



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – September 11, 2019 Agenda Item 2

Work Session

Review of the Findings of the Impervious Area Study and Discussion of Possible Stormwater Rate Structure Changes

Recommended Council Action

Review key findings of the Impervious Area Study, review possible stormwater rate structure changes and discuss next steps

Context with Key Issues

On January 9, 2019, City Council received an overview of the Impervious Area Review Study completed by Black & Veatch. The consultant reviewed available Lidar data and GIS maps to identify the square footage of existing impervious area by lot and land use type. This analysis had not been performed since the original implementation of the Stormwater Utility Fee in 1996. As a result of the review, it was determined that the average impervious area for Single Family properties in the City is 2,116 sq ft. The prior figure was 1,228 sq ft. This figure represents the Equivalent Residential Unit or ERU, which is the basis for the stormwater fee. The difference in average impervious area on single family property lots is primarily due to improved data, rather than an actual increase in installation of impervious surfaces since the original determination.

Currently the City charges all single family properties the same stormwater utility fee (\$93) regardless of lot size or amount of impervious areas. Non-single-family properties, including multi-family, commercial and institutional property, are charged based on the amount of impervious area on their lot. The fee structure for those properties is calculated by dividing the actual impervious area of the property by the ERU and multiplying that number by the base fee of \$93.

The annual revenue generated by the fee is approximately \$700,000. Since the actual average impervious area is greater than previously used to calculate the annual fee, if the City were to use that new average for the ERU, the rate would need to increase or the fee structure would need to be revised in order to generate the annual revenue needed for the stormwater management program.

At the January 9 work session, several alternative rate structure options were discussed. Also discussed was a way to reward property owners who reduce the impact of stormwater from their property on the City's stormwater system and an interest in limiting the cost of stormwater fees for lower-income residents. The most direct way to meet these goals is to adopt a stepped rate structure, such as charging a fee for each 100 sq ft or 500 sq ft of impervious surface (rather than use a residential property impervious surface average) and giving a property owner the opportunity to reduce the charge if they reduce the impervious surface area. Because lower-income property owners generally own smaller properties, their costs can be lower than the current ERU fee.

Council Priority

Environmentally Sustainable Community; Fiscally Responsible Government

Environmental Considerations

All stormwater management programs are funded through revenue generated by the Stormwater Utility Fee. These programs include maintenance of existing systems as well as construction of new infiltration and treatment facilities for stormwater management. These programs are mandated by State and Federal law.

Fiscal Considerations

The Stormwater Utility Fee funds all activities the City undertakes for the management and treatment of stormwater. Ensuring that the fee structure is equitably assessed is essential to ensure the ongoing revenue necessary to provide that service.

Racial Equity Considerations

As the Council considers various stormwater fee options, racial equity impacts should be considered. For example, if there is an association between race and properties with less square footage of impervious surfaces, choosing an option that charges by amount of impervious surface could be more equitable than one that charges based on an average of all residential properties.

Attachments and Links

- [Impervious Area Review Study](#)