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Stormwater Utility Program Fact Sheet

Purpose of Stormwater Utility Fee

All local governments in the metropolitan Atlanta area are required to manage stormwater under the federal Clean Water Act's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System. In 1990, the Federal Storm Water Phase I Rule became law and required local governments in metropolitan areas to develop Storm Water Management Programs. Union City is required to have an MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) which is a permit that establishes guidelines for governments to minimize pollutants in stormwater runoff to the "maximum extent possible". The City was issued an initial permit in 1994 and was reauthorized in 1999, 2004 and has recently been resubmitted for reauthorization for 2012. Permits require local governments to identify where the storm sewer systems discharge to creeks and streams, and to develop a comprehensive local stormwater management program to reduce pollutants entering the public storm sewer system including creeks and streams.

The City currently has several ordinances in place to address Stormwater Management including: Stormwater Management Ordinance; Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance; Post-Development Stormwater for New Developments and Redevelopment; Floodplain Management/Flood Damage Prevention; Illicit Discharge and Illegal Connection; Litter Control; Stream Buffer Protection and on-site inspections. A mechanism to fund this administration of these activities as well as stormwater infrastructure improvements is a Stormwater Utility (SWU).

The purpose of a Stormwater Utility is to generate funds to support the Stormwater Management program which would include maintenance of the drainage infrastructure, response to drainage complaints, repair of drainage system failures, capital improvement projects for drainage problems, capital projects for watershed protection and channel restoration and administration of the Stormwater Management Program. A stormwater utility user fee would require payment of a monthly fee proportional to the amount of impervious area compared to an ERU (Equivalent Residential Unit). In the metro Atlanta area fees range from around \$2.00 to \$8.00 per ERU per month.

An ERU is the average impervious area for single family dwellings. The average impervious area for Union City residential districts is 2,800 square feet and includes house area, driveway, sidewalks and patios. As a result of the Mayor and Council's recent adoption of a Stormwater Utility, the city would begin charging a monthly fee based on the ERU. Each single family dwelling unit would be billed one ERU regardless of lot size or house size. Multifamily developments would be billed as multiples of ERU based on the number of units or amount of impervious area. Commercial and Industrial entities would be billed as multiples of ERU based on impervious area.

Ways to get a credit against Stormwater Utility Fee

Stormwater structural controls are constructed stormwater management facilities designed to treat stormwater runoff and/or mitigate the effects of increased stormwater runoff peak rate, volume and velocity due to urbanization. These facilities include but are not limited to stormwater ponds, stormwater wetlands, bioretention areas, sand filters, infiltration trenches and enhanced swales. The following information summarizes the process for applying for a credit, the structural stormwater control facilities that are eligible for a credit, and the amount of credit that may be applicable. Applicants for a credit on their SWU fee must submit the attached application form and associated documentation. By submitting the completed application, the Property Owner indicates that he/she has reviewed the criteria for SWU fee credits and asserts that the property on the application form is eligible for a SWU credit.

The burden is on the property owner to provide the supporting documentation, which is described in the Stormwater Utility Rates Ordinance. Most of the disputes will be overestimated impervious surface area, which is pretty straightforward if they provide the required supporting documentation. Larger developments that have stormwater controls may also be looking for stormwater control credits, and that will require review by an engineer.

Two-step process: Appeals would go to that designated staff person first for a quick overview to assess the nature of the dispute. If it is related to impervious surface area it would be handled at that level. If it involves anything more, specifically regarding hydrologically-related concerns or stormwater control credits, will require review by an engineer.

Stormwater Control Credits

Developed land than other single-family dwelling units, including, but not limited to, multiple-family dwelling unit residential properties, manufactured home and mobile home parks, commercial, retail and office buildings, public buildings and structures, industrial and manufacturing buildings, storage buildings and storage areas covered with impervious surfaces, parking lots, parks and other recreational properties, public and private schools and universities, research facilities and stations, hospitals and convalescent centers, agricultural uses covered by impervious surfaces, and water and wastewater treatment plants and all other types of developed land except single-family dwelling units may receive a credit against the stormwater service fee applicable to the property. The stormwater utility service fee credit for on-site stormwater control systems or facilities that reduce or mitigate the impact of impervious surfaces on the subject property shall be proportional to the extent that the on-site stormwater control systems or facilities provided, operated, and maintained by the property owner meets or exceeds the city's development and performance standards contained in the stormwater utility service fee credit application and instructions and other requirements and conditions. The amount of the stormwater utility service fee credit shall not be related to the cost incurred by the property owner for performing, constructing, providing and/or maintaining such programs, systems, facilities, services and activities.