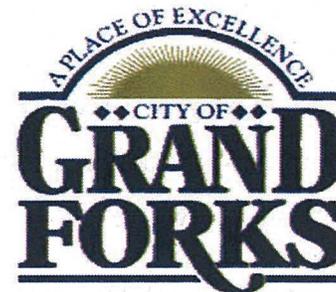


**TESTIMONY OF KEN VEIN, CITY COUNCIL MEMBER
CITY OF GRAND FORKS, NORTH DAKOTA
WATER TOPICS OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
REPRESENTATIVE JIM SCHMIDT, CHAIRMAN
MONDAY, MARCH 7, 2016**



Good morning Chairman Schmidt and Members of the Water Topics Overview Committee. I am Ken Vein, a City Council member from the City of Grand Forks. I'm here today to provide a project update on the City's Regional Water Treatment Plant (WTP).

Legislation passed in the 64th Legislative Session provides unprecedented support to critical water needs throughout the State. Within this budget, the State Water Commission would provide over \$800 million in funding for critical water supply and flood control projects. One of these projects is one that I have been involved in over the last two decades.

The City of Grand Forks has been planning the development of a new regional WTP since 1995 to address four key areas: 1) Water quality challenges; 2) Increasing water demands; 3) Regulatory impacts; and, 4) Ensuring affordable rates for residents, business, and industry.

We have invested nearly \$52.9 million in water system improvements from 2001 to 2009 in preparation for the new facility. This plant is designed to overcome the challenges introduced to the City by the operation of the Devils Lake outlet, to maintain competitiveness among our value added agricultural commodities, to position the City for the completion of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project, but most of all, to ensure clean and reliable drinking water for our residents, business, and industry far into the future.

We believe the City shoulders the primary financial responsibility for capital costs and for all operations and maintenance costs of the facility. However, we have laid the groundwork for a partnership with the State to construct this new facility. In the 2013 to 2015 biennium, the State Water Commission funded this project with a \$5 million dollar-for-dollar matching grant. In this biennium, an additional \$30 million grant was appropriated with the intent for continued grant funding for the 2017 to 2019 biennium to fund the

remaining 50 percent of total project costs. The groundwork for a partnership has become a successful example of State and Local government working together for the strength of the State as a whole.

The WTP is currently under engineering design with final design anticipated by the end of the year and an anticipated project bid in early 2017. The State funding has been instrumental in moving this project forward. To-date, the City and State have collectively spent \$5.2 million with approximately 50 percent of that matched by State dollars. As part of engineering design, the City has engaged a Construction Manager-at-Risk to provide an alternative to the traditional design process so that the City of Grand Forks and the State as a whole are getting the best value possible.

In addition to the progress made on the design of the WTP itself, we have started planning for the necessary core infrastructure to serve the WTP site. Our staff has been working over past three months to identify what road, water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure is critical to the success of this site and ensure that it is constructed and available so construction of the WTP is not delayed by these efforts. We anticipate to have design work complete to bid this spring for construction in 2016. The effort to design and plan for this infrastructure is yet another example of how the State is supporting efforts in our community. We are working with the Bank of North Dakota to access the new infrastructure revolving fund authorized during the 64th Legislative Session to fund these improvements. The core infrastructure for this site totals approximately \$8 million and will take advantage of this newly authorized program. Altogether, the Bank of North Dakota program will fund \$15 million of approximately \$33 million in infrastructure across our community.

As work on the WTP and surrounding area progresses, we are inspired by the commitment from the State through the variety of programs available and look forward to seeing this project become an example of how communities and the State can work together. On behalf of the City of Grand Forks, our residents, businesses, industries, and everyone who will benefit from this project, I thank you for your continued support of this project that will serve generations to come.