

Fort White Vote On Resolution Postponed

October 23, 2019



OSFR member Bill Basta speaks. All photos courtesy of Explica Media.

The normally quiet Town Council meeting for the Town of Fort White was alive Monday night with over 50 onlookers crowding the small meeting room as a two page agenda quickly wended its way to its last item, "Discussion and possible action: opposition of the proposed permit renewal to Seven Springs Water Company". This was placed on the agenda by Councilman James Richardson after he heard from several constituents asking about having the town echo the Columbia County Resolution.

Mayor Ronnie Frazier and three of the four council members (Councilman Bill Koon was absent) listened to about a dozen speakers lay out their cases for and against a possible resolution. Three members of Our Santa Fe River spoke, including board member Merrillee Malwitz-Jipson, who provided the council with folders containing information sheets and detailed factual materials, and Bill Basta, who will be joining our board in the coming month, and myself, addressing places in the United States where communities have stopped Nestle. Other speakers favoring a resolution included Jim McFarlane, who spoke eloquently about the decline of the river and springs; Melina Rayna Farley-Barratt, a candidate for outgoing Rob Bradley's Florida Senate seat, who also noted the natural systems decline; and Anton Kernohan, a UF student who organized the Youth Climate Strike this year in downtown Gainesville, who noted the concern of young voters inheriting a troubled and declining water system.

Speakers against the proposed Resolution included Risa Wray, an owner of Seven Springs Water Company, who argued that her family is very interested in the health of the springs, a long time cave-diver who indicated that the water requested by the permit is minimal, and three employees of Nestle, the company purchasing the water from Seven Springs, touting their employer as a good corporate citizen.

The Council briefly discussed some of the factual input from the pros and the emotional content of the cons and determined that they needed to do more research into the claims from the podium. Consequently, they deferred decision until their next meeting, which will be on Monday, November 25 at 7pm.



All photos courtesy of Explica Media.

Comments by OSFR President Mike Roth.

-A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back-
