

A momentous occasion took place in American Beach on Wednesday with the Septic-to-Sewer groundbreaking.

The ceremony was attended by the key individuals who made this project become a reality, with notable appearances by State Senators Aaron Bean and Audrey Gibson. County staff and commissioners were joined by project engineers Stephen Spratt and Theresa Irby-Butler of Government Services Group. Among the politicos were members of the American Beach Water and Sewer District Advisory Board, American Beach Property Owners' Association and the community itself.

"It seems like a lifetime ago that we all got together in (Former County Attorney Michael) Mullin's conference room. It had to be six or seven years ago at this point," County Manager Taco Pope said at the ceremony. "We were trying to figure out what path could we get that made it financially feasible to bring water and sewer into the community?"

This critical infrastructure project -estimated to cost \$11 million -garnered a lot of attention throughout the state for its "innovative" funding strategy to bring sewage to the historic African American community.

Chairman of the Water and Sewer District Advisory Board, Erving Gilyard, took the stage after Reverend Carlton Jones kicked off the ceremony with a prayer.

"To me, this project is not about any one person or any one organization. This is about our community. We wanted to continue to progress and to live on. I believe that the founders of American Beach would be proud to see what we are doing with the legacy that they left to us," Gilyard said. "This is one of the most important projects of anything that has happened at American Beach."

Gilyard said, "I'm going close with a lyric from Sam Cooke^ 'It's been a long time coming, but a change is going to come.'" mmahoney@fbnewsleader. com