

DWSD Blog Series #8 - Reminder, the Election is in One Week and Now We Know Referendums Can Have Irreversible Consequences. “Let’s All Get Out and Cast an Informed Vote”

In this final post of this 8 part series, we will attempt to summarize the key facts, and correct the misrepresentations of the many alternate facts we would anticipate every voter would most benefit from as they prepare themselves for the June 8th Vote on the Consolidation Referendums.

- 1st, as prior qualified, and subsequently confirmed by active City leaders, the Consolidation Referendums were birthed without so much as a courtesy call to the affected Districts. To this day, through many individual and collective meetings between residents and the City, Water and Sewer, and Fire Districts, no one has stepped forward to lay claim to knowing, much less expressing exactly why we are here. The only thing known for certain, and qualified in public by the Mayor in her statements at the April 20th City Council meeting, she was singularly opposed to the District’s bonds for replacement infrastructure. Therefore, this (the Referendum on Water and Sewer Consolidation) was perceived by her to be a means of stopping the District from acquiring these funds.
- We, the Water and Sewer District, by contact from our bond attorney, know that City personnel personally phoned that attorney requesting information regarding how to stop the refunding of the 2012 Bond, to stand down our Bond package, an apparent direct violation of State ethics laws.
- We know that, if the Mayor had been successful in stopping the 2012 refunding, it would have cost residents \$566K in debt savings on the debt restructuring alone and, would have crippled critical project implementation to shore up increasingly collapsing water and sewer mains, including the soon to be built 2nd water tower that will keep residents insurance rates from rising.
- We know that the Mayor, and the past secretary of the POA, together unsuccessfully attempted to run an opposition petition to stop the District’s 2021 Bond. A move that was so poorly orchestrated that it failed on 3 separate legal parameters to even certify.
- We know that City leaders, working with County representatives and legislative leaders at the House and Senate level, have, at least on three occasions, attempted to take your voice off the table by having the statute that formed the Water and Sewer District amended to turn it over to the City. Both attempts, upon exposure, failed. How’s that for building trust?
- We know that the City’s CPA report, the foundational premise for what savings and benefits could be expected to be derived from Consolidation of both the Water and Sewer and Fire Districts, isn’t worth the paper it is written on.
- We know that there is not unanimous agreement between the Mayor and the sitting Council that this should have ever been proffered, and certainly not in this way or time. We also know that this move is further clouded by the fact that the City Council will be guaranteed to change by 40% (2 members) after June 8.
- We know that Mayor Depreo, in Council workshop in April, 2018, while serving as Ward 1 Council Member, led the opposition against consolidation of either the Water and Sewer District or the Fire Department.
- As further regards the composition of the City’s elected leadership, we are highly confident that these Referendums would have never seen the light of day had 5 of the 6 seats been contested on June 8th.

- We know that the numerous attempts by many to misrepresent the District's fee structure, including using the local and regional media to widely propel the myth that the infrastructure improvement bonds would raise fees another \$20, all failed when informed by the facts.
- We learned that the Mayor's grants focused ideology that we must delay critical infrastructure improvements, including water and sewer, for whatever time it takes until we get someone else to pay for it is flawed to its core. We further know that absolutely "no" state oversight agency advises this practice as the primary means of managing critical infrastructure, especially given Diamondhead's highly uncompetitive median household income rating. And, we know this very same political management practice is a primary reason behind the cascading failures of municipalities across the State, Region, and Nation.
- In contrast, we know that the Water and Sewer District is directly following State expert guidance in aggressively attempting to head off imminent collapse of our most imperiled water and sewer mains, and storage and delivery infrastructure, including taking immediate advantage of the lowest recorded borrowing rates in modern history.
- We know that, in spite of extreme challenges to right 50 year old wrongs, we deliver the best drinking water, and collect and treat wastewater to the highest standards on the Coast, if not the State. We know that we do this at rates that are, in reality as, or more, competitive than any other full service District on the Coast.
- We know that we are unfortunately guilty of under educating our customers on the need, structure, and framework of our first true rate increase in 8 years, an unavoidable rate adjustment that doesn't even match what the natural evolution of the 2012 fees, adjusted for inflation, would have been today.
- We know that managing and operating complex water and sewer infrastructure 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year is a daunting task and indisputably best left to experts.
- We know that the City does not currently have any idea of the magnitude or scale of what it takes to run the District, much less any plan.
- Coupled with the overwhelming Cons outlined in Blog #7, we know you should "VOTE NO" to supporting placing either the Water and Sewer or Fire District under the management of the City.

Finally, we most importantly know how truly blessed we are to have had the opportunity for the past 32 years to bring you the best water and sewer services available. With your help, we look forward to continuing to provide that service to you and your family.

As a reminder, please join us at the remaining townhall meeting where we look forward to answering any outstanding questions you may still have regarding your water and sewer services or our position on the Consolidation Referendum. Please note that Diamondhead Fire Chief Michael Munger will be joining us as guest speaker and will be answering your questions for the Fire District as well.

DWSD Town Hall Meetings

Thursday, June 3rd at 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. - City Hall Council Chambers

Thank you again for your ongoing interest and support. The Diamondhead Water and Sewer Board