Influence of Political Connections on Targeted State Infrastructure Funding for the Village of Indiantown

Date: July 7, 2026

Executive Summary

The Village of Indiantown has secured approximately $46 million in targeted state funding for a new reverse osmosis water treatment plant, in addition to $17.2 million awarded as part of the Governor's December 2025 $311 million infrastructure package and a $22.5 million Local Funding Initiative Request submitted for the same project.

While the need for reliable water infrastructure in a growing rural community is legitimate, the scale, timing, and process by which this funding was secured raise serious concerns about transparency and the influence of personal and political relationships with Governor Ron DeSantis.

This paper examines how three individuals with documented close ties to the Governor — Josh Kellam (President of The Garcia Companies and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission appointee), Kevin Powers (former Vice Chair of the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board), and Taryn Kryzda (former Martin County Administrator and interim Indiantown Village Manager) — facilitated access and relationships that appear to have influenced both the amount and the speed of funding awarded.

Of particular concern is that this substantial infrastructure investment significantly increases water capacity in a community where concurrent land-use actions have explicitly enabled large-scale industrial development, including hyperscale data centers — despite clear and vocal opposition from the vast majority of local residents. The choice of an expensive, high-capacity reverse osmosis system, rather than a more conventional and lower-cost treatment approach, further amplifies questions about whose interests are ultimately being served.

Background and Timeline

The Village of Indiantown is a small, historically rural community in western Martin County with a population of approximately 6,700. In recent years, it has faced increasing pressure from large-scale development interests, particularly proposals for hyperscale data centers. Against this backdrop, the Village has received substantial state assistance for water infrastructure.

Key milestones include:

- **April 2025:** Silver Fox 606 LLC is formed.
- **December 2025:** Governor DeSantis announces a $311 million infrastructure package including $17.2 million for Indiantown.
- **Early 2026:** Silver Fox data center proposal emerges publicly.
- **April 16, 2026:** Planning & Zoning Board recommends approval of the Tesoro Groves PUD (5,722 acres), which explicitly permits data centers.
- **April 29, 2026:** Silver Fox 606 withdraws its data center proposal.
- **April 30, 2026:** Village Council unanimously approves the Tesoro Groves PUD rezoning despite significant public opposition.

- **July 2, 2026:** Governor DeSantis is credited with securing $46 million for Indiantown's new reverse osmosis water treatment plant.

This funding has been delivered through a combination of legislative earmarks (LFIR) and existing agency programs highlighted at the gubernatorial level.

Key Individuals and Their Connections to the Governor

Three individuals with close ties to Governor DeSantis or his administration have played significant roles:

Josh Kellam – President of The Garcia Companies and FWC Commissioner

Josh Kellam is President of The Garcia Companies, a major South Florida development firm. In 2025, Governor DeSantis appointed him to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). He previously served on the South Florida Water Management District's Water Resource Advisory Coalition. His dual role as a developer and gubernatorial appointee gives him direct access to both development policy and regulatory decisions affecting water and land use.

Kevin Powers – Former Vice Chair, South Florida Water Management District Governing Board

Kevin Powers served for many years as Vice Chair of the SFWMD Governing Board. SFWMD exercises broad authority over water supply, permitting, and infrastructure across South Florida, including Martin County. His long tenure and ongoing relationships have made him an influential figure in water infrastructure funding and allocation decisions.

Taryn Kryzda – Former Martin County Administrator and Interim Indiantown Village Manager

Taryn Kryzda served as Martin County Administrator and later as interim Village Manager for Indiantown (beginning January 2026). In these roles, she maintained direct contact with the Governor's office on policy and funding matters, providing a critical bridge between local government and state decision-makers.

How These Connections Influenced the Outcome

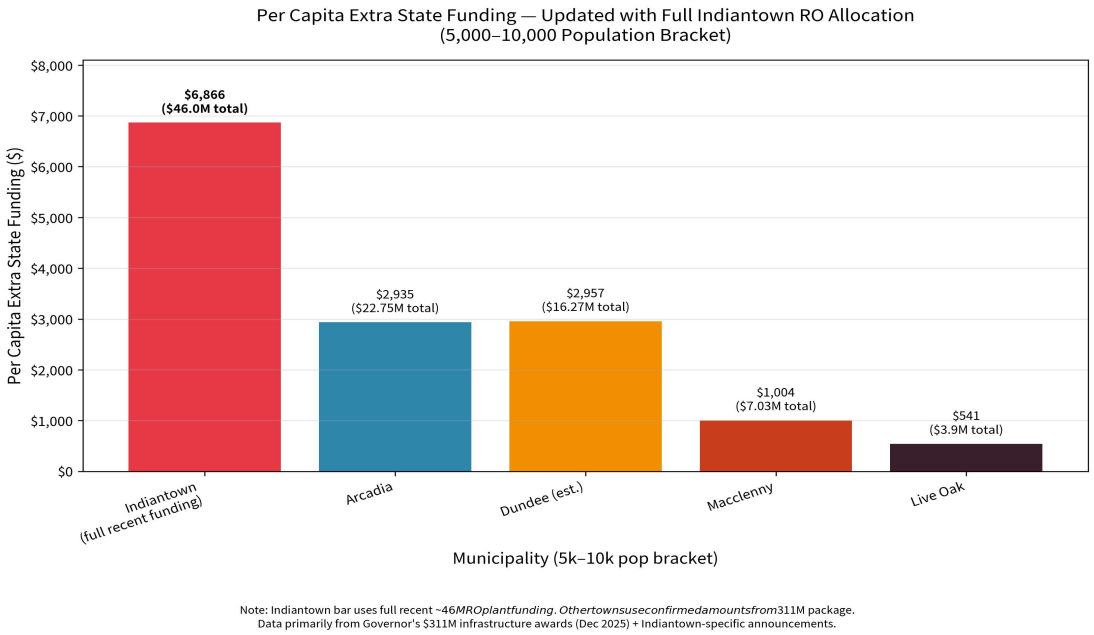
These relationships created several structural advantages:

- **Direct Access to the Governor's Office:** Indiantown benefited from multiple direct lines to the Governor through appointees and local administrators with established relationships.
- **Preferential Framing within Agency Programs:** The $311 million package and $46 million announcement were structured at the gubernatorial level using existing programs.
- **Acceleration of Funding:** The $22.5 million LFIR request moved alongside parallel agency funding streams more effectively than typical for a community of this size.
- **Alignment with Development Goals:** These networks have been active while major land-use changes enabling data centers were advancing. The infrastructure funding creates capacity that supports such growth.
- **Disregard for Local Public Opposition:** Despite widespread and vocal opposition from the vast majority of Indiantown residents — expressed through public comments,

protests, and organized resistance — both the data center-enabling land-use changes and the associated infrastructure funding have continued to advance. This disconnect between the clear will of the local population and government action strongly suggests that external interests and well-connected networks are driving outcomes more than the needs or desires of the rural village residents themselves.

Visual Evidence: Per Capita Funding Disparity

The following chart shows per capita extra state funding for municipalities in the 5,000–10,000 population bracket. Indiantown's figure stands out dramatically, especially when including the full ~$46 million allocation.



Per Capita Extra State Funding Comparison (5k–10k Population Bracket)

The Choice of Reverse Osmosis Technology: Cost, Capacity, and Long-Term Impacts

A critical but under-examined aspect of Indiantown's funding is the decision to pursue a full-scale municipal reverse osmosis (RO) water treatment plant rather than a more conventional groundwater treatment system. This choice has significant implications for long-term costs, rate impacts on residents, and the type of development the new infrastructure can support.

Technical Context

The Floridan Aquifer in Martin County contains significant brackish water zones with elevated chloride levels. In such cases, conventional treatment (aeration, filtration, and disinfection) is often insufficient to meet drinking water standards. Reverse osmosis is a proven technology for treating brackish water and can produce high-purity water suitable for both residential and industrial use. In this narrow technical sense, RO may be justified.

However, the question is not simply whether RO can treat the water, but whether a large, high-capacity municipal RO system was the most appropriate, cost-effective solution for Indiantown's

existing residents — or whether it represents an over-engineered system designed to create substantial excess capacity for future large industrial users.

Cost and Operational Comparison

Capital Costs: A municipal-scale brackish water RO plant is significantly more expensive to build than a conventional well treatment system. The $46 million figure for Indiantown reflects a robust, high-capacity facility.

Operating Costs: RO systems have substantially higher ongoing costs than conventional treatment, primarily due to high energy consumption, regular membrane replacement, chemical usage, and brine disposal (which can represent 15–40% of the water pumped). These operating costs are typically 2–4 times higher than those of a conventional treatment system and will eventually be passed on to ratepayers.

Long-Term Rate Impacts on Residents

In a small system like Indiantown's, high fixed and operating costs are spread across a relatively small number of ratepayers. A conventional well treatment system would result in significantly lower long-term water rates for existing residents. By choosing a large RO plant, the Village has locked in higher ongoing costs that will pressure future rate increases — costs that existing households will bear whether or not large industrial users materialize to help pay for the system.

Data centers and other large industrial users are extremely water-intensive. Once the high-capacity RO infrastructure is in place, these users become the primary beneficiaries of the excess capacity, while residential ratepayers subsidize the base system through higher rates. This is a classic case of public infrastructure being built at taxpayer expense to primarily serve private industrial interests.

Health and Quality Considerations

RO produces very high-purity water and effectively removes salts, chlorides, and many other contaminants. This is a clear benefit when source water quality is poor. However, RO also removes beneficial minerals, which can affect taste and require post-treatment remineralization, adding another layer of complexity and cost.

The Data Center Context: How This Funding Supports Industrial Development

The infrastructure funding and land-use decisions in Indiantown have moved forward in close coordination. The choice of a high-capacity RO system is particularly well-suited to support large industrial users.

Silver Fox 606 (606 acres): Proposed hyperscale AI data center. Withdrawn April 29, 2026.
Tesoro Groves PUD (5,722 acres): Approved April 30, 2026. Explicitly permits data processing centers.
Hyperscale data centers require massive amounts of high-quality water for cooling. By building a large municipal RO plant with state money, the Village has created infrastructure that significantly de-risks future data center development. The timing strongly suggests the infrastructure was designed with industrial-scale users in mind, not merely to serve existing rural residents.

Implications

The combination of political influence in securing funding, the choice of an expensive high-capacity RO system, and the fast-tracking of land-use changes that enable data centers — all while disregarding clear local opposition — points to a process that prioritizes connected interests over the democratic will and long-term financial well-being of rural residents. Existing households will likely face higher water rates to support a system sized for industrial growth they did not request and largely oppose.

Recommendations

- **Full Public Disclosure:** Require detailed public reporting of all communications between Indiantown representatives and the Governor's office or appointees regarding this funding.
- **Independent Review:** Request an OPPAGA or ethics review of the funding process and technology choice.
- **Strengthen Guardrails:** Support legislation requiring greater scrutiny of large infrastructure investments when they coincide with major development proposals opposed by the local community.
- **Protect Rural Residents:** Ensure that infrastructure decisions prioritize the long-term financial interests and expressed will of existing rural residents over the needs of future industrial users.

Conclusion

The Indiantown funding success benefited from a network of individuals with deep relationships to Governor DeSantis. The choice of a high-cost, high-capacity reverse osmosis system — rather than a more conventional and lower-cost treatment approach — creates long-term rate pressure on residents while providing the water infrastructure most attractive to large industrial users. At the same time, land-use changes explicitly permitting data centers have been fast-tracked despite strong local opposition.

This is more than a story of infrastructure investment. It is a case study in how political access and influence can shape not only the amount of public funding a small community receives, but also the type of infrastructure built and the future development it enables — often against the clear will of the local population. Rural communities deserve transparent processes and decisions that genuinely reflect the needs and voice of the people who live there.

— End of Position Paper —