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City of New Meadows * P.O. Box 324 * New Meadows, Idaho 83654
Phone (208) 347-2171 * Fax (208) 347-2384

September 9th, 2021

RE: ARPA Funds

Dear Idaho Legislators,

The Idaho we see today is a result of the investments made decades ago. In the 1960s and 1970s, the federal government made significant investments in community infrastructure, providing funds that helped many cities install or upgrade their water and sewer systems. These projects are expensive and the federal funds helped ensure that the cost burdens to communities were reduced and sustainable.

After decades of very limited federal investment, the aging infrastructure in our community has become a major challenge and now the federal government has stepped up to provide more resources to help cities fund water, sewer, and broadband projects. Without the federal investment, our citizens will be looking at massive increases in their water and sewer bills every month. Dedicating these federal funds to the needs with the highest long-term return on investment will ensure that taxpayers get the most bang for their buck.

The City of New Meadows is facing overwhelming infrastructure needs. With the current funding we have secured, we cannot finish our current water project due to an increase of over 250% in cost of construction, labor and materials. The current loans we have in place for the project will result in a 50% increase in our utility rates – without completing the project and providing the needed infrastructure.

Our sewer infrastructure continues to need funding while the utility rates reflect a recent upgrade required just to stay in compliance with DEQ standards.

Because we are a small community, we have been edged out of the broadband funding the state has available, due to the empty promises of federally funded telecommunications companies who are not interested in providing the services and coverage needed for our residents to have adequate internet access.

Spending these one-time funds on operating expenses will force our city residents to pay for more expensive than usual, needed upgrades on their own, which does not make sense. Using these funds for infrastructure ensures that Idaho's communities and economy get the best return on investment.

The recent actions of the Legislature are not only putting our community at risk, but they are also jeopardizing the ability to invest in Idaho's future. That is not the fiscal stewardship that made Idaho great. Nor is the recommendation by some leaders in the Legislature to provide funding for ongoing expenses such as police and fire from these funds. City leaders, like myself, are on the front lines, handling Idaho's population boom and we know better how to use these funds to make prudent decisions and not only reinvest where necessary but make wise one-time investments in our future.

We ask that you consider the long-term effect of your actions on those who are engaged in a very real struggle to maintain aging infrastructure in a time of unprecedented increases in cost and population. At the same time, we are trying to operate with a diminished work force and lack of availability for materials needed in projects. You have the opportunity to help us invest in what is crucial and necessary for those you represent.

Mayor Julie Good