

Public-Private Partnership Improves Fire Protection and Water Pressure in Buena Vista

A four-way partnership between the city of Buena Vista, Southern Virginia University, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Palmyra Holdings, LLC, made it possible to add fire protection capabilities and increase water pressure for residences in northeast Buena Vista.

"Seldom in my career have I seen such effective cooperation between private and public entities," said Hunter Young, president of Civil Consulting Group and the civil engineer who oversaw the project. "[Southern Virginia] and the city should be very proud of what [they've] accomplished."

Buena Vista City Manager Tim Dudley said the potential cost could have been upwards of \$100,000. "SVU handled it. They got the contractors, and it was easier for them to get someone cheaper because we didn't have to go through the city's process of bidding."

The final cost after each of the four partner organizations contributed was about half the potential amount.

Because of several new and proposed construction projects on and surrounding Southern Virginia's campus, it was apparent to Melvin Henson, Buena Vista public works director, and Bob Huch, Southern Virginia's vice president of administration and finance,

that water pressure and fire protection for the area was insufficient.

Huch and Henson brought together representatives from the city, university, church and Palmyra Holdings—all of whom were affected by the lack of pressure and protection—to remedy the situation.

Henson was pleased with the outcome. "It gives the city flexibility as we look down the road to the future," he said. "Once everybody was sitting down at the table with the same songbook in front of them, everybody's goal was the same."

Each of the parties concerned joined with the city to help finance the project.

"All-in-all, it was a tremendous group effort and a win-win circumstance for all of those involved," Southern Virginia's Huch said.

The new waterline provides the city with greater flexibility when the nearby water tank needs to be taken offline for maintenance, and it also will provide plenty of supply and pressure for future public and private projects.

Although three private entities helped pay for the water line, the city maintains full ownership and control.

by Holland Newton

