

City of Hesperia

STAFF REPORT



DATE: March 5, 2024

TO: Mayor and Council Members
Chair and Board Members, Hesperia Water District

FROM: Rachel Molina, City Manager

BY: Nathan R. Freeman, Director of Development Services
Cassandra Sanchez, Director of Public Works
Bethany Hudson, Assistant Project Manager

SUBJECT: Amendments to Title 14, Chapter 14 of the Hesperia Municipal Code related to Ownership and Maintenance of Sewer Laterals

RECOMMENDED ACTION

It is recommended that the City Council and the Board of Directors of the Hesperia Water District (District) introduce and place on second reading Ordinance No. 2024-01 regarding the maintenance of sewer lateral lines; amending Title 14, Chapter 14.02 and Title 14, Chapter 14.08 of the Hesperia Municipal Code.

BACKGROUND

Throughout the District's service area there are currently 9,400 sewer lateral lines, with a potential for this to increase to over 25,000 connections in the next twenty (20) years based on the Silverwood Master Planned Community (Silverwood). A sewer lateral line refers to a pipe that conveys wastewater from a customer's property to the public sewer mainline. Maintenance typically includes the clearing of blockages created by the accumulation of fats, oils, and grease, poor waste discharge practices, the removal of tree roots, and the repair of cracked or separated joints. Historically, the sewer lateral line responsibility has been shared where the property owner has maintained and repaired lines from the building or home to the property line and the District has maintained and repaired lines from the property line to the sewer main line.

Most of the historical work undertaken in association with removing blockages in sewer laterals has been a result of poor waste discharge practices by the property owner. Each blockage costs over \$1,500 to repair and takes on average twenty (20) labor hours to remedy, taking staff away from other job duties and maintenance of main lines. As future development, such as Silverwood, connects to the sewer system, these costs and staff time are anticipated to increase substantially.

ISSUES/ANALYSIS

The City is currently experiencing economic growth with the addition of various commercial and industrial projects as well as new housing developments including Silverwood. Upon total build out, Silverwood will add an additional 15,663 homes that will connect to the District's sewer infrastructure bringing the total sewer lateral connections to just over 25,000, not including any other development that would be required to connect to sewer. Based on the anticipated growth in development, maintenance, and replacement costs, inclusive of both normal deterioration and minor rate of failure, the anticipated long term financial impacts will result in an ongoing deficit for

Public Works and debt burden to the District's annual budget that is not currently identified for long term fund dedication.

Anticipating the substantial impact of the Silverwood project, and in an effort to be proactive and adopt industry-wide policies employed by most California cities, staff recommends an amendment to the City's Municipal Code to transfer all sewer lateral ownership (from the building or home to the sewer main) to property owners, which promotes a culture of responsible waste management. If approved, property owners would have a vested interest in maintaining the functionality and efficiency of their private sewer laterals, as they would essentially bear the costs of negligence or improper waste discharge. This is likely to promote better waste disposal practices, reduce blockages or backups, and prevent costly damage to the entire sewer infrastructure. All existing commercial, industrial, multi-family, and single-family residential properties will be subject to the new Municipal Code requirements as of the effective date.

In anticipation of this recommended action, staff has begun developing a Private Lateral Maintenance Program to partner with the community to provide public education and outreach through a series of social media posts, community events, and educational material handouts located at City Hall and the Public Works Yard. The Private Lateral Maintenance Program will launch immediately upon approval and will be a key component to the success of the program for the District to see a benefit of cost savings through the use of staff time and resources.

On February 20, 2024, the City Council and the Board of Directors of the Hesperia Water District approved at first reading and adopted the changes proposed to the municipal code with modified language that the District will retain responsibility for all currently connected properties and continue to maintain and service sewer lateral blockages from the property line to the sewer main. All new connections, 30 days after the second reading, shall be subject to the new municipal code language stating the property owner will be responsible for the private sewer lateral from the onsite point of connection to the sewer mainline.

FISCAL IMPACT

It is anticipated that the District will realize annual cost savings with an expected long-term benefit due to the substantial growth rate of economic development within the City.

ALTERNATIVE(S)

1. Provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Ordinance 2024-01
2. Attachment 2 – Exhibit "A" Municipal Code Title 14, Chapter 14.02. Section 14.02.020 and Title 14, Chapter 14.08. Section 14.08.030 redlines and alternative language