

June 7, 2021

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Merced City Council
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RE: June 7th Study Session Review of Sewer Collection and Treatment Plans

On behalf of the Virginia Smith Trust, I would like to encourage the Merced City Council to approve the staff request to update the Sewer Collection Master Plan and the Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade projects to reflect the most accurate and current information on wastewater flows. Like many other such plans in the Central Valley, your current plans do not account changes in water use and wastewater generation resulting from recent CalGreen Code and City Building Codes updates. And, we note that treatment plant wastewater flows have actually declined over the past 20 years, despite a 40 percent increase in population over that period. Planning for the future requires a scientific, critical look at current trends and conditions going forward, and a recognition that future growth and development will use substantially less water and generate substantially less wastewater than the current average.

VST has worked with the City over the past year on this issue. During that time, we have conducted sewer flow monitoring at Bellevue Ranch that has confirmed, conclusively, that new residential uses generate substantially less wastewater than the current average. This reduction is “hard-wired” into the design of the homes and is permanent. We also know, conclusively, that UC Merced’s actual flows at buildout will be one-third of those assumed in the master plan. Finally, we know, based on sewer and water use records, that non-residential uses generate 50% to 75% less wastewater than currently assumed.

We believe the relook at this matter as recommended by City staff is prudent and warranted, and that it will, conservatively, save the City and rate payers tens of millions of dollars. Our thanks to City Manager Stephanie R. Dietz, Community Development Director Scott McBride, and Stantec for their cooperation and insights on this matter. We look forward to staying involved in these projects as they are updated.

Sincerely,



Stephen J. Peck, AICP
Project Manager, Virginia Smith Trust Development Project Manager

