

Submitter: Charlotte Thomas  
On Behalf Of: City of Harrisburg Water Bond Project  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On  
Capital Construction  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5531

Honorable Chairs and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Charlotte Thomas; I am a City Councilor for the City of Harrisburg; we are a small city located in the heart of the Willamette Valley with 3,651 citizens. I am writing to you today to express my support for the three capital requests that the City of Harrisburg has in this agenda. The request that is our biggest priority, and most important to our citizens is the Water Bond Project. This request is for \$2,345,000.

As residents of the City of Harrisburg we are lucky that we have safe water, however, for over 60 years, the water has generated major complaints from the citizens in our community. It has prevented both businesses and new residents from locating in Harrisburg. It is a constant topic of complaint and conversation. Our aquifer is full of sediment, and high in manganese, and iron. It looks cloudy, or brown, doesn't smell good, and doesn't taste good. Our household fixtures and appliances require extra maintenance and have to be replaced more frequently. A lot of people don't believe the water is safe, even though it meets all regulatory standards, and instead of drinking it, they pay for water to be delivered.

For years the technology to fix our water problems was out of reach because of the sheer cost but in 2017 a solution was proposed and our citizens voted in favor to fix the water with a \$7.5 M bond. This bond would give us two water tanks, two filtration plants, replacement of water lines, and provide a new well, giving us the ability to remove one of the wells causing the problems. It took three years for three different engineering firms to provide all the planning, design, and engineering work required, during which we replaced almost 10,000' linear feet in water lines and spent \$1M on generators.

In February of 2020 we were ready to go to bid when COVID hit. We waited until fall of the first year of COVID to find we were \$1M over budget; another year and a half later we were \$2.7M over budget. The third and final bid was June of 2024, and was \$9 M, which was almost \$4M over the remaining bond funds we had available. On a side note, our standard operating budget for the city is about 9M when it's not injected with bond funds. Since construction started, we are \$1M over budget; we paid for that out of savings we scrimped to find, and the funds in our urban renewal program. We are currently applying for a \$3.5M Special Public Works Fund loan, raised water rates and are doing everything possible to make ends meet. Even with all this we believe another year of construction will continue to cost far more than

planned.

Harrisburg is a small city, but we have huge heart. We are doing all we can and still struggling to make this project affordable. Our \$2.3M request is small, but it would make a huge difference to our citizens. I respectfully ask that the committee help our deserving citizens by approving this request. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Thomas  
Harrisburg City Councilor