

Temple Terrace to hold town hall on water contamination concerns

City leaders hope to supply more information for residents demanding answers amid PFAS fears.



Samples are prepared for water quality testing. On March 3, testing of Temple Terrace's water revealed a high level of PFAS, which has been linked to cancers and a host of other health issues. [Courtesy of Tampa Bay Water]

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TEMPLE TERRACE — After a contentious City Council meeting that some residents say left them with more questions than answers, city leaders will host a town hall Aug. 11 to address growing concerns over PFAS contamination in the city’s water supply.

The city announced it will hold the town hall from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Omar K. Lightfoot Senior Center on 56th Street.

The meeting comes on the heels of a tense and emotionally charged July 15 City Council meeting, where a large crowd of residents demanded action and clarity after learning the city’s drinking water had tested above new federal limits for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, often referred to as “forever chemicals” because they are difficult to eliminate.

On March 3, testing of the city’s water revealed high levels of PFAS, which have been linked to cancers and a host of other health issues.

The test detected two PFAS compounds, PFOA and PFOS, in levels exceeding the Environmental Protection Agency’s new drinking water standards, established in April 2024.

The PFOS levels at both of the city’s water treatment plants measured just over 19 parts per trillion, exceeding the EPA’s limit of 4 ppt.

The PFOA levels were between 8 and 10 ppt, more than twice the EPA limit of 4 ppt.

A total of 25 additional PFAS compounds were also detected.

Although the city’s test results were mailed to residents and included suggestions on what those who were concerned could do in response, such as installing home filter systems, the issue didn’t gain momentum until the results were highlighted in a Temple Terrace Facebook group.

That led to a large crowd turning up at the City Council meeting.

In response, the city tried to assure residents at the meeting that it is addressing the issue.

The council aims to pass a measure at its next meeting Tuesday expanding the services of water consultant CHA, which has been working on the city’s water treatment facility improvements, so it can test the water and provide a solution.

The city is also going to seek funds from a pool of settlement money paid by companies such as 3M and DuPont, which are responsible for much of the PFAS contamination now threatening water systems across the country.

That would help offset the cost of fitting the city’s current water apparatus with what is likely to be an expensive system to remove PFAS from the water.

“The responsible parties here are the chemical manufacturers, the 3Ms and DuPonts of the world,” said James Ferraro Jr., a Miami-based attorney who represents more than 30 cities, including Fort Lauderdale and Boca Raton, dealing with issues similar to Temple Terrace.

“And that focus is important because that’s where the lawsuits are going, and rightfully so. Those are the responsible parties, and Temple Terrace likely will be able to tap into some of the settlement funds that are out there.”

However, the money can’t buy time. Most residents are worried that waiting until the 2031 deadline for Temple Terrace to become compliant isn’t fast enough.

Some experts have said it could take up to five years to put in a system to filter out PFAS and other chemicals.

While the City Council didn’t set a date at the July 15 meeting, it did vote 3-1 to schedule the town hall.

The only no vote was from Mayor Andy Ross, who was unsure hosting one so soon would be enough time for the city to develop further details to share with residents.