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\_Attachment 2  
Stormwater Utility  
Public Outreach Framework-  
draft final

City of Alexandria, Transportation and Environmental Services

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## 1. Overview, Goals and Objectives

The Public Outreach Framework provides the basic outline for the City of Alexandria's (City) outreach to inform and educate the public, and to receive input from City residents and community on the overall structure of the proposed Stormwater Utility (SWU) program. The Public Outreach Framework provides the basic structure to actively seek the involvement of City residents and members of the community in creating a collaborative process to form the essential structure for the SWU program. As such, this document is to be used as the overall basic framework of the outreach strategy, allowing the refinement of the outreach process to be incorporated into a more detailed outreach approach. The framework calls for reaching out directly to City residents at large and members of City organizations that are stakeholders and will likely be affected by the stormwater utility fee. The components of this framework are consistent with requirements in § 15.2-2114 of Code of Virginia, the guidance provided in the City's *What's Next Alexandria* Handbook for Civic Engagement and accepted practices.

The specific **goals** for the City's Public Outreach Framework are to:

1. **Inform.** Increase resident awareness of stormwater program requirements including, but not limited to: Chesapeake Bay unfunded mandates and water quality issues, and opportunities for public participation;
2. **Educate.** Develop basic knowledge or understanding of the SWU program and the potential effects of the structure among stakeholders; and
3. **Be Responsive.** Awareness, consideration and responsiveness on the part of the City about stakeholders' views on the program and program objectives.

The **objectives** that describe how the City will go about implementing these goals include:

1. **Open and transparent public participation.** Establish and sustain an open and transparent public participation process that informs, educates and gathers feedback from residents and community.
2. **Create awareness and increase knowledge.** Create awareness of stormwater management and water quality issues and increase residents' knowledge of the City's ongoing initiatives to protect the environment, enhance water quality and improve quality of life in the community and how the City intends to fund the stormwater program.
3. **Facilitate two-way communication.** Create opportunities for two-way communication that enables residents to provide input and ask questions on the program structure.
4. **Balance expectations.** Balance residents' expectations on the utility rate, level of service and stormwater program regulatory and other requirements.

## 2. Stakeholders

The City's Department of Transportation and Environmental Services and other departments, including the Office of Management and Budget, Department of Finance, and Office of Communications and Public Information, and Information Technology Services will manage this outreach and communicate with residents as external stakeholders during development of

the SWU program. Emphasis will be placed on outreach to residents in the following groups: Alexandria residents at large, community and business groups, members of commissions and committees, members of faith-based and non-profit organizations, and the owner of a parcel(s) with significant impervious area.

In addition to reaching City residents at large, potential residents and groups to be targeted include, but are not limited to:

- Environmental Policy Commission
- Budget & Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee
- Alexandria Chamber of Commerce and other business groups
- Alexandria Faith-Based and Non-Profit Organizations
- Large property owner(s) in Alexandria and
- Alexandria homeowner, condominium, civic, and citizens' associations

### 3. Key Messages

The purpose of using key messages is to ensure that the information disseminated to the public is consistent with the outreach goals, and includes the following:

1. The SWU supports the City's longstanding leadership role as a good environmental steward, with respect to water quality.
2. How a SWU supports the requirement for the City to significantly increase funding for the environment and stormwater due to new regulatory changes.
3. The SWU will help the City to be able to fund stormwater needs including complying with regulatory mandates to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment from stormwater discharges to meet state and federal water quality laws and regulations.
4. The SWU will fund substantial stormwater infrastructure and programmatic investment over the long term.

### 4. Phases of Outreach

The City's Environmental Policy Commission (EPC) studies, makes recommendations, and conducts public forums to introduce ideas and gather input on the environmental impact of various projects and program initiatives in Alexandria. Given that the EPC includes diverse representation of interests across all stakeholder categories described in Section 2, the City anticipates working closely with the EPC during all each phase of public outreach. Its role as a resource and facilitative group will complement other engagement efforts. Staff will reach residents by coordinating with the Environmental Policy Commission (EPC) to hold a public forum, providing an opportunity for City staff and the EPC to hear and respond to public comment on an SWU prior to the issue being considered by City Council.

Forms of outreach will include in-person presentational workshops to civic and business groups, and use other outreach methods, including but not limited to: online tools such as AlexEngage, eNews, the City's website, the City's social media platforms, online news media, and forums; and traditional print materials such as newsletters, newspaper notices and brochures. City leadership will be briefed by staff before the start of each phase.

#### **4.1 Phase 1: Establishment of Basic SWU Structure (Spring – Fall CY2016)**

The goal of this phase is to create the basic structure for the Stormwater Utility program through engaging residents and the community. Phase 1 would conclude in fall 2016 (October/November) when City Council would consider a resolution establishing the basic SWU structure.

Phase 1 will emphasize a public education component on the basics of stormwater management (Stormwater 101) and a discussion of the regulatory mandates to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment from stormwater discharges to meet Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements as embodied in the City's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) general permit issued by Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Additional components will emphasize aspects of the City's stormwater program likely to be funded by a utility, and solicit feedback from residents on the initial structure for the utility. A variety of outreach tools will be used to disseminate this information, to include staff engagement of resident groups through presentations. Outreach efforts will also highlight opportunities for residents to participate in the process of creating the structure for the utility.

The phase will culminate with City staff and the EPC holding a public forum in early fall to solidify the basic SWU structure. The public forum will occur prior to bringing the basic SWU structure before the City Council in fall 2016 for consideration of a resolution establishing the basic structure.

#### **4.2 Phase 2: Creation of Billing Process & Initial Credit Policy (Winter CY2016 – Spring CY2017)**

The intent of Phase 2 is to build upon initial civic engagement opportunities with the goal being refinement of the billing structure and credit policy, which is a mechanism to recognize that certain actions may reduce the costs of public stormwater services over time. This phase would culminate in adoption of the stormwater utility as part of the FY2018 budget process and would include work sessions or budget-related presentations about the utility.

Phase 2 outreach will occur using a variety of civic engagement tools and will continue to highlight opportunities for stakeholders have to participate in this process. Establishment of an initial credit policy will focus on properties that have installed stormwater management facility best management practices (BMPs) as a condition of development, the amount of credit to be applied to the fee, and the process for applying for credit. Following the formation of the City's initial credit policy structure, staff will brief the City Council in a budget-related work session or oral discussion. This phase includes FY2018 budget adoption and City Council consideration of establishment of a stormwater utility.

#### **4.3 Phase 3: Finalization of Administrative Processes (Fall CY2017)**

This phase of the outreach would occur following City Council's consideration of a SWU program as the preferred strategy to fund the City's Stormwater Program needs, and prior to the notification to the community of the first billing cycle. (If Council chooses another option or defers establishment of a utility, this phase would be amended.) If a SWU is adopted, the goal of Phase 3 would be to provide relevant information for the implementation related to billing details, FAQs, and other aspects of implementation as applicable. If it occurs, this phase would culminate with a City Council update on the SWU administration process.

#### **4.4 Phase 4: First Billing & Implementation Check-In (Winter CY2017 & Ongoing As Needed)**

Phase 4 would be an ongoing civic engagement process with stakeholders about the continued implementation of the utility, focused on the consideration and incorporation of additional strategies into the credit policy. Notification to the community and the first SWU bills will go out in FY2018.