



CITY OF ASTORIA

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**Testimony Before the Oregon Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Submitted by Elisabeth Adams, Astoria City Councilor - Ward 3
On behalf of the City of Astoria**

Subject: Request for \$4.96 million in Additional Grant Funding – WWTP Headworks Improvement Project

Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Elisabeth Adams, Astoria City Councilor—Ward 3. I am here to respectfully request your support for \$4,959,232 in additional grant funding for our Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Headworks Improvement Project. This is an investment critical to protecting Oregon's water resources and supporting the long-term viability of one of Oregon's premier coastal communities.

Astoria's Wastewater Facility was constructed in the 1970s, and was never equipped with modern headworks technology to screen items that can disrupt normal operations (i.e., debris, grit, etc.). As the community has grown—particularly with the expansion of our local brewing industry—untreated solids and elevated Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) have increasingly stressed our lagoon-based treatment system. Without this upgrade, Astoria risks falling out of compliance with its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit, putting Columbia River at risk of environmental degradation.

This is not simply a matter of infrastructure—it's about public health, environmental protection, and economic equity. Astoria faces a unique set of challenges:

- Our City's infrastructure is aged, in some cases over a century old, and vulnerable to natural disasters such as landslides, flooding, and tsunamis.
- We are under a federal Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) mandate, requiring \$50–\$60 million in additional sewer upgrades.
- And with limited growth and a constrained tax base, any increase in utility costs falls squarely on an already burdened rural-based population.
- Despite this, Astoria City Council leadership has already demonstrated that it will make the necessary hard decisions to raise utility rates to support critical infrastructure.

The proposed improvements—flow measurement systems, debris screening, grit removal, and solids management—are not only essential for regulatory compliance but will expand treatment capacity for the next 20 years. We have started construction out of necessity and are still finalizing our financial plan. The original project cost was \$5 million, primarily funded by ARPA, but inflationary costs and other constraints have increased the project to almost \$10 million. As mentioned, the project is

underway, environmentally sound, and fully aligned with Oregon's 2017 Integrated Water Resources Strategy and Clean Water Act goals.

Astoria, however, is asking for assistance to help offset the remaining \$5 million. Your assistance would ensure the following:

- Astoria debt levels remain sustainable.
- Astoria utility rate structure can absorb future infrastructure obligations.
- Helps Astoria support its mandated housing strategy as prescribed by the State.
- Ensure the City stays on schedule for completion of this vital work.

Astoria is committed to doing its part to maintain high water quality standards. We are simply asking for your support in addressing the \$4,959,232 that is necessary to finish the Astoria Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Headworks Improvement Project.

On behalf of Astoria's residents, businesses, and the health of the Columbia River system, I want to thank you for your time and consideration.

Elisabeth Adams
Astoria Councilor - Ward 3

