

## **Stormwater Stakeholders Advisory Group Minutes**

March 7, 2016 (5:00-7:00PM)

400 South Main Street, Blacksburg Motor Company Conference Room (BMC1)

### **Stakeholder Group Members Present**

Susan Anderson, Blacksburg Town Council

John Bush, Blacksburg Town Council

Lindsay West, Resident

Carolyn Howard, Draper Aden Associates

Andrew Kassoff, EEE Consulting, Chair

### **Not Present**

Joe Meredith, VT Corporate Research Center

Donna Gresh, HH Hunt Inc., Vice-Chair

### **Town Staff Present**

Kafi Howard, Town Engineer

Katherine Smith, GIS

### **Others Present**

John Burke, Environmental Program Manager - Town of Christiansburg

Javad Torabinejad, Citizen

## **Welcome and Introductions**

The meeting began at 5:08 pm. There were no new attendees to introduce at this meeting.

## **Review and Adopt Minutes**

The meeting minutes from February 22<sup>nd</sup> were approved.

## **Public Comment**

Mr. Torabinejad was present and spoke during the public comment period. He began by stating that he wanted to clarify that he was not a part of this committee. He explained that he is a citizen advocate and even though he is not allowed to participate, he appreciates the opportunity to listen. Mr. Torabinejad explained that he was happy that Blacksburg Estates stormwater fees are being looked at although issues may linger because of the mobile home park administration. He is concerned that there is a discrepancy between the way that the park is being charged and how the management is passing on the fees to the residents. Additionally, Mr. Torabinejad spoke about how the existing stormwater tier system is one source of discrimination that can easily be addressed.

Mr. Torabinejad spoke at length about credit systems in other jurisdictions and how there was a low instance of use of the residential credit. He provided detailed information on the contacts he spoke to, the stormwater utility structure and credit system for the following localities: Falls Church, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg, Richmond, Staunton and Roanoke.

Mr. Torabinejad continued by stating that he had taken information regarding all of the members in this room from the stormwater utility database provided to him. He looked at how a Roanoke-style stormwater utility would impact each of their bills. It would not change for the people in this room.

He feels that the tiers are unfair and it is only a matter of time before a legal challenge will occur. He also feels that there should be an incentive for stormwater stewardship such as Charlottesville's Conservation Program.

### **Single Family Tiers and How It Impacts Stormwater Revenue**

Staff introduced a presentation illustrating the impacts of establishing tiers for single family residences. Currently the stormwater utility fee for residential units is generated as one flat fee per residence. This results in the bulk (5843) of the stormwater bills being charged a fee of 6 dollars. Due to multiple residences, there are 291 bills for \$12 dollars, 57 bills for \$18 dollars and 55 bills of \$24 dollars. There are no bills greater than 24 dollars because residences that have more than 4 units are considered non-single family and are charged based on the tier table.

Staff explained that both Lynchburg and Richmond have tiers for their single family residential stormwater customers and they are structured similarly. Using these examples as a guideline, a single family tier for Blacksburg would be structured like the table below.

	Square Foot Range	1 ERU = 3300 sf	Charge/month	Number of Bills
Low Tier	0 - 1650	0.5 ERU and less	\$3.00	1163
Medium Tier	1651 – 4950	> 0.5 – 1.6 ERU	\$6.00	3953
High Tier	4951 - greater	> 1.6 ERU	\$9.60	842

If this tiers structure were established it would result in an annual loss of \$45,458 dollars. It would decrease the bill for almost 1200 customers and increase the bill for over 800. There would be a significant change to the structure of the single family billing system to switch from a flat fee per unit to a fee based on the impervious number. Because the existing system is billed and based on the meter, some of these multiple unit structures would have to have their bills adjusted to split the tiered charge across the multiple meters associated with the structure. For example, a four-unit townhome that fell within the high tier would have four bills of \$2.40.

A committee member asked if we continue to add complexity to the utility structure by adding single family residential tiers, would it not be more equitable to go straight to a smaller ERU, like Roanoke. Another committee member responded with the concern that the original desire for the utility was to keep it simple. This was done for a reason. Analyzing each bill similar to Roanoke may not be hard, but it could be rather time consuming. The committee member feels that they should look to staff to communicate whether this is reasonable to take on. The Town of Christiansburg representative discussed a Black and Veatch study of stormwater utilities nationwide and read details from it. It stated that nationwide, 67% of stormwater utilities use a flat rate for single family residences, 25% use a tiered

system for single family, and 6% look at the individual impervious coverage for each parcel. Mr. Torabinejad asked if he could speak and was told that he could not by a committee member. Mr. Torabinejad departed the meeting. A committee member suggested that we initiate a 5 – 10 minute time limit on public comment for the next meeting.

### **Administrative Analysis of Roanoke City's Stormwater Utility**

Staff presented the results of a discussion with Dwayne D'Ardenne regarding the level of administration that Roanoke City maintains for its stormwater utility. Mr. D'Ardenne was invited to visit this committee to speak directly to the group, but declined at this time. He said that in a few months when things calm down he would be willing to come speak, if needed. Mr. D'Ardenne explained to staff that there are 33 full time employees in the Stormwater Division, which is part of the City's Public Works department. Twelve of these positions are supervisory and administrative and 21 of these positions are field technicians and operators. Credit applications are reviewed by the Planning Department. Impervious associated with new construction is entered by the GIS department and aerial photography is flown every year to maintain the existing impervious database. Staff provided a brief look at Roanoke City's revenue and expenditures and expected increases in the stormwater fee.

To contrast, staff explained that in the Town of Blacksburg, there is one stormwater engineer, one stormwater inspector and a three person crew in Public Works that provides maintenance for the stormwater system. The public works crew is not dedicated to stormwater. They have to help provide other services such as leaf collection and snow removal when there is need. There are no administrative staff persons for stormwater and no known plans to increase staff.

### **Stormwater Credit Alternatives**

Staff presented a presentation discussing some options for providing credits for single family residential lots. The state code was quoted. It states, *"A locality adopting such a system shall provide for full or partial waivers of charges to any person who installs, operates, and maintains a stormwater management facility that achieves a permanent reduction in stormwater flow or pollutant loadings. The locality shall base the amount of the waiver in part on the percentage reduction in stormwater flow or pollutant loadings, or both, from pre-installation to post-installation of the facility."* Staff discussed that if the Town continues limiting the minimum bill to \$6.00, it is not providing for partial waivers of charges to a large amount of our bill payers. Slides were shown that illustrated a few examples of single family stormwater structures that have recently been put in place that are fully engineered. These types of facilities did not exist when the original utility credit guidelines were discussed by the committee. Only since July 1, 2014 has the frequency of the on-lot stormwater facilities become more common.

A committee member asked to confirm that the stormwater features shown only treated the stormwater from that specific lot. The committee member remarked at how large they were. Staff confirmed that these are not designed to treat anything but the runoff from the roof and driveway of one house. Staff showed a list of additional practices that could qualify for stormwater credits. A

committee member asked if it would be considered unfair if we applied a less stringent standard for the credits achieved by single family as compared to the standard for the credits achieved by the commercial sector. For example, what if Kroger complained about the expense to achieve its credits and in comparison a single family home only had to install a rain barrel. The committee agreed that if residential credits are to be offered, it should be as consistent as possible.

A committee member identified that other localities use the standards in the Virginia Stormwater Clearinghouse and the Chesapeake Bay guide for home ownership as the requirements for installation of BMPs for credits. Their guides have the necessary detail to provide the consistency that we are looking for. The method to provide these credits was discussed, either lowering the bill or providing a refund at the end of the year after Town inspections occurred.

A slide showing some additional options for non-single family credit alternatives was shown to the group. These credit alternatives were not standard nor were they all proven to permanently reduce the stormwater burden. The committee felt that they had merit, but had more concerns regarding consistency.

#### **Quick Update on Blacksburg Estates**

By committee request, staff presented an illustration of the most recent billing rate for the Blacksburg Estates Mobile Home Park. Recently, a developer has purchased a large portion of the site. As a result, Blacksburg Estates has moved all of its occupied homes from the “for sale” property to the remaining property. This resulted in a reduction in stormwater fees from \$727.27 to \$545.45. Staff confirmed the number of occupied structures in the park totaled 113. The average stormwater fee would be approximately \$4.83 per building.

#### **Identification of Future Discussion Items**

The meeting wrapped up with the items to address in the next meeting. The goal will be to make final decisions on all of the discussed options (these are listed below for committee reference). Staff will provide draft language for enabling the single family credits. The next meeting is on **March 21, 2016**. Staff agreed to send a reminder out to all committee members.

#### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:22 pm.