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Commissioner: Oregon City needs a clean, reliable water system

Denyse McGriff October 20 2021

Denyse McGriff: It's time to invest in our water infrastructure by voting yes on two ballot measures

Two measures on the Nov. 2 ballot in Oregon City are aimed at supporting needed investments in our water infrastructure. (<https://pamplinmedia.com/images/artimg/00003715069895-0600.jpg>)

Current and past city commissioners have been working on this topic as a priority for years. Many public meetings have been spent working through the master planning of the most critical system needs, debating responsible levels of service, establishing fees to ensure developers pay for the cost of new development and seeking out assurances that our existing funds are being allocated where most needed.

I care about this community and want our community to be prepared to meet its needs with a 21st century water system. This election is the best opportunity to get there and that's by voting yes on Ballot Measures 3-576 and 3-578.

By voting yes, you will provide Oregon City with the same flexibility most cities have by utilizing low-interest loans, and we would increase rates with your input more than our 3% limit.

As you consider your ballot, I ask that you to reflect on the exhaustive work of the city, and the difficult decision that I and the other commissioners made to ask voters to support water infrastructure and vote yes on the measures. As you make your decision on this very important question, I ask you consider a few things:

Interest rates for infrastructure are at an all-time low, yet in Oregon City we are not able to access any form of lending. Oregon City's current water system is vulnerable to seismic ground movement resulting from an earthquake, and this funding would resolve many of those vulnerabilities.



Denyse McGriff

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Our ability to keep up with the current demand during peak summer season is at the point that mandated curtailment is expected; water storage for urban fire defense is alarmingly scarce.

Replacement of our oldest pipe network is a daunting task, but without new funding, the cost and present danger of living with the old pipes and chasing wasteful system leaks, patching and emergency response to pipe failures is both costly and risky.

Maintenance and construction of public infrastructure are more complex than when much of the city's water systems were built between 50 and 100 years ago. These complexities along with inflation have outpaced the city's past rate increases.

If voters approve these measures on Nov. 2, we will have the ability to leverage our position as a city to promote good water infrastructure practices, pursue loans and grants and seek state and local funds to limit the amount of borrowing. With your input, the City Commission will limit the rates over the six-year timeframe. Please vote yes in support of 3-576 and 3-578 and invest in our water system for today and in the future.

Denyse McGriff is an Oregon City commissioner.

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