

**From:** Jeff Howard

**Sent:** Monday, March 02, 2020 6:00 PM

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**Subject:** Item No. B-07 (Thaxton Rd. Tract Offsite Wastewater Improvements) on March 3, 2020 Agenda

\*\*\* External Email - Exercise Caution \*\*\*

Chair Kiolbassa and Commissioners,

For your consideration on the March 3 agenda is the above-referenced item requesting a variance for the wastewater line intended to serve the Marble Creek Basin. This City of Austin capital improvement project has long been planned as part of a comprehensive system. The original SER related to this sewer line was approved in May 1986. The original approved SER did not have an expiration. In 2014, in connection with the Springfield subdivision, a new SER calling for a wastewater line easement in the proposed location was approved. In addition, City staff reviewed plans showing the wastewater line in connection with an Erosion Hazard Zone Level 2 study. An easement was subsequently dedicated along Marble Creek behind Springfield Section 2 subdivision. Homes and drainage improvements have been built along this portion of Marble Creek preventing compliance with the 1/2 -CWQZ requirement in this area. In addition, an 8-inch sewer line to serve the Springfield Subdivision was also constructed and installed and is in place in this same general area.

On August 22, 2019, the Council unanimously approved the current SER and funding for the proposed alignment of the wastewater line. Before you for consideration is the variance that staff has said is needed for the construction plans for the wastewater line related to the original SER.

The 30" wastewater line will be 10,169 linear feet servicing the Marble Creek Basin. Millions of dollars of infrastructure have been invested in this area. The line is located along Marble Creek outside the existing half CWQZ for about 92% of the entirety of the alignment. No other variances are being sought. The portion to be located within the half CWQZ is approximately 860 linear feet, of which a large portion was previously disturbed as part of the construction for the existing 8" wastewater line currently serving the Springfield subdivision. This portion of the 30-inch line will be encased and located above the bluff line of the creek and the area closest to the creek centerline will be bored to avoid any disturbance. After years of reviewing, analysis, and consideration of alternatives, this approach is the safest, best-designed and most environmentally conscious option for the alignment. It should be noted, perpendicular creek crossings that are actually located in the bottom of a creek and pass through the actual bottom of a creek (something we are NOT proposing here) are expressly allowed by the Code in ALL parts of the City. This are allowed because sometimes creek crossing are necessary. Here crossing through the ½-CWQZ is likewise necessary because of the easement and Springfield development.

The "alternative" proposed by Environmental Staff not viable because (i) it is less environmentally sound, (ii) fails to adhere to best engineering practices, and (iii) greatly increases the cost to City taxpayers/ rate payers significantly. This alternative would require obtaining an easement for the lift

station, construction of a lift station, cutting through new streets in the Springfield subdivision, and substantially more linear feet of a force main. It is less sound environmentally because of the reliance on a lift station, with its mechanical equipment susceptible to failure over time, as oppose to gravity lines encased in steel. The alternative is also substantially more expensive for the City to construct, and therefore, the taxpayer, and also requires returning to Council for approval of increased funding.

The Environmental Commission voted 5-5 to approve. When that motion failed, the Environmental Commission did technically vote to deny, but ONLY as a vehicle to add consensus conditions for the Zoning and Platting Commission to consider. In other words, the Environmental Commission was convinced that the approval of the variance might be warranted and wanted to make sure its conditions were included. We have revised the plans to include ALL City environmental staff and Environmental Commission comments and conditions. These environmental conditions have already added a 42% increase (approximately \$1.8 million increase) to the cost of the line. The line is already being very, very well designed with the highest level of environmental scrutiny possible. The Environmental Commission included longing boring and encasing requirements and taking the existing un-encased 8-inch line out of service. The staff "alternative" of adding the unnecessary and less desirable lift station and force main will serve no safety or environmental purposes and will only serve to increase the costs to the City, add risk of mechanical failure and environmental risk, leave the 8-inch line in place, cut up existing roadways and ignore the prior history, planning and existing easement in place for this very purpose.

For the foregoing reasons, we hope you will consider approval of the proposed alignment. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

### Jeffrey S. Howard

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