

The urgency of merging MCAOA with Mapleton Water District cannot be overstated. As a critical stakeholder in Mapleton's infrastructure and economic landscape, I implore this committee to recognize the dire necessity of supporting HB 3910. This legislation represents more than a mere administrative shuffle; it embodies a lifeline for our community's survival and potential for growth.

### **The Current Crisis**

Mapleton stands at a precipice. Our sewage treatment system, operated by MCAOA, teeters on the brink of insolvency, threatening to plunge our town into a public health and economic catastrophe. The ramifications of this potential collapse extend far beyond inconvenience; they strike at the very heart of our community's viability.

### **Economic Implications**

The closure of local lumber mills dealt a severe blow to Mapleton's economy, leaving MCAOA with an untenable financial burden. The organization's original vision of expansion to serve the greater Mapleton area became an unattainable dream, forcing an unconscionable cost onto a small customer base.

### **Essential Services at Risk**

The potential failure of MCAOA threatens to unravel the fabric of our community. Without a functioning sewage system:

- Grocery stores would be forced to close, depriving residents of access to basic necessities
- Fuel stations would shut down, isolating our community and hindering transportation
- Maple Lane RV Park and Marina, a crucial provider of affordable housing, would cease operations
- Mapleton Food Share, a lifeline for many in our economically depressed area, would be unable to continue its vital work

The domino effect of these closures would be catastrophic, potentially leading to the de facto dissolution of Mapleton as a viable community.

### **The Human Element**

It is crucial to understand that MCAOA is not an impersonal entity but a collective of dedicated community members striving to maintain essential infrastructure while simultaneously running their own businesses and living in the service district. These individuals are not seasoned politicians or legal experts; they are ordinary citizens grappling with extraordinary responsibilities.

Their commitment to keeping Mapleton's sewage treatment operational, despite overwhelming odds, deserves our utmost respect and support. However, goodwill and determination alone cannot overcome the systemic challenges MCAOA faces.

### **HB 3910: A Path to Sustainability**

The proposed merger with Mapleton Water District, facilitated by HB 3910, offers a beacon of hope amidst this crisis. This legislation provides a structured pathway to consolidate resources, expertise, and administrative capacity, potentially alleviating the crushing financial burden currently shouldered by MCAOA's limited customer base.

### **Benefits of Consolidation**

1. **Economies of Scale:** Merging operations can lead to cost savings through shared resources and streamlined processes.
2. **Enhanced Expertise:** The combined entity would have access to a broader pool of knowledge and experience in utility management.
3. **Improved Financial Stability:** A larger customer base and diversified revenue streams could help stabilize rates and ensure long-term viability.
4. **Access to Funding:** A consolidated entity may be better positioned to secure grants, loans, or other forms of financial assistance for infrastructure improvements.

### **The Broader Context**

The challenges facing Mapleton are not unique. Across rural America, small communities grapple with aging infrastructure, declining populations, and limited resources. How we address Mapleton's crisis could serve as a model for other communities facing similar challenges.

### **Environmental Considerations**

Ensuring the continued operation and potential improvement of Mapleton's sewage treatment system is not just an economic imperative but an environmental one. Proper wastewater management is crucial for protecting local waterways and ecosystems, particularly given Mapleton's proximity to sensitive coastal environments.

### **Social Equity**

The current situation, with its exorbitant sewer rates, places an unfair burden on Mapleton's residents, many of whom are already struggling economically. By supporting HB 3910 and facilitating this

merger, the committee has an opportunity to address this inequity and ensure that basic sanitation remains accessible to all members of our community.

### **A Call to Action**

The passage of HB 3910 is not merely about merging two utility providers; it is about preserving a community's future. It is about ensuring that families in Mapleton can continue to live with dignity, with access to basic services that many take for granted. It is about maintaining the economic viability of a town that has already weathered significant hardships.

As you deliberate on this legislation, I urge you to consider the faces behind the statistics – the small business owners struggling to keep their doors open, the families making impossible choices between paying for sewer services and other necessities, the volunteers who have dedicated countless hours to keeping MCAOA operational against overwhelming odds.

The merger proposed in HB 3910 represents more than an administrative solution; it embodies hope for a sustainable future for Mapleton. It offers a chance to break free from the cycle of crisis management that has consumed MCAOA's resources and energy, allowing for a focus on long-term planning and infrastructure improvement.

In supporting this bill, you have the power to set Mapleton on a path toward stability and potential growth. You have the opportunity to demonstrate that rural communities matter, that their challenges are seen and understood, and that there are pathways to address even the most daunting infrastructure crises.

The residents of Mapleton are not asking for a handout; they are asking for a hand up – a chance to create a sustainable system that will allow their community to thrive. By merging MCAOA with Mapleton Water District, we can pool resources, share expertise, and work towards a future where basic sanitation is not a luxury but a given.

In conclusion, I implore this committee to recognize the critical importance of HB 3910 for the future of Mapleton. Your support can be the catalyst that transforms a community in crisis into a model of rural resilience and innovation. The people of Mapleton are ready to roll up their sleeves and do the hard work of rebuilding and reimagining their infrastructure. All they need is the opportunity that this legislation provides.

Thank you for your time and consideration. The future of Mapleton hangs in the balance, and your decision on HB 3910 will resonate for generations to come.

Respectfully submitted,

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