

Date: March 18, 2026

Purpose: Comments for submission to March 19, 2026 Regular City Council Meeting Packet.

Re: City of Stevenson Ordinance No. 2025-1224.

Dear Stevenson City Council Members and City Administrators,

My name is Brian McNamara. I am writing once again to address the council agenda discussion of Ordinance No. 2025-1224 requiring property owners' mandatory connection to the recently installed sewer lines in parts of the city. These sewer lines were not in place or requested prior to the project initiation. There have been no justifications for these extensions other than the need to capture new rate payers to defray the cost of renovating the sewer treatment plant or attain consistency with existing sewer infrastructure. Past administrations have admitted the treatment plant was allowed to become inadequate even as the city moved forward with residential developments and encouraged businesses that have high water use and effluent discharges. Current septic system owners have had no historic effluent inputs into the system. There have been zero health or safety complaints reported to the city regarding septic systems. There were no imminent threats to city infrastructure caused by the presence of septic systems in the city limits identified in the ordinance proposal process. The ordinance mandate is based upon the availability of an adjacent sewer line. These did not exist prior to the recent extensions.

This issue is of great concern to me because I am a property owner and resident being adversely affected by these decisions. I have called Stevenson my home since 1991. I purchased my current home in 1995. There are 24 other identified property owners who are currently, or have already been, financially harmed by the restrictions included in this ordinance. Property values, equity, and salability are already being affected. It is my understanding those who sign up for waivers or decline connection will have liens placed on their property. As the ordinance stands owners will not be able to sell their homes until connected. This is wrongful overreach by Stevenson's elected officials to confront a perceived problem that doesn't exist.

The cavalier attitude displayed towards owners financial and legal burdens prior to ordinance adoption were not financially justified even after council member requests. There was a rush to adopt exemplified by the council attempted vote on the ordinance without the two required public meetings. Fortunately, this was thwarted. The attitudes displayed in meetings was one of "were doing this because we can" even in the face of opposition and no proof of urgency or harm from currently operational septic systems. The erroneous justification that because current sewer users were suffering skyrocketing rates non-users should be sucked into the system to pay for the cities past treatment plant neglect was evident. This is known as "crab mentality" wherein crabs in a bucket see others escaping and pull them back in so they all can

suffer together. The supposition that spending tons of money to extend sewer lines and force new users to pay for them will bring down costs to the other crabs is unproven and totally inequitable when considering the huge costs and impacts to affected owners. Septic system owners were never in the city sewer bucket! The 25 property owners have independently operated effluent treatment systems that have never impacted the city.

Fortunately, implementation of the ordinance is now delayed until August 31st, 2026 to allow the new city council members and administrators to find equitable solutions to the negative impacts being imposed on owners. I hope that all council members and administrators will perform due diligence in pursuit of the following prior to renewing the ordinance:

- Immediately and directly notify all affected property owners of the 6-month delay of implementation of the ordinance until 8/31/2026. Several property owners I have spoken to were unaware of the extension. Encourage participation in the review process and solicit financial estimates of individual owners' costs of compliance.
- Require the administration to provide financial reporting of cities ability to recoup costs associated with construction of the sewer extensions based on costs born by the affected property owners. In effect, will the burden placed on owners be equitable to the owners' financial responsibilities mandated by the ordinance? Both city council members voting against the ordinance have requested this during the ordinance approval process but it was not provided.
- Determine if there is a "master timeline" to which cities in Washington state must comply with Washington State rules in Chapter 173-216 WAC, federal rules of 40 CFR part 403, conditions of its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. My research indicates there is not. Why then is the city implementing the ordinance now when no imminent health, safety or infrastructure risks have been identified?
- The council should take the time to consult with the affected owners to see the real costs being forced upon them. Several owners have already lost considerable amounts of money and equity due to the ordinance.
- Council and administration should request and review council member Dave Cox's June 6, 2025 Memorandum to council and administrators. "Subject: Recommendations for Sewer Ordinance Reform – Connection and Funding Strategy." Additionally, ex-council member Pat Rice's letter to the city administrator titled "My Draft Sewer Ordinance Input" also dated June 6, 2025. These are excellent sources of issue context and financial responsibility from two of the councils most experienced and fiscally conservative council members.
- The new city council has an excellent opportunity restore property owner and city resident confidence that their elected officials are working in their best interests. The

ordinance main advocates are no longer in office. According to the public works director there have been no health or safety complaints regarding septic systems. The affected properties do not impact Stevenson's sewer infrastructure or drinking water collection system. The council should act now to preserve the property rights of constituents.

The following resolutions should be approved and adopted by the city council:

- **This situation can be quickly and undone by voiding the ordinance.** Problem solved. This retains septic owners' independence from the sewer treatment plant in case of emergency.
- Owners already financially harmed (ex. Chris and Candace Ford and others) should be compensated.
- The city should permanently waive the forced payment of "System Development Charge" construction costs and fines. If owners choose to voluntarily connect the city will recoup costs in monthly sewer rates from that property forever. The cities after the fact "carrot vs stick" incentives are basically forced compliance enforced by property liens.
- The ordinance connection costs, fees and fines combined with owner on-site connection/decommission costs will be reflected in increased rental rates and higher asking price for properties thereby reducing housing affordability and salability of properties in the city of Stevenson. Any areas subject to future city annexation will likely resist due to past heavy handed city council and administration actions such as Ordinance No. 2025-1224.

Thank you for your consideration,

Brian McNamara

City of Stevenson resident and property owner