

## **STORMWATER UTILITY**

### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TO HELP ANSWER INQUIRIES FROM PROPERTY OWNERS**

#### **WHY AM I RECEIVING A BILL AGAIN?**

- 1) After the first stormwater bills were sent out (about 1 year ago) the Board of Commissioners held three Town Hall meetings to hear concerns and receive feedback on alternative stormwater funding solutions from Fayette citizens.
- 2) As a result of citizen comment in those meetings, the Commissioners called for a SPLOST initiative to rectify the County's failing stormwater infrastructure.
- 3) The countywide Infrastructure SPLOST was not approved. The Board of Commissioners is proceeding with "Plan B" for a stormwater funding solution that includes reworking Stormwater Utility program and revising credits.

#### **WHO VOTED FOR THIS? DID I?**

The Fayette County Board of Commissioners VOTED to form a stormwater utility on January 1, 2012. Since the utility charges a user-fee it did not require a vote by county citizens.

#### **I WAS NOT INFORMED ABOUT THE UTILITY?**

Realizing there was not proper notification after the first billing, the Board took steps to keep citizens informed.

- 1) All water system customers received a letter about the Stormwater Town Hall meetings held last spring.
- 2) A detailed listing of 181 projects scheduled in the SPLOST was distributed to all County libraries.
- 3) Four detailed press releases about these projects and the revising of the stormwater program were printed in both the Fayette Daily and Citizen newspapers.

#### **WHAT IS A STORMWATER UTILITY**

A stormwater utility is a financial organization whose ONLY purpose is to fund local stormwater services. It is illegal to use user-fees collected by the stormwater utility for any other purpose.

**WHAT IS THE STORMWATER FEE BASED UPON?** User fees are based upon the amount of impervious surfaces developed on each property such as rooftops and driveways.

**WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF IMPERVIOUS AREAS?** Impervious area includes roofs, driveways, sidewalks, patios and similar improvements.

#### **HOW IS THE FEE CALCULATED?**

- 1) All impervious area on your property is measured from 2010 aerial photography.
- 2) The area is rounded down to the nearest 1,000<sup>th</sup>. *Ex. 7.965 square feet is rounded down to 7,000 square ft.*
- 3) The rounded-down area is then divided by 1,000. This equals the "Equivalent Rate Unit" or ERU
- 4) The ERU is multiplied by the rate (.35 cents) and by 12 months. This number is the annual user fee.
- 5) Finally, any credit amount is subtracted from the annual user fee which equals the Total Bill.

$$(\text{Impervious Area}/1,000) \times 0.35 \times 12 \text{ months} - \text{Credits} = \text{Total Bill}$$

#### **HOW CAN I PAY MY BILL?**

- 1) At the Water System offices (245 McDonough Road) with cash, check, or money order.
- 2) By mail via check, or money order.
- 3) Online or via phone through the third party Paymentus Corporation.  
[http://www.fayettecountyga.gov/environmental\\_management/stormwater\\_utility.htm](http://www.fayettecountyga.gov/environmental_management/stormwater_utility.htm)
- 4) At a Water System drop box via check or money order. Locations are: Administrative Complex, Water System Office,
- 5) Some Wal-Mart payment centers also accept payment if the customer has their bill in hand.

#### **HOW OFTEN WILL I RECEIVE A BILL?** Yearly

The next bill for 2014 will be mailed before June.

#### **MY PROPERTY DOES NOT CONTRIBUTE TO RUNOFF. WHY DO I HAVE TO PAY?**

All property owners receive a benefit for properly maintained drainage systems underneath roads.

**MY BILL SHOWS A 2/5/10/20 ACRE CREDIT BUT I HAVE MORE/DIFFERENT ACREAGE. WHAT CAN BE DONE?**

The Board of Commissioners recognizes large lots often “buffer” the impacts of impervious area; so automatic credits have been applied to LARGE LOTS. The Board recently added the 10 and 20 acre credits in addition to the 2 and 5 acre credits already in place.

**HOW CAN I DISPUTE MY BILL?** A customer can dispute the credit, the amount of land they own, or the amount of impervious area. Please take their name and account number and notify them someone from the Environmental Management Department will review their property information.

**ISN'T THE STORMWATER FEE JUST ANOTHER TAX?**

Although a stormwater utility user fee is an additional cost, it is not a tax. All developed properties within unincorporated Fayette County including churches, schools, and county facilities will be assessed a stormwater user fee because they generate stormwater runoff and receive stormwater services. Also, increasing property taxes unfairly burdens the residents in Peachtree City and Fayetteville who already pay user fees to their own Stormwater Utilities.

**IS THE FEE TAX DEDUCTABLE?**

No. It is a user fee therefore not tax deductible.

**WHAT IS THE STORMWATER UTILITY PAYING FOR?**

- 1) The user fees will help cover the costs to repair, replace and maintain the County's stormwater infrastructure.
- 2) It will include some of the capital improvement projects listed in the SPLOST list (located on the County's web page)
- 3) It will help pay for replacement of failing pipes, cleaning dirt and debris out of storm drains and driveway culverts and solving drainage capacity problems.
- 4) **(It will not pay for driveway culvert replacement.)**

**HASN'T FAYETTE COUNTY BEEN PERFORMING THESE REPAIRS ALL THIS TIME?**

Yes, but with the majority of the stormwater infrastructure reaching the end of its life span (25 years for corrugated metal pipe) and no money consistently allocated for these repairs, the Board of Commissioners decided a utility was the fairest funding source.

**ARE CORRUGATED METAL PIPES STILL USED UNDER COUNTY ROADS?**

Current County regulations prohibit installing corrugated metal pipes; only concrete pipe can be installed under County roads and in the right-of-way.

**IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO REDUCE MY BILL?**

Credits are automatically applied to lots greater than 2 acres that have less than 10% developed property. Other user fee credits that may be available are outlined in the Stormwater Utility Credit Manual located on the County website. Also, one can be mailed to you.

**IS THERE A SENIOR CITIZEN DISCOUNT?** No.

**WHAY AM I BEING CHARGED FOR MY GRAVEL DRIVEWAY?**

All driveways and parking areas are considered impervious. However, since gravel areas typically have less runoff than concrete or asphalt they are billed at a reduced rate.

**WHAT IF I DON'T PAY MY BILL?**

Accumulating late fees (10% per year) are applied to overdue bills. Additionally, the county may pursue any remedy available by law to enforce and collect the user fee including late fees, court costs, attorney's fees and interest on the amount owed.

**I DON'T HAVE COUNTY WATER. WHY AM I BEING BILLED?**

All developed properties within unincorporated Fayette County will receive a bill regardless if the property owner use or don't use County water.