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SKAMANIA COUNTY

August 24, 2017

Via facsimile 509-427-8202

Stevenson City Council
P.O. Box 371
Stevenson, WA 98648

Re: Comments on sewer system improvements and rate increases

Dear City Council Members:

The Skamania Economic Development Council is submitting this comment letter to address concerns expressed by our local businesses regarding the proposed sewer system treatment plant upgrade and increases to sewer rates based on the anticipated sewer system improvements. First, we would like to acknowledge and thank you for your ongoing efforts to address this crucial infrastructure issue for all of the city's residents and businesses; however we respectfully request that additional analysis be completed prior to making any formal decisions. In addition, the business community wants to actively engage with the city to determine if there are potential innovative solutions or modifications that could reduce the proposed cost not only for the city, but for the businesses as well.

The EDC has identified several items in the sewer system plan and proposed rate analysis that should be addressed or discussed further:

- Obtain a second opinion on the sewer system improvements and identify "required" improvements vs. desired improvements (ex.: \$3.8 million in support facilities...) to reduce anticipated costs;
- Identify the specific BOD issue and levels through additional testing. The entire treatment plant improvements revolve around addressing the BOD levels, but the sewer system plan itself indicates that more analysis needs to be completed on BODs (Section 8.1.2, p. 110);
- The rate analysis completed identifies three cities that utilize "high-strength wastewater rates", but doesn't identify the rates within those cities so it can be compared to Stevenson (and other

relevant information such as population, BOD levels, # of high strength users, etc.); this is crucial to make sure the comparison isn't flawed;

- Compile a list of other rural cities of similar size to identify current rate structures, number of rate payers, and sewer plant capacity so the community can better understand the rate increases proposed;
- Engage with DOE to identify whether BOD levels set with the previous NPDES permit can be modified, identify whether the Gantt chart can be adjusted to allow more time for further BOD analysis, and have an informal discussion with DOE or consultant on the "Orange Book" requirements and possible more cost-effective solutions for Stevenson; this can be done through a wastewater sub-committee that consists of city council members, staff, businesses, etc.;
- Create a more aggressive funding package that puts less of a burden on both city finances and businesses; the IACC conference coming up in October is a great opportunity to meet with all of the agencies and determine how to best finance these improvements;

While the EDC recognizes the need for the system improvements and the timeliness of those improvements based on the Department of Ecology's Administrative Order, the profound impact these changes would have on our businesses warrants further discussion prior to making a final decision. Individual businesses will speak to their specific concerns and the potential impacts to their current business operations. Please listen to these concerns and recognize that the businesses want to work with the city to create a long-term solution that benefits everyone.

As you know, many of our local business owners are very active participants in this community and the community as a whole benefits from their support. We need to ensure that we do everything we can to facilitate the well being of these existing businesses and create a business friendly environment within Stevenson.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Kari R. Fagerness
Executive Director