

City of Sweet Home – 19 April 2019Sweet

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 \$12 million dollars to finance wastewater treatment plant upgrade. My name is Dave Trask, a member of the Sweet Home City Council. With me are fellow City Councilor Susan Coleman, City Manager Ray Towry, Public Works Director Greg Springman, and Preston Van Meter with Murrsmith Engineering.

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 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 reaches capacity, the untreated wastewater is diverted straight to the South Santiam River which adjoins the North Santiam, which empties into the Willamette, which then meets the Columbia...so the majority of your constituents are probably downstream from us.

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.

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.

Two years ago, I sat in front of this very committee and testified to our need for help with a 4 phase, 42 million dollar project. Since I was last here in 2016 Sweet Home has completed a preliminary engineering study focused on rehabilitation and increased capacity that is instead leading us to a single phase, 28.2 million dollar project – significantly less than our original 42 million dollar estimate. That work included structural diagnosis of the plant components and geotechnical study of the soil, all paid for by our community. We have also raised our sewer rates to one of the higher rates in Oregon and forecast to have just over 7 million dollars on hand when the project is completed. We have also met with Business Oregon, USDA and our federal elected officials to identify funding options. We did not sit idle, we are committed to this project.

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. Over 10% of our public-school children are classified as “homeless.” The number of transient homeless is clearly visible in our streets and growing. We have one of the highest unemployment rates in the state as well.

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

Again, I thank you for hearing us and ask you help us by allotting 12 million dollars for construction of our Wastewater Treatment Plant rehabilitation.