

January 8, 2025

Dear Kathleen,
Dear Jessica,

I am voting 'no' on the 60M water treatment plant, but will vote for a 34M plant that uses gravity (or carbon) filtration to remove Manganese.

RO is expensive (\$11M) The bids received reflect the consultant's decision to ask the bidders to bid on the first \$6M of the installation, so presumably there is a second round of bids for the other 5M (membranes?). The cost is not just in installation but operational costs as the membranes are expensive.

There is also the matter of timing. If we do the RO now, it forecloses two benefits that I suspect we would all vote for:

Technological Advancements and 3M Settlement

PFAS now has national attention and given the number of US cities who will address (or are addressing) this very difficult problem, there will be technological advances (and cost-savings, perhaps?) that we could benefit from in the near future. The second benefit is that, should PFAS arrive here, Northfield can seek to participate in the 3M settlement that is helping other cities today (Cottage Grove & Hastings) in paying for their Water Treatment Plants. But if we have already paid for it, I doubt that the Settlement Trustee will give us any money.

As to community softening, we face two additional problems. The city staff advocates that residents who buy salt for their water softener spend \$19 a month, and the city can do it for cheaper at \$8 per month. We need to further research this; It's not what I am learning from householders, but it is also trying to change human behavior very quickly (including the argument they can dispose of their softeners, or do/do not have to worry about appliances which cannot accept completely softened water).

I have spoken to our State Rep who was the ED at Clean Rivers, and current ED Jennifer Tonko. Neither want to lobby the city for community softening.

Just two more points:

The staff wants the City to apply for a loan (at an attractive rate of 2 or 2.5 percent) from the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority. The increased water rates will pay off the loan in 20 years and for infrastructure in the NW quadrant. Shouldn't this also be discussed and voted upon by the Council?

Finally and most importantly, there's the impact on residents and businesses. Under the staff proposal, by mid-year 2028, the most conservative household user of water will pay \$552 more per year for water than they did in 2024. Of that 552 dollars, \$384 is for water and the other \$168 is the increase for sewer and storm water. In other words, the most thrifty user of water will pay well over \$1,000 a year – this becomes a significant part of the conservative householder's budget on par with property taxes.

Please correct me about anything in this letter or otherwise. I am open that we should do more, but 34M does accomplish the manganese removal.

Sincerely,

s/ Peter

Peter Dahlen

cc: City Clerk Lynette Peterson; City Administrator Martig