

Cape Coral Council votes to push LCEC for transparency

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Customers of the Lee County Electric Cooperative and Cape Coral Council are looking for a paper trail from their utility as they want more answers about the rates and charges before it considers a new agreement.

The council says it's looked for these answers for a year. Still with no answer, they decided to take their concerns to state leaders.

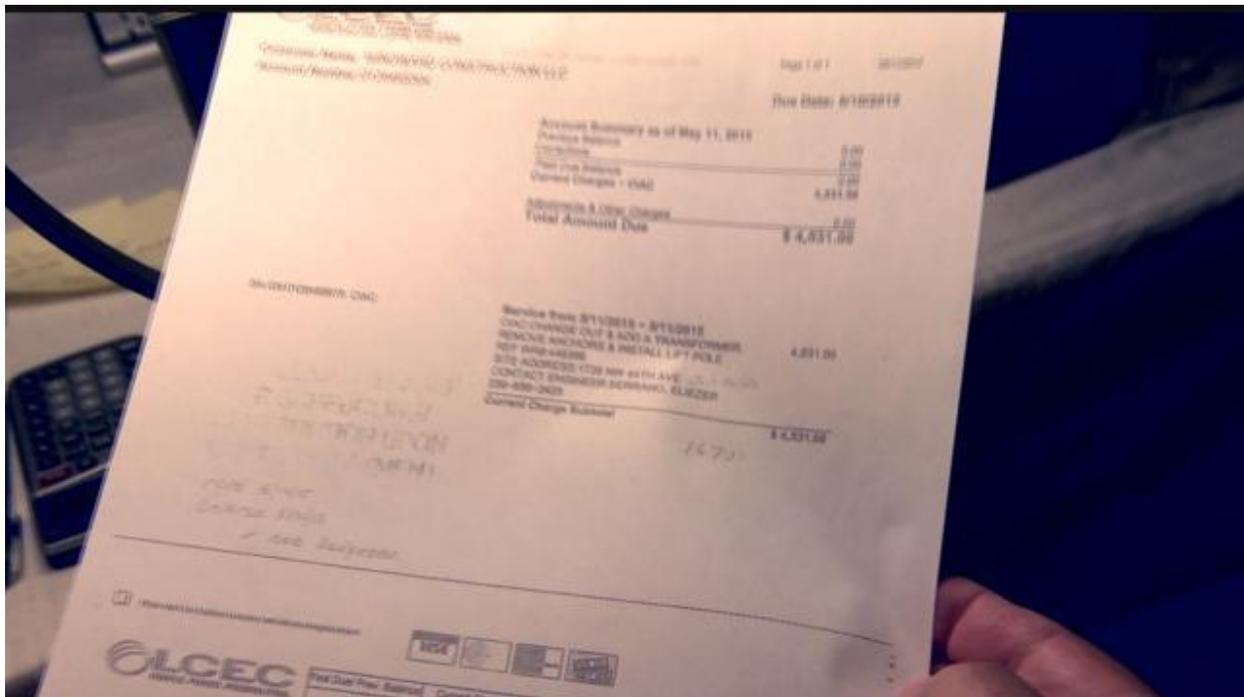
"Right now, I just want information, and the fact is it's been over a year and I've gotten nothing," said Cape Coral Mayor Marni Sawicki.

Answers are all that Mayor Sawicki wants and her patience is running thin. But so are the pockets of people being overcharged by their electric cooperative.

"Turned out being \$10,851.50," said Dale Darwin.

That's how much he says he was charged by the company to hook electricity up to his home.

"We didn't anticipate this, we didn't have it in our budget. It created a hardship for us to pay that amount of money."



He's not alone.

When Jim Schmidt started building on his property, he was forced to pay thousands for two vacant properties he didn't own.

"When we met with LCEC, they told us we had no alternative but to pay it or you won't have any energy to our house, so we had to pay it," said Jim Schmidt.

When he asked why, he didn't get much.

"They wouldn't disclose certain elements of the charge. They wouldn't explain to charge that they put upon us, and that was frustrating. They weren't being clear or honest," he said.

The city has a choice to run its own electric municipality or sign a new agreement.

Sawicki says without honest information on charges, her patience is wearing out.

"If we're going down this path and we end up not getting the information or find out the information is so blatantly wrong and that we are being overcharged, well then you know what? I don't know why we can't look at an option; because of their non-compete with FPL, to buy it and turn it over to FPL and let them run it."

The resolution passed Monday evening directs staff to go to the public service commission in Tallahassee with request for detailed information behind LCEC's rates and charges.

Only Councilmember Marilyn Stout was against the resolution.