

Senate Political Subdivisions Committee

Senator Randy Burckhard, Chairman

Senator Howard Anderson, Vice-Chairman

March 26, 2021

Chairman Burckhard, Members of the Senate Political Subdivisions Committee:

My name is Steve Bakken and I am the Mayor of the City of Bismarck. I am providing testimony on behalf of the City of Bismarck in support of House Bill 1419.

Over the course of the last several years, the City of Bismarck has been evaluating various funding options for city infrastructure including the replacement of special assessments which are currently used to pay for street maintenance projects. Community stakeholders representing the business community, apartment owners, builders, realtors, manufactured home parks, homeowners and renters have all been involved.

In April of 2020, the City of Bismarck issued a request for proposals for Street Utility Fee Consultant Services. Our selected consultant AE2S Nexus has worked with city staff members over the course of several months developing a framework and strategies to replace the street maintenance special assessment revenue received from residential and commercial properties with an alternative funding source such as a street utility fee. The Bismarck City Commission received the Street Utility Framework Report at its January 12, 2021 meeting. The report provided a comprehensive analysis of various methods the City of Bismarck could use to design a street utility fee.

Versions of HB 1419 have been considered by the Legislature in the past. The current version of HB 1419 provides the necessary authority for Bismarck to move forward and re-engage our community stakeholders in discussions of the details of the framework needed to establish a street utility fee for Bismarck. You may hear from others today who may express opposition to HB 1419. They may express concerns about the details of the Street Utility Framework Report or situations that the report did not address. Please keep in mind the street utility framework is one example of how to implement an infrastructure fee for street maintenance in Bismarck. Necessary engagement of our community stakeholders will occur after the enabling legislation found in HB 1419 is approved by the Legislature.

The changes to North Dakota Century Code defined in HB 1419 will provide the City of Bismarck the authority to levy and collect a fee for payment of street maintenance projects. The City of Bismarck is at the ready to take the next steps to fine tune its Street Utility framework with robust engagement of our community stakeholders.

On behalf of the City of Bismarck, I urge you to give HB 1419 a DO PASS recommendation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1419. I am happy to stand for any questions the Committee may have.

Steve Bakken, Mayor
City of Bismarck
701-355-1300
sbakken@bismarcknd.gov