



Outlook

Letter Of Submission for January 6 Council Workshop

From Donna Anderson <donnaranderson101@gmail.com>

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Donna Anderson
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City of Boardman
City Manager and City Councilors
Boardman, Oregon 97818

December 31, 2025

Dear Mayor and City Councilors,

My name is Donna Anderson, and I am a resident of Boardman. I am submitting this letter for inclusion in the official public record regarding the City's current water and sewer rate discussions and the January 6, 2026 workshop materials.

In 2020, the City went to voters and passed a general obligation bond to fund major water and wastewater improvements—wells, tanks, pipes, lagoons, and other core infrastructure. The message to residents at the time was straightforward: this bond would modernize and expand the system to support growth while ensuring long-term reliability.

Now, only a few years later, residents are being told that water and sewer rates must increase by approximately 10–12% per year, year after year, for an extended period of time. These are not one-time or modest adjustments. Compounded annually, these increases will significantly raise household utility bills and create long-term affordability concerns for families, seniors, and fixed-income residents.

This leads to a reasonable and unavoidable question:

If voters already approved a bond to pay for major water and wastewater infrastructure, where exactly did the bond funding stop and the annual 10–12% rate hikes begin?

At the same time, the City's own water audits and rate analysis show that residential customers do not use most of the water produced by the system. Residential consumption represents only a small portion of total water sales. The majority of water is associated with large users and system-level operations—industrial demand, wholesale supply, testing, and operational flows.

That raises another fundamental concern:

If residents use only a small share of the water, why are residential customers being asked to absorb repeated 10–12% annual rate increases?

From a household perspective, it appears that residents are being asked to pay escalating rates not because of their own usage, but to support capacity, risk, and financial exposure tied to large-scale users. This concern is reinforced by the City's own financial analysis, which acknowledges that a significant portion of water revenue depends on a single major customer relationship. The analysis further states that if this relationship were to change, residents could face sudden and severe rate shocks.

In other words, households appear to be positioned as the financial safety net—both now, through repeated 10–12% increases, and in the future if industrial or wholesale arrangements change.

What makes this especially difficult for residents to accept is the lack of transparency in public discussions. At recent workshops, City Councilors appear constrained from openly discussing who actually uses the vast majority of the City's water. If elected representatives cannot clearly identify the primary drivers of water demand and system expansion in public meetings, residents are left without the information needed to understand why their rates are increasing so sharply.

At the same time, residents are being asked to accept a new approximately \$1 million well project and long-term rate increases, even though residential use accounts for only a small portion of total demand. From the citizen's point of view, this creates the impression that households are paying for infrastructure and risk created by others, without proportional responsibility or open disclosure.

To be clear, residents are not saying “do not maintain the system.” We understand that infrastructure requires ongoing investment. What residents are asking for is fairness, transparency, and accountability, including:

- A clear explanation of which projects were covered by the voter-approved bond and which are now being shifted into ratepayer bills.
- An honest, public discussion of who uses most of the water and who drives system expansion.
- Assurance that residential customers are not being asked to shoulder repeated 10–12% annual increases to backstop industrial or wholesale risk.
- Confidence that City Council can openly discuss these realities while representing the citizens who elected them.

These are reasonable questions for anyone who opens a monthly water bill and is told to expect double-digit percentage increases year after year, despite having already voted to fund major infrastructure.

I respectfully ask the Council to address these concerns directly, transparently, and on the public record, and to ensure that future decisions reflect equitable cost-sharing based on actual water use—not simply the ability of residents to absorb compounding rate increases.

Thank you for your consideration and for entering this letter into the official record.

Sincerely,

Donna Anderson