

Dear Mayor Batey, Council President Anderson, Councilors Massey, Stavenjord, and Khosroabadi; and City Manager Sagor

Community Comment, August 5, 2025, Regular Session

**Re: New Water Bill Fee for Public Safety represents the City's failure to prioritize**

(I write this testimony, understanding it is futile to ask City Council to vote down the new water bill fee it contemplates for supplementing the police department's budget.)

**How did the City get to this point of adding yet another new fee/tax?**

Let me list some of the bigger reasons:

It tosses \$1.7 million to help fund the County's Hillside Park expansion. The Police chief says Hillside will spike the number of police calls for Hillside. The County pays no city property taxes to help fund this increase in Police service calls. And I wouldn't be surprised if Hillside were to be exempt from paying the proposed public safety water bill fee, seeing as how the residents meet income qualifications.

The City tosses another \$300,000 to Shortstack affordable housing project, and it seems possible that Shortstack will have reduced city property taxes via reduced tax assessed value of the homes than if privately developed – the private development having had a high likelihood.

The City includes central Milwaukie (Milwaukie Market Place and surrounding properties) in its urban renewal district, freezing out increases in city General Fund property tax proceeds and thereby shorting the police department budget. It is ironic but I have heard city staff even say that they keep forgetting that central Milwaukie is in the urban renewal district. New Seasons, McFarland (now 7 Acres), Planet Fitness and Ace hardware would occur without being in the urban renewal district.

The City chooses to divert a substantive portion of the only recently added gas and electric utility tax to staffing climate change machinations – a discretionary and futile expense of trying to change the temperature of the earth.

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And if this fee were a so-called "Investment" why is it that it is permanent, and not sun-setted? If it is to save future expenses like a normal business investment, then there would be a payback period to the bottom line. The fee payer might more aptly refer to it as a ransom payment to the City, instead.

Sincerely,  
Elvis Clark, Milwaukie