

Company that built water plant Hialeah faces controversy

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The same company that built the Water Treatment Plant Hialeah is part of another controversy about 1,500 miles north, in Massachusetts, also a plant built in 2008 that does not distribute water to the community.

Inima a Spanish corporation that developed [the plant Hialeah not operating](#) even though it opened a year ago, built a treatment plant water to the city of Brockton faced a number of challenges, from delays in obtaining permits construction to the detection of coliform bacteria in 2010.

Now authorities are considering buying Brockton plant for \$ 88 million, and so get rid of a contract that [requires the city to pay \\$ 6 million annually](#) for water is not distributed.

Hialeah City officials said they were unaware of the situation on the ground in Massachusetts.

"I personally am not informed [about the case Brockton plant]," said Armando Vidal, director of the Department of Public Works in Hialeah, when asked about it.

Brockton plant was first built by Inima in the United States and granted the company Hialeah only the second contract in the country. The company has built desalination plants in Europe and the Middle East. For Hialeah, negotiations with Inima occurred during the administration of former Mayor Julio Robaina.

An employee at the plant in Massachusetts said any information would be requested to Moses Pariente, CEO Inima in America. Reached by telephone Wednesday, Pariente told a reporter for the Miami Herald would not offer comment on the case until he would return trip this week.

¿Unnecessary plant?

In the midst of a severe drought that threatened the future of the municipality of Brockton leaders in 2002 signed a contract with Aquaria LLC, an association created by the American company

Inima and Bluestone Energy Services, to build the desalination plant, the which process the water from the Taunton River.

The --whose plant construction cost \$ 75 million and was financed with funds privados-- has capacity to produce up to 5 million gallons of water a day, but so far only produces enough to keep the system running, and discharge to the drain.

Originally the plant was to be opened in 2005, but the process of obtaining building permits took five years, according to reports from *The Enterprise*, a newspaper of Brockton. In 2008, a manager of Aquaria told the newspaper that the delay in obtaining permits was because the average state environmental agencies were not familiar with desalination processes-which converts salt water into drinking by special filters .

Aquaria began construction in 2006 and [the plant opened in 2008](#) .

However, by the time of opening, the services were not as necessary as originally planned, since the city implemented conservation measures that prevented water shortages likely to drought, [according to a report](#) from the *Boston Magazine*. In addition, the company planned development in the area that did not happen due to recession.

In 2010, *The Enterprise* [reported Aquaria violated a federal standard](#) of drinking water, when some samples showed the presence of coliform bacteria. At that time an official from the plant said it may have been an error in the samples, according to the publication. It is unclear how or when the problem is corrected.

The plant stopped delivering water to Brockton in 2011 and so far [has not found another customer](#) .

On Thursday, the vice president of the Council of Hialeah, Luis Gonzalez, said a week ago he began to hear rumors that Inima also faced problems with a water plant he built in another state.

Opposition to the project

In 2010, Gonzalez along with then Hialeah Council President and now mayor of that city, Carlos Hernandez, did not support the second reading approval Inima contract to build the plant in West Hialeah.

"I was not informed about this other controversy in Massachusetts," Gonzalez told the Miami Herald. "At that time [the Council session of 2010] I did not vote in favor of hiring the company [Inima on second reading] because I wanted a little longer, wider a period to analyze the case, especially when dealing with a subject so important. "

Mayor Hernandez did not answer several calls from The Miami Herald to pick your version. However, last week expressed his frustration this way to put delays plant launch Hialeah.

In Massachusetts, the contract signed more than a decade between Brockton and Aquaria provides that the city should pay \$ 120 million over 20 years to the company, but is not distributing water.

John Condon, Brockton finance chief, told the Herald on Thursday that the municipality pays the huge sum for the exclusive water service if necessary during a potential drought. "It's like a reservation. We have to be sure that water is available anytime you need it, "Condon said.

Brockton Mayor Bill Carpenter, recently proposed to buy the plant to the company, if a financial study being conducted determined that the city would save money in charge of the operation. Some criticize Carpenter's proposal, arguing that operational costs represent costs for the municipality.

Condon said economic Inima also records unable to sell water to other communities lost, possibly due to limitations imposed by

"Our interest in buying the plant has to do with the nature of the contract, not Inima performance under the contract," Condon said. "[Inima] has done the best he could."

Inaugurated unfinished

A year after the plant been inaugurated Hialeah, [Hernandez admitted for the first time](#) that this inauguration ceremony actually obeyed the completion of construction of the infrastructure, but not to the approval of water quality by the health authorities .

During the inauguration ceremony held a week before the elections for reelection as Mayor Hernandez, numerous county politicians and Hialeah [appeared to provide water processed in the plant](#) , but in reality it was bottled water.

Construction of the plant for \$ 100 million was funded by 50 percent of Miami Dade County funds and half in bond debt managed by the City of Hialeah. In this regard, Vidal said that the city has been well evaluated by a rating agency risk as to the bonds issued, according to a financial report released Monday.

According to Hernandez, the second stage of development of the Water Plant, which includes the adoption of water quality for all

human consumption, should take four to five months. However, the project faced numerous problems such as the detection of coliform bacteria and various problems in mechanical and electrical systems, according to a report prepared by Vidal in August.

In this situation, both Hernandez and Vidal have emphasized that Inima faces paying penalties of \$ 10,000 per day for failure to commissioning of plant operations within the time specified in the contract. Vidal said the penalties would be applied from July. Vidal said this week made public the result of a reassessment of Hialeah plant to determine if there finally treated water is fit for human consumption.