

**BILL060(24)**  
**Testimony**

**MISC. COMM. 535**

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND TECHNOLOGY (PIT)

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**Meeting**

Meeting Date: Nov 21, 2024 @ 02:30 PM

Support: 1

Oppose: 1

I wish to comment: 0

Name: Donald Sakamoto	Email: cylonone@aol.com	Zip: 96813
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Nov 20, 2024 @ 01:55 PM
Testimony: oppose		
Name: Frank Doyle	Email: doylef002@hawaii.rr.com	Zip: 96825
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: Nov 20, 2024 @ 10:14 PM

Members of the Sewer Fee Advisory Group. Administration and Consultants,

At the six previous Sewer Advisory Group meetings, ENV Consultants professionally and with excellent presentations, provided the methodology and options available to establish the Sewer Fee required for the next ten years. The Advisory Group's charge is to help expand the public's understanding of the needs for wastewater improvements, and related costs to achieve the benefits to Public and Environmental Health and Safety resulting from their implementation. The Advisory Group's objective is to have sewer rate increases in balance with the financial needs of the utility and rate payer affordability.

Wastewater improvements required to be implemented to improve the Oahu's collection system and treatment facilities are summarized in Consent Decree Entered into by the City and County of Honolulu on December 17, 2010, with EPA, Department of Health (DOH), The Sierra Club, Hawai'i's Thousand Friends, and Our Children's Earth Foundation. The Consent Decree mandated that secondary treatment of sewage be implemented at all Oahu wastewater treatment facilities.

While most of Oahu's treatment facilities provided some public health and/or environmental benefits, the requirement for secondary treatment at the Sand Island Wastewater Treatment Plant (SIWWTP), where treated effluent is discharged miles offshore at a depth of some 300 feet, provides little if any Public Health or environmental benefit at the estimated cost of at least 2.5 billion dollars is not justified or affordable.

Oceanographic studies over the past 40 years, have not cited due to the SIWWTP treated sewage discharge, any public health issues either in the near shore waters of Māmalā Bay, nor within the zone of mixing at the deep ocean outfall. Therefore, there are no public health issues required to be mitigated and the cost for upgrading the Sand Island facility to secondary treatment with no tangible public health benefits cannot be justified. Nor can secondary treatment upgrades be justified based on reducing environmental impacts. Studies of the water quality

based on reducing environmental impacts. Studies of the water quality and flora and fauna at and around the deep ocean outfall have demonstrated little or no difference inside and outside the zone of mixing.

In 2021, a group of prominent scientists and professional engineers has been urging the City Administration to appeal to the Environmental Protection Agency, the Consent Decree requirement of secondary treatment at the SIWWTP, arguing that secondary treatment is not warranted at this particular plant for the following reasons:

1. Secondary treatment will not bring any measurable improvement to the deep ocean waters into which the effluent is discharged.
2. Secondary treatment will increase the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.
3. Secondary treatment will increase the amount of solid material that will require treatment and disposal (either by incineration or landfill)
4. Secondary treatment will be costly to construct, maintain and operate.

Despite being presented with an overwhelming amount of scientific data, confirming no negative public health or environmental impacts, and with no disagreement to the scientific findings, the City Administration has determined that: “By investing in these infrastructure upgrades today, we are safeguarding public health, protecting our environment, and ensuring that Oahu is prepared for the future challenges of climate change. These improvements are essential for our community’s well-being.” While there may be some safeguarding of the public health and protection of the environment in the planned upgrades proposed at other facilities, public health and protection of the environment has already been achieved at the SIWWTP.

It appears that the City’s main reason for not moving forward with an appeal to EPA is stated in that, very overuse term, “that ship has already left the shore.” In other words, the Administration has taken the position that it is too late to do anything about the Consent Decree.

It is never too late. The cost of construction and operation of Phase III secondary treatment is an unwarranted and unjustified financial burden

added to present taxpayer financial woes and those yet to come. The City Administration should be willing to make the effort to reduce the charge of the Sewer Fee, and now may be the best time to do so.

Next year, there will be changes in staff and regulatory requirements at the federal EPA and Congress. It would appear prudent now, to continue to proceed with the implementation of the Sewer Fee as part of the Budget process without the cost of Phase III secondary treatment at the SIWWTP, while appealing the requirement for secondary treatment to the EPA as did the City of San Diego in 2019, thereby successfully obtaining an exemption to the Clean Water Act (CWA) amending this federal law.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Frank J, Doyle  
Storm Water-Wastewater Advisory Group Member