



WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

“Willmar Municipal Utilities will provide safe, reliable & quality utility services at competitive rates for their customers.”

February 2023

Attn: Chair Pappas, Chair Lee, Speaker Hortman, Majority Leader Dzedzic, Minority Leader Johnson, and Minority Leader DeMuth

Dear Committee Members:

We write in strong support of the City of Willmar, Willmar Municipal Utilities (WMU) Project. Willmar is a small community which recently completed a \$90M wastewater treatment plant which was required to meet MPCA discharge standards. Based on a rate study completed by AE2S, WMU’s wastewater rates are at the upper end of the rates in the upper Midwest. To alleviate the burden of an additional \$21M in debt to construct an advanced biological water treatment process, we write to you in support of WMU’s request for additional grant funding through the Public Facilities Authority Bond Proceeds.

WMU’s proposed advanced biological treatment process will provide the City of Willmar with improved water quality, build water resiliency in response to climate change impacts, alleviate drought impacts in a water-short community and reduce chloride concentration to the water receiving stream at the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and move WMU closer to complying with MPCA’s salty discharge requirement. Our current levels of manganese within our potable water wells are very high and exceed the EPA’s secondary water quality standards by 25%. Studies have shown that these levels of manganese can be harmful to the brain development of newborns and young children. The result of this project will reduce the manganese to acceptable levels. Implementation of a biological filtration should enable WMU to address current challenges including complete removal of ammonia, removal of iron, manganese and assimilable organics, while providing non-corrosive water with a persistent chloramine distribution system residual and increase capacity.

In addition to improved product results, the improved water quality should reduce the need for point of use ion exchange water softeners which are the primary source of salt loadings to the WWTP thereby helping the WWTP reduce its salty discharge constituent concentrations in order to progress towards compliance with the MPCA’s salty discharge requirements.

The design of the project was completed in 2021. Due to the lack of funding in 2022 and the need for increased capacity for economic development and jobs, Willmar has proceeded with the project. All elements of the project are expected to be completed in 2024. WMU is a small community, and to



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construct an advanced biological treatment process is both challenging and expensive. Receipt of grant support will greatly reduce the financial pressure on the City's rate payers and ensure the community has a reliable, local water supply while maintaining reasonable rates.

Thank you for your consideration, and I urge you to give the City's request all due consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce DeBlieck, President
Willmar Municipal Utilities Commission

John Harren, General Manager
Willmar Municipal Utilities

Doug Reese, Mayor
City of Willmar

Leslie Valiant, City Administrator
City of Wilmar

Ken Warner, President
Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce

Aaron Backman, Economic Development Director
Kandiyohi County/City of Willmar

Larry Kleindl, Administrator
Kandiyohi County

Eric Day, Executive Director
Mid-Minnesota Development Commission

NOTE: Please see attached signatory pages (8)



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