



Statement on Onsite Sewer Ordinance (Ordinance Calendar No. 7352AA – Septic System Ordinance by Councilman Toledano)

October 31, 2023

Last summer, a councilman from the other side of the parish proposed an ordinance regulating septic systems that seemed to make very little sense, both in timing and also in what it proposed to do. Over the last several months, concern has grown among parish residents, particularly those in District 9, about this ordinance. This Thursday, a presentation will be given before the parish council regarding the proposal, but the language of the ordinance is already available. Simply put: this does not work for St. Tammany parish, and it certainly does not work for District 9.

The ordinance is poorly written, poorly timed and the equivalent of using a flame thrower to deal with an ant pile. It would place a huge burden on the backs of the poor and middle class, particularly in rural areas. It is estimated that it would negatively affect roughly 42,000 homes and businesses in the parish.

It is not accurate to just consider the inspection cost, but the cost of repairs would fall on those who can least afford it. Also, the cost would be passed on to tenants of rental properties. I often hear from people in the east of the parish and in rural areas that they are being neglected or exploited, and this type of ordinance simply reinforces that.

It must be noted that the author of this ordinance and many other current members will not be on the council in the new year. The new council is who should deal with such a major issue. Every resident of St. Tammany wants clean water and to avoid pollution, but a solution needs to be more surgical and not on the backs of those who can least afford it.

At this time, the parish should also focus more on crumbling infrastructure and leaky pipes in subdivisions, rather than this poorly conceived ordinance. This ordinance seems to be a solution in search of a problem, as the answer is certainly not to punish the poor and middle class residents of St. Tammany, particularly in the rural areas of the parish.

Finally, there are serious legal concerns about some of the provisions in the ordinance. Specifically, the provision that states that the parish may come onto a person's property simply by virtue of the presence or operation of a septic system.

As such, I oppose the proposed ordinance.

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