

Sewage plant built in anticipation of growth



**Mayor Jim Thomas sees if he can tell which bottle holds drinkable water. With him are Col. Todd Buchs, Fort Stewart garrison commander, & City manager Billy Edwards.
Photo by Alena Parker**

Though it was officially opened Tuesday with a ribbon cutting ceremony with local officials, Hinesville's wastewater reclamation facility has been in operation since August and contractors are even looking at expansion. Mayor Jim Thomas, City Manager Billy Edwards and Fort Stewart garrison commander Col. Todd Buchs joined other state and local officials in seeing the finished product of the currently estimated \$21.9 million project when it is fully expanded to treatment capacity of four million gallons per day. The city received a \$300,000 grant from the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority earlier this year to help with the project.

The city also received part of a \$500,000 grant from the General Assembly in 2007 for water reuse projects in the surrounding counties. "To get a project of this magnitude built and operational in three and a half years is astonishingly fast," Edwards said. "And in order to do that, you've got to have a (good) team of elected officials"



The tanks where the wastewater is stirred and injected with water is where most of the work of the plant occurs.

Mayor Jim Thomas called it a state-of-the-art facility. "One of the reasons this plant exists is because it's going to help us in the long run to manage our water resources more," Thomas said. "This really is a very good technological answer to some of the problems that we're having." Thomas congratulated the city's former administration for its "forward-thinking," for beginning the project. "This really is the beginning of the future for our city," Thomas said. The plant will treat sewage from west Hinesville with the other side being treated from the wastewater plant on Fort Stewart.

Engineer Paul Simonton brought up highlights of the treatment process. "So far we've been able to, on some days, equal the amount of flow into the plant with the amount of water consumed on the reuse system," Simonton said. Keith Causeway, P.C. Simonton and Associates treatment plant project manager, provided a tour of the plant starting from raw sewage to finished product. He explained the wastewater goes through two screenings and an odor control system on the ground before being pumped up to one of the three 23-foot tall, 63 square foot tanks called sequential batch reactors, where mixing and injecting air lets nature break down the solids.



Project Engineer Paul Simonton addresses the crowd at Tuesday's dedication.

“There’s bacteria in there, and you want to get them to eat,” Causeway explained. “They’re the ones that eat all the human waste.” Then everything shuts off and the sludge separates from the wastewater and settles to the bottom. The sludge accumulates for 60 days then is pushed into a belt press. “And all you have left is an organic-based material that you can mix with a mulch and make a compost out of it,” Causeway said.

Water goes through a third screening and is sent back through a scan to make sure it is up to standard at the end of the process and retreated if it does not. It is pumped back into the city to be used for irrigation. An extra six million gallons of the treated water can be stored in a pond in the plant. “This is the foundation for our ability to grow in the future,” Edwards said. The City expects the population to swell with the arrival of a Fort Stewart new brigade, some of the influx coming as soon as March 2009.

Complete article can be read at:
<http://www.coastalcourier.com/news/article/9930>



Keith Causeway, project manager with P.C. Simonton & Assoc., Inc., discusses how the plant works.