



MEMORANDUM

CC-26-129

Consideration for Exemption to Water and Sewer Service Abandonment

Item Type: Action Memorandum
Prepared For: Mayor Lord and City Council
Date: May 19, 2026
From: Jean Arno, PW Inspector
Through: Daniel Kort, Public Works Director, Melissa Jacobsen, City Manager

Background: During platting actions, the City often requires property owners to abandon water and sewer services that will go unused. This is common with lot line vacations or relocations. Water services are typically abandoned at the main (unless the main is under pavement), and sewer services are cut and capped at the property line.

We do this to prevent leaks on unused lines, and because our code generally only allows for one water and one sewer service per lot.

Purpose: With Homer's growing population and the need for more affordable housing, we should build in some flexibility for larger lots that have the realistic potential for future subdividing. This memo proposes setting criteria to be utilized on a case-by-case basis, to keep installed and capped services in place when it makes sense.

Justifications for Keeping Services on Larger Lot:

- Larger lots in Homer often have subdivision potential under current and future zoning code. Keeping the stubs in place preserves our existing infrastructure, avoids tearing up roads later for new installations, and supports orderly development.
- It saves future owners and the city significant time and money.
- Leak risks can be managed with proper installation, capping, bury depth, and marking which is already the standard practice.
- This approach is consistent with our code's goal of connecting properties to sewer systems and matches current practice for what we require for new subdivisions.

Conditions for an Exception: The Public Works Director would approve exceptions on a case-by-case basis during the plat review. A lot would typically qualify if it shows realistic potential for future subdivision based upon remaining undeveloped property and lot size minimums defined in code (backed by a site plan showing proposed construction of the lot) or is zoned for multi-use development.

Any exception would require:

1. Proper installation and watertight capping per City Standards.
2. Updated utility maps and clear notations on the site plan.
3. A provision that the services must be abandoned later if the lot is not subdivided within a reasonable time frame, or if future construction on the lot has inhibited it from future subdivision.

Conclusion: A strict abandonment rule works fine for small lots, but it creates unnecessary problems for larger parcels that are likely to be subdivided in the future. Adding this flexibility, with clear criteria and safeguards, will help developers and property owners reduce long-term costs, and support our housing goals.

Recommendation: Authorize Public Works to implement this policy on a case-by-case basis.