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April 15 Budget Hearing
Item 10 – Stormwater Fee Increase

Hello Mr. Mayor and members of City Council

I am John Hill, a resident of Rosemont and a member of the Ad Hoc Committee on Stormwater Flooding.

I am here to voice my strong support to the 5% increase in the Stormwater Fee.

The fee is an important investment in the future of our city.

In the past five years, Alexandria has seen 6 severe flooding events – not just 10-year rain storms -- but some of these storms should only occur once every 50 years. And scientists predict it is going to get worse. The National Weather Service predicts that we will see a 30% to 40% increase in severe rainstorms over the next several decades.¹

Think about that for a moment. Alexandria's Flood Action program was launched when we had two back-to-back flooding events in the summer of 2018. And another pair of back-to-back flooding events in summer of 2020.

In my neighborhood of Rosemont we had barely cleaned up after one rainstorm when we were hit again a few weeks later. Could you imagine when that becomes three flooding events each summer? That is the future that climate change is creating for us.

Fortunately, Alexandria has put together a bold plan to address stormwater flooding. Although a lot of small projects are actively underway -- the Capital Plan for Stormwater includes 12 large multi-year capacity-building projects that address the most flood-prone areas. That part of the plan – the big projects to fundamentally improve Alexandria's ability to move stormwater --that part has barely begun. Only 2 of these big projects have begun the design phase...no construction has actually started yet².

So far, no funds have been expended on the other ten projects. That's why the stormwater fee is so important. A steady and reliable source of funding – not just in one year – but year-over-year for a decade or more is required if these large projects are to become reality.

There is another – perhaps more powerful reason to invest in stormwater infrastructure now. It's not getting any cheaper. The cost of large public works projects is increasing faster than the rate of inflation.

At a national level – the cost of water-related infrastructure has increased almost 50% in the past ten years³. To put that in perspective – the Consumer Price Index has increased 30% during that same period ⁴. This trend is likely to continue. This data reveals an inconvenient truth – delaying an investment in infrastructure will ultimately increase the cost that Alexandria residents will have to pay for flood resilient neighborhoods.

The flooding problem in Alexandria grew slowly over the past few decades as rainstorms became more severe and our storm sewers were under-funded. The Flood Action plan

developed by the City in 2021 changed that. The city now has a plan that will address the flooding problem head-on.

Increasing the Stormwater Fee to at least keep pace with inflation is essential to make the Flood Action plan a reality.

Thank You.

Sources:

1. Climate.gov from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, "Prepare for more downpours", by Michon Scott, July 10 2019.
2. City of Alexandria, "Flood Action Projects Dashboard", as of April 2023
3. US Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, "Construction Cost Trends", 3/3/2023
4. US Bureau of Labor Statistics, "CPI Historical Tables for US Cities(Average)"