

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 3, 2013

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

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Introduction and First Reading. Consideration. Passage on First Reading of an Ordinance to Amend the Requirements for Storm Water Discharge and Grading Plans

..BODY

ISSUE: Consideration of an ordinance to amend Section 5-6-224 of the City Code to allow alternative methods of storm and subsoil water discharge, establish an expiration date for grading plans and require amendments to approved grading plans to be processed for approval.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council pass the ordinance on first reading and set it for public hearing, second reading and final passage on Saturday, April 13.

DISCUSSION: Section 5-6-224 of the City Code addresses methods for disposing of storm and subsoil water, as well as spelling out the provisions for submitting grading plans for approval to the Department of Transportation & Environmental Services (T&ES). Staff is recommending two minor changes to this section of Code.

Sump Pump Discharge

The code section lays out specific requirements for connecting storm water and ground water, including from roofs and sump pumps, directly to the City's storm sewer system. This connection is required for all properties located within 100 feet of a storm sewer for single family residential properties. The requirement ensures that runoff of this type does not flow directly onto neighboring properties, creating a nuisance and potentially flooding adjacent structures. It also ensures that this runoff does not accumulate in the street and freeze during the winter, creating a safety hazard for vehicles and pedestrians.

In some cases, however, an environmental benefit may be achieved by not connecting the storm or ground water to the storm sewer, such as allowing the water to infiltrate into the existing yard or be collected in a rain barrel for reuse. The proposed change will allow the Director of T&ES to permit alternative means of disposal when it can be shown to provide an environmental benefit. In each case, the Director will first determine that no nuisance will be created if the

storm or ground water is not connected to the storm sewer. Staff anticipates that fewer than twenty permit applications per year will meet the environmental benefit criteria without creating a nuisance on adjacent properties or in the public right of way. In addition, staff is recommending that the code be modified to allow storm water from roof drains to be discharged to the gutter or street at the Director's discretion. This will avoid more costly connections to the storm sewer for roof drains, which only discharge water during rain events, when the street and gutter are already wet. However, the Director may decide not to permit this type of connection in areas that are very flat and subject to ponding and/or freezing.

Grading Plans

In February, 2008, City Council approved changes to City Code Section 5-6-224 to amend the requirements for submitting grading plans associated with construction activity on individual lots, primarily associated with single family homes and additions. These changes were made in response to a large number of complaints associated with the construction of new homes or large additions resulting in changed drainage patterns, re-grading, installation of new sump pumps and roof drains and the denuding of vegetated areas on the property. Given lot sizes and topography in Alexandria, changes in drainage systems and patterns on one lot can have a negative impact on neighboring properties. Since the implementation of the new grading plan requirements, staff has been able to better regulate the impacts of this type of construction.

At this time, staff would like to add two provisions to the grading plan requirements. First, staff would like to establish that the grading plan approval is valid for a period of three years from the date of approval. This time frame is consistent with the term of validity for site plans. Providing an expiration date on the plans will require construction activities to follow the current requirements and best practices for land disturbance and storm water management. The proposed changes also provide for an extension, and include an extension fee of \$100 to cover the staff time associated with reviewing the plan and any necessary updates. Staff is not proposing to increase the initial plan review fee of \$500. The second proposed change to the requirements for grading plans is requiring that changes to the approved grading plan be reflected on an amended plan. This will ensure that a record set of plans represents the actual improvements made to a property. No fee is proposed for these amendments.

FISCAL IMPACT: The anticipated revenue associated with the addition of an extension fee for grading plans is expected to be minimal. Staff expects to receive approximately five requests for extensions in a given year, resulting in total increased revenue of \$500.

ATTACHMENT:

Attachment 1: Ordinance Cover

Attachment 2: Ordinance

STAFF:

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager

Christopher Spera, Deputy City Attorney

Richard J. Baier, Director, Transportation & Environmental Services

Emily A. Baker, City Engineer, Transportation & Environmental Services