

December 14, 2023

Petition for waiver of sewer hook-up requirement

Requested by: Eric Torbet

Project location: 3944 Pine Ave, Clearlake

APN: 039-402-390-000

Dear Board of Supervisors,

I own a ½-acre lot in the city of Clearlake on which I'd like to build a small (450 sq ft) affordable home. I'd like to install an environmentally-friendly sewer system, consisting of a greywater system and an above-ground aerobic "humanure" system. I have already submitted a detailed proposal to Lake County Environmental Health, and Director Craig Wetherbee along with Public Health Officer Noemi Doohan have written a letter of support for my project. I attach my proposal and their letter of support with this petition. I also attach my proposed site map and plumbing plan.

The advantages of my proposed sewage system are that it saves the County from having to process the waste and purify the waste-water; it's a robust system that works even in a long-term power outage or a loss of water pressure; and it's very affordable to the home-owner. Environmental Health has a keen interest in seeing this project move forward because it presents a possible "third option" that could one day be introduced into the sewer code ordinance. There are lots in Lake County, for example, that are neither near a sewer line nor upon which a septic system can easily be installed (bedrock, high water table, or small yard), and it would therefore be nice to have this third option available. I will be working in collaboration with Environmental Health to implement my proposed system.

I am not petitioning the Board of Supervisors for permission to move forward on this alternative sewer project, as Environmental Health already has the authority to grant it and will do so. Rather, there is a sticking point in the [County Sewer Use Ordinance](#), where in Section 205 it states that if there is a sewer line within 200 ft of the property then one must hook up to it. The only way, apparently, to waive this requirement is provided in Section 204 of the same code, which states that the Board of Supervisors has the power to grant relief from sewer requirements. **There is a sewer line within 200 ft of my lot and I would like to forego hooking up to this sewer line, and kindly ask for your waiver of this requirement.**

I seek relief for the hook-up requirement because I will not be using the sewer line as part of my proposed system. If I were to hook up to it, it would just be a plugged drain pipe with no purpose. You may argue that it should be there in case in the future I or the new owner of my home wish to convert to a regular sewer-line system. However, this is unnecessary because I will already account for this possibility by laying in a water closet drain pipe before pouring the slab-on-grade foundation. This water-closet drain pipe will extend beyond the foundation perimeter and will have temporary plugs on both ends. In the future, all that will be needed to hook up to the sewer line is to dig a trench down to the street and lay in a drain pipe.

Scott Harter, Director of Sanitation of Lake County, informs me that there are situations where there is an existing septic system but then the County installs a nearby sewer line. These existing septic systems are

“grandfathered in”, meaning there is no need to hook up to the sewer line, **unless and not until the septic system fails**. My proposed system, like these grandfathered systems, would not be hooked up to the sewer line while it is operational, but if the system were to fail, then of course I would hook up to the sewer line as required.

You may argue that my proposed alternative sewer system should be implemented on a lot without a nearby sewer line in place. However, this is an experimental project and as such may not succeed, in which case it's actually a good thing that there's a sewer line nearby as a back-up plan.

Finally, I note that **I've already paid the County the fee for an Experimental Sewer System**. It would not be right for the County to also collect the fee for a regular sewer system when that service is not even provided.

Thank you for considering my petition to waive the sewer hook-up requirement.

Sincerely,



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