



City of Bellevue
115 E Pine Street
Box 825
PO Bellevue, ID 83313
208-788-2128 Fax 208-788-2092
www.bellevueidaho.us

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To my fellow Bellevue Residents,

There has been a great deal of misinformation about the “Water Bond” and the project that the City is pursuing. I would like to share some background and facts with you. First off Bellevue has great water quality. We are not teetering on a potential boil order whatsoever. In the last almost 10 years the City had to issue one boil order due to a broken pipe which led to depressurizing the water system. If the system pressure falls below 20 psi by regulation a system must report to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and declare a boil order.

This project is more about water quantity vs quality. Yes, the spring system is over 40 years old and from a recent sanitary survey conducted in 2022, DEQ identified multiple deficiencies in the collection and distribution structures and system that could lead to a potential contamination on the water. Again, our water is perfectly safe and good to drink. The City completes an annual consumer confidence report that lists sample results and any compliance violations.

Bellevue has three sources of water, two wells and a spring. The spring is our primary source of water, and it is gravity fed, meaning there is no need for pumps or electricity to distribute it through most of the City, except for a recent subdivision. In the summer months, the max daily use can be around 2-million gallons of water per day. The spring water rights provide just under 2-million gallons a day. The spring is our oldest water right and is considered a surface water right. This is crucial for the City of Bellevue regarding the Big Wood Ground Water Management Plan (BWGWMP). This water right can not be curtailed by other surface water users in drought years unlike the ground water wells. This means that it is a sustainable water source that cannot be shut off if agriculture producers with surface water rights feel that the ground water pumping is affecting their ability to irrigate with their senior surface water rights.

The main objective of the water project is to improve the spring collection system, move the collection line from private property to the county road with an access easement and reduce the significant amount of water loss by installing a new main line from the spring to the water tank. There are a couple of other mainline upgrades that coincide with Idaho Transportation Department projects on Highway 75 along with leak detection throughout the system. All of this is to bring the water system back into compliance with DEQ and Idaho Administrative Code or Idaho Administrative Procedure Act (IDAPA).

The City was presented with three options, which totaled \$9.6 million, \$16.66 Million or \$21.1 million. The City chose the priority of getting back into compliance with DEQ at \$9.6 Million. The City was awarded a \$3.3-million Leading Idaho Funds grant on the condition it could show it had the ability to secure the remaining \$6.6 million to complete the project. I have asked for a total of \$7 million in funding through the State Revolving Fund program which is a loan at a fixed 2.5% interest rate over 20 years. The additional \$300,000 is to avoid overages in construction or material costs in the project. The bond, if passed, will secure \$10 million in

funding for this project. Once it begins, the grant money will be used first. Once the City starts using the loan option, we will start implementing rate increases. This will not happen all at once but over the next few years of the project. The City is still actively looking for additional funds to offset the cost of the loan and keep our rates lower.

Bellevue is currently on a flat monthly rate of \$35.05 per month. We have approved and funded the software and remaining components to bring our water meters online and intend to be operational by the end of September 2024 and convert to a metered rate by May 1, 2025. The metered water user rate will be a \$35.05 base monthly fee for up to the first 6,500 gallons per calendar month and \$1.09 for every additional 1,000 gallons per calendar month. The water industry estimates that an average person uses 3,000 gallons of water monthly. Indoor usage accounts for 70% of the water used, with the bathroom being the largest consumer. At the current base rate, we are paying \$0.005 per gallon of water. If the rate were to increase to the full amount of \$65 per month, we would still only be paying \$0.01 per gallon, one penny per gallon.

It is not my intent to raise rates and put pressure on already tight family budgets. I want to ensure that we have the infrastructure to provide basic public health and safety. We have deferred maintenance on our water and wastewater systems for too long and are now reacting to a need. My intent is to get Bellevue back into compliance and then implement an asset management plan and maintenance program that changes the past philosophy of reactive management to a proactive management policy. It will be cheaper in the long run to have a proactive plan in place and look at mitigation strategies than it is to continue down the road with reactionary policies.

The full information on the bond and the project is posted on our City website
<https://www.bellevueidaho.us>. Please take some time and review it before you vote and please take the time to vote.

Chris Johnson
Mayor
City of Bellevue
208-309-0656