News Release - October 10, 2018 Stormwater fees

The City of Washington has drainage problems! That is nothing new. What is new is that the City Council is working to try to fix the problem.

TheCity'sstormwaterutility,formedbystatemandatein2004,islosingabout$80,000ayear.Mayor Joe Wellman commented, "Obviously the utility can't continue losing money, but more importantly, thereisnomoneytododrainageprojectsthatneedfixed."Thecity'sstormwaterratehasbeen$3.00 per month per utility customer for 14 years, and this generates only about $162,000 a year. "Per engineeringestimates,"Wellmancontinued,"theCityneedstoinvestmorethan$1.8milliontoinstall or repair drainage sewers and waterways over the next severalyears.

The Council has had to face this reality, and another reality is how to equitably share that cost .One option would be to increase everyone's flat rate. The disadvantage is that that would increase the unfairness between homeowners and others of varying property sizes .

The Council has spent the last year working with their consultants and accountants to derive a fairer system based on the amount of impervious surface property owners have. Impervious surfaces include rooftops, driveways and parking lots, all of which prohibit rainfall from seeping into the ground but instead discharges the run-off into the city's storm sewers and ditches.

"The fairest way to charge the fee," Wellman said, "is to charge a fee based on the amount of run-off eachpropertygeneratesasdeterminedbythesquarefootageofimpervioussurface."Afterconsidering variousalternatives,theCouncilfeelstheyhaveasystemthatisfairerbutlimitstherateshockforlarge non-residentialpropertiessuchasbusiness,school,not-for-profitandgovernmentbuildings.

Likemanyothercommunitiestryingtoaddressdrainage,feeswouldbebasedonthenumberof EquivalentResidentialUnits(ERU)anon-residentialpropertyhas.OneERUwillbedefinedasthe

averagesquarefootageofimpervioussurfaceahomeinthecityhas,establishedat2,558squarefeet. Single-family residential owners will be charged for one ERU, or $4.25, per month. Non-residential property owners will be charged the equivalent of $4.25 for every 2,558 square feet of impervious surface they have, with somelimits.

"The Council is concerned, though," Wellman said, "that this system alone would be unbearable for large institutions and businesses." In fact, the report presented to Council members at their meeting October9thbytheCity's consultantsindicatesthatthelargestnon-residentialpropertiesintheCity would pay as much as $1,162 per month. "That's not acceptable," Wellman said, speaking for the consensus of the Council members.

ThecompromisetheCouncil&itsadvisorshaveproposedisthatnon-residentialpropertyownerswould be assessed $4.25 per ERU with a maximum of $75.00 per month for contiguous parcels of land (or parcel groups) not separated by other real estate or public rights of way. If a property owner owns 10 parcels of land that are considered a parcel block for instance, the most that owner would pay per month would be $75.00. Some owners would pay more than that each month, though, if they own variousparcelsseparatedbypublicstreets,forinstance."Themonthlyfeewouldbecappedat$75per parcel block, not necessarily per owner," said Wellman.

In August Wellman sent a letter to non-residential utility customers explaining the proposed system to assist them in budgeting for 2019. The City has also set up a page on its website for non-residential property owners to visit to see what their total fee would be. The City has used information from the CountyAssessor'staxrecordstogeneratethefees.Theordinancetoimplementthenewsystemwillbe discussed by the Council over the next fewmeetings.

-----end----

[For further information, contact Wellman at 812/254-5575.]