,

* and given that this stable, fully predictable energy usage will continue after ownership transfer,

* and given that, now requiring 188 meters would burden us with approximately \$188,000 set-up costs and \$4,700/month metering fees, we ask that the traditional requirement for metering be waived and that we continue our current arrangement under the formula set forth in Rate Schedule OL-17.

We now await the formal response from Santee Cooper to questions we raised at our Oct 4th meeting.