

June 12, 2026

Brian McNamara

Please include this comment letter in the June 18, 2026 Council Meeting Packet.

Dear Stevenson City Councilmembers and Mayor,

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to improve the city's sewer ordinance. The current revisions reflect a much fairer approach to city goals while incorporating vital corrections requested by residents and affected property owners regarding mandatory connection, out-of-pocket connection expenses and property rights.

My comments primarily concern the 27 residences originally affected by the recent sewer extensions—the majority of which did not request this service—as well as the long-term impacts on future annexations. Future infrastructure extensions should focus on new developments rather than capturing existing residents to pay down sewer treatment plant debt.

Specifically, I request that the council revisit the discussion regarding when a property owner with a functioning On-Site Sewage System (OSS) wishes to add a bathroom, an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), or a detached mother-in-law unit.

During the May 21st, 2026 council meeting (archived on Vimeo), this topic was discussed between minutes 33:40 and 34:08. The council initially seemed to agree that adding an ADU or bathroom should not trigger a mandatory sewer connection if the official health department allows for OSS expansion. If the current OSS can handle the increased capacity or be expanded to comply with state regulations, it should be permitted.

However, at minute 33:52, comments from Mr. Cox appeared to backtrack on this consensus. There is no clear justification for using a property addition as a mandatory connection trigger. Doing so directly contradicts the council's previous agreement that simple proximity to an existing sewer main would not force a connection.

If adding a bathroom or ADU remains a mandatory connection trigger, it will cause several negative repercussions for property owners:

- **Severe Financial Burden:** It will dramatically increase costs via System Development Charges (SDCs) (\$6,000 to \$12,000), monthly sewer fees, on-site connection plumbing, and OSS decommissioning. These costs can easily total tens of thousands of dollars.
- **Housing Disincentive:** It discourages homeowners from building additions that increase local housing stock, improve family livability, and boost property values.

- **No Added Safety Value:** Forcing a connection serves no public health or safety purpose if the property can already accommodate an expansion within official health department standards.

**A Note on Long-Term Incentives for Legacy Residences:**

The city's current one-year SDC waiver is the only incentive for the 27 impacted residences to connect voluntarily. Once this one-year window closes, the incentive disappears. Property owners will instead be heavily incentivized to delay connection as long as possible to avoid massive upfront costs.

As the city seeks to annex new areas with legacy residences, I urge you to maintain a permanent SDC waiver for existing OSS properties. This creates a continuous incentive for owners to connect voluntarily over time as county or state OSS regulations tighten. The city will quickly recover the waived SDC costs through ongoing monthly sewer rates in perpetuity (for example, a \$150/month rate recovers a \$9,000 SDC in just five years).

Please revisit this topic before finalizing the ordinance. Ensure the text clearly protects property owners' rights to improve their homes without triggering mandatory sewer utility connections. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brian McNamara