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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE " COUNCIL TO DECIDE WATER RATE REQUEST" NSB KINGS BAY
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Council to decide water rate request

By Kelly Benton
Tribune Staff Writer

U.S. Navy and St. Marys officials at a public meeting last week with Crooked River Plantation residents were asked questions about vinyl chloride, its potential health risks, property values and city water rates.

Vinyl chloride, a carcinogen, has been detected in tests of groundwater around the old Camden County landfill, located on Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base property east of the residential district. Tests near the entrance of the subdivision revealed levels of the contaminant in groundwater.

Some Crooked River Plantation residents said they are concerned that their property values will be affected by the discovery of the contami-

nant in groundwater on private property within the subdivision.

"What does this mean to people with homes on the market?" one audience member asked. "As a real estate agent, am I obligated by law to inform people of this potential contamination?"

Officials admitted that there is no way to answer questions about real estate values and how they are effected by possible contaminants.

"It's hard to tell. We don't think we will find a health hazard on your property, but it is hard to say what will happen because selling property is another story," St. Marys Mayor Jerry Brandon said.

One resident asked if St. Marys would consider adjusting city water rates for Crooked

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River residents who previously relied on shallow wells for swimming pool and irrigation purposes.

"Some of us are going to see an added expense because of discontinuing our private well use," an audience member said. "Is there any plan to help us as we hook up into the city water?"

Brandon said the city would "have to work something out" to assist residents, but city manager Mike Mahaney said he will advise city council not to adjust water rates.

"It's council's decision, but my recommendation is going to be no on the basis that the \$5 million bond issue says no special rates shall exist," Mahaney said. "I would urge council to move very cautiously in making decisions on questions such as this."

"If the Navy feels the risk is high enough to ask residents to curtail shallow well water use, then perhaps the Navy should absorb the increase in water bills as well as provide the labor and

material for sprinkling system changes," Mahaney told council in a Sept. 4 memorandum.

Several council members contacted for comment had not reached a decision concerning the adjustment of city water rates.

"I'm not so sure we could" adjust the rates, council member Kyle Lewis said. "Existing rates are cut and dry, except in crisis, and this is not a crisis situation."

Though Brandon does not

think water rates will be uniformly lowered, "we would consider cases on an individual basis. But we are not going to blanket preferential treatment," he said.

The problem with vinyl chloride is not unique to St. Marys, environmental consultant Dr. Michael Keirn told the audience. Now frequently detected in areas near old landfills, vinyl chloride was first spotted in aquifers in Miami.

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