

Office of the Superintendent

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St. Francis Area Schools

April 4, 2024

Matt Look, City Administrator
City of East Bethel
2241 221st NE
East Bethel, MN 55055

RE: HF 5189 / SF 5309: Letter of support for inclusion of East Bethel water and sewer treatment systems in the state's bonding bill

To Whom It May Concern:

The purpose of this letter is to express the school district's support for including water and sewer systems for the City of East Bethel in the state's bonding bill. Building these systems is essential to the school district and city because of current issues with school district water and septic systems as well as the desire to provide an increased tax base for the school district.

Currently, East Bethel Elementary School and Cedar Creek Elementary School are serviced by well and septic systems on our properties. Maintaining private water and sewer systems has been problematic, so the district is interested in city-provided services. In addition to the present need to upgrade the schools' septic pumping station, both schools were negatively impacted by the tannins in our well water over the past 18 months. The cloudy water that students and staff were pulling out of filtered water stations caused a level of alarm and panic; temporary remediation efforts necessitated a strong response from the school district, including shutting off all drinking fountains, providing bottled water, installing a new water softener system at Cedar Creek, and conducting multiple water quality sampling by state and local entities. Parents and community members questioned whether the schools provided a safe environment for their children. Further, it is increasingly challenging to find staff members with the special wastewater treatment license and rural water certification.

Building the systems will also help the area with planned and needed growth, which will eventually help with the tax impact on local residences and businesses. In particular, the school district recently lost an operating levy referendum request, partly because of increased taxes in the cities within the school district. Providing a stronger tax base will eventually help with the tax burden for residents of the school district.

Once again, the school district wholeheartedly supports the inclusion of water and sewer systems for the City of East Bethel in the state's bonding bill. It is the right thing to do for the City of East Bethel as well as St. Francis Area Schools.

Sincerely,

Karsten Anderson

Karsten Anderson
Superintendent