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OCHS grad: Two measures will sustain Oregon City water system

 Roseann Johnson  November 01 2021

Home Builders' Roseann Johnson: Though unseen, this mighty network is critical to daily function

As the first incorporated city west of the Rocky Mountains, Oregon City has some of the area's oldest water pipes. Though unseen, this mighty network is critical to OC dwellers' daily function.

Like the wind, you don't see the water system directly, but rather its effects. Clean water somehow travels to your faucet or toilet, and you anticipate it greeting you on demand. Likewise, most can't see the rusty, cracked pipes, or dangerously low reservoir levels.

When it comes to the water system, needed improvements often are "out of sight, out of mind" until they become flooded roads, blocked businesses and water restrictions, to name a few.

Residents also want to drink, bathe, poop/flush, and otherwise enjoy readily available clean water, plus, have enough for disaster management.



COURTESY PHOTO: CITY OF OC - Paint is peeling from the ceiling of the Henrici Reservoir in Oregon City.

(<https://pamplinmedia.com/images/artimg/00003717666869-0600.jpg>)



COURTESY PHOTO: CITY OF OC - Oregon City replaced a corroded and undersize pipe this year on Latourette Street.

(<https://pamplinmedia.com/images/artimg/00003717666845-0600.jpg>) Hence, far better to work on the water system now, than to risk the alternatives by deferring maintenance and capacity upgrades. It's less costly to respond to system needs over time than to handle a sudden deluge.

The city has done what it can so far. Water system development charges are at their max. The city submitted an inquiry for low-interest water infrastructure financing. Yet ultimately, the city must be poised to accept an offer.

The solutions are with the voters. Yes on Measure 3-576 frees the city to pursue best financing, which in turn reduces existing pressure on ratepayers. Yes on 3-578 allows rates to be right-size depending on the debt service. The two measures go hand in hand for sustainable OC water.

Oregon City High School graduate Roseann Johnson is assistant director of government affairs for the Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Portland.



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