

Senators and Representatives,

Thank you for inviting us to speak today and considering our request for your help with our Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade in Sweet Home. We respectfully request you consider allocating \$2 million dollars to finance about half of phase one of a four phase wastewater treatment plant upgrade. My name is Dave Trask and I am the City Council President Pro Tem. With me are Ray Towry, our new City Manager; Patricia Gray, our long time Finance Director and Joe Graybill, our City Engineer and Acting Public Works Director.

To give you some background:

Our current wastewater treatment plant has been in service since 1947. Major upgrades were completed in 1974 and 1994. A facility plan quantified a wet weather capacity deficiency that had resulted in a 1999 Mutual Agreement Order with the Department of Environmental Quality – or – DEQ.

To put it simply, during extreme weather events DEQ estimated we could see an estimated 22 million gallons of wastewater sent to the treatment plant per day. The plant could only handle seven million

gallons per day. When the plant reached capacity, the untreated wastewater was diverted straight to the Santiam River.

Sweet Home has invested over \$15 million since 2003 to make improvements to the waste water collection system, significantly reducing the Inflow and Infiltration – or I n I - issues. There were other, less expensive options to simply treat the water faster, but the city chose to pursue I N I reduction because it had the added benefit of also restoring structural integrity to deteriorated portions of the collection system. It isn't the "quick fix" or the cheapest fix but it is the best long term solution.

Continuing to pursue this remedy is now at the point of diminishing returns. Expensive pipe replacement projects show little reduction in infiltration of the collection system and compromise our already delicate roads. Further, the aging plant equipment is past its life expectancy and deteriorating quickly. WE are forced to address plant deficiencies.

Unfortunately, we have much more work to do. In order to continue to work toward resolution of the Mutual Agreement Order we will need to complete a four phase, \$42 million dollar upgrade project.

Many may balk at the \$15 million dollars we have spent as small potatoes. But to us in Sweet Home, it's a big deal.

The median household income of Sweet Home is one of the lowest in the state of Oregon, low enough that every student in Sweet Home grade schools receives free lunch. 10% of our public school children are technically classified as "homeless." The number of transient homeless is clearly visible in our streets and growing.

The City of Sweet Home has lost \$5 million to tax compression in the past five years. The financial loss to compression continues to increase exponentially.

The perfect storm has been developing in Sweet Home with 9 taxing entities sharing a \$10 tax rate, Sweet Home's home values have not been increasing as they are in more urban areas of Linn County and the cost of providing services continues climbing without any sight of slowing down.

Our small, economically challenged community has been working diligently to fix our aging infrastructure, but needs your help.

Again, I thank you for hearing us and ask you help us by allotting \$2 million for approximately half of the phase one construction of our Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade.