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Title:	Introduction and First Reading. Consideration of Passage on First Reading of an Ordinance to increase the Stormwater Utility Fee by amending Article C (STORMWATER UTILITY) to Chapter 6 (WATER AND SEWER) of Title 5 (TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES).		
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Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 20, 2021

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:
Introduction and First Reading. Consideration of Passage on First Reading of an Ordinance to increase the Stormwater Utility Fee by amending Article C (STORMWATER UTILITY) to Chapter 6 (WATER AND SEWER) of Title 5 (TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES).

ISSUE: Consideration of measures to urgently enhance City flooding response efforts including a phased in increase in the stormwater utility fee rate to $280 from $140 per billing unit to accelerate delivery of storm sewer capacity capital improvement projects.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

1. Indicate its commitment to an aggressive approach to addressing flood mitigation on an accelerated basis through increased system maintenance and a substantial additional capital investment in stormwater capacity infrastructure;

2. Adopt the resolution (Attachment 7) to establish an Ad Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Group;

3. Adopt the proposed ordinance on first reading which phases in a two-step increase in the current stormwater utility fee of $140 per billing unit by $70 to $210 in June of 2021 and by another $70 to $280 in November of 2021, and schedule it for second reading, public hearing and final adoption on February 20, 2021; and

4. Provide guidance to the City Manager to reflect this aggressive approach in the forthcoming FY 2022 Proposed Operating Budget and the FY 2022 to FY 2031 Capital Improvement Program.

BACKGROUND: In September 2020, in response to three flash flooding events (July 8, 2019; July 23, 2020; and largely September 2, 2020) as a result of climate change-induced severe rain events, the City Manager established an Interdepartmental Strike Team Flooding Management Task Force to urgently develop plans to address flooding-related policy, planning, and funding issues. The team included representation from 11 City departments. The Task Force has now submitted its initial recommendations, many of which reflect resident input from an extensive, ongoing neighborhood outreach effort. They also address, at my request, the identification of needed capital investments, staffing levels, operating program enhancements, project prioritization, funding strategies, legislative requests and immediate actions to expand the City's flood warning sign and rain gauge program, and overall communication.

Following City Council's November 16 work session apparent directive to be *more aggressive in funding, maintaining, and constructing storm sewer capacity projects*, the primary Task Force recommendation is to phase in a substantial increase in the City's stormwater utility fee from $140 per billing unit to $210 per billing unit in June, 2021, and to $280 per billing unit in November 2021. Given Council guidance to accelerate project delivery, staff propose the updated rate be effective upon approval of the attached ordinance with billing to occur in two phases, beginning this June. The first bills reflecting an increase would be due by June 15, 2021 (still FY 2021) - and the second by November 15, 2021 (FY 2022). This would generate a total of approximately $14.8 million this calendar year. Immediate funding authorization would allow the City to start adding staff and resources now to urgently accelerate storm sewer capacity projects, spot improvements and system maintenance. Given the urgency of the situation it is recommended that Council act now, so staff recruitment and project planning does not lose six months waiting for the annual budget process decision making. In total, the plan proposes to increase capital funding for capacity projects to approximately $170 million over 10 years (a 750% increase from previously approved funding levels).

The Stormwater Utility Fee Table included as Attachment 3 demonstrates the increase on ratepayers. The fee is billed to all real property owners as a separate line item on real estate tax bills, half in May (due June) and half in October (due November). Properties that do not pay real estate tax receive a bill for just the stormwater utility fee. The fee is more equitable since it is based on a property's impervious area, or hard surfaces like roofs and driveways, that don't let rain runoff soak into the ground and generate stormwater runoff. The City groups ratepayers into two categories: Residential and Non-Residential.

Residential customers pay according to a flat or tiered system. A typical, single-family detached property owner's current semiannual fee is $70 ($140/year) and is defined as the 'billing unit,' with smaller properties such as condominiums and townhomes paying a fraction of the billing unit. If Council approves the fee

increase, the semiannual fee will increase by 50% to $105 in May and an additional 50% to $140 in October.

Non-residential property owners such as commercial or industrial properties, apartment buildings and non-profit or faith-based properties are variable using site specific information to calculate the total impervious area on a property. These rate increases are also shown on Attachment 3. One example shows churches that currently pay $1,300 to $15,000 per year (in semiannual payments of $650 to $7,500) would be billed $975 to $11,250 in May and $1,300 to $15,000 in October.

CREATION OF AN ADVISORY GROUP: During the January 12 public meeting, Councilman Chapman brought forward a proposed resolution (Attachment 7) which would create an Ad Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Group. Similar to the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Ad Hoc Advisory Group, this Stormwater group would be to monitor the planning and implementation progress including that of major capacity projects, spot improvements and increased system maintenance. The group would also advise on future stormwater utility fee rates, after considering annual operating and capital budget proposals. This group as envisioned would serve as a central body for receipt and dissemination of information for the City's flood mitigation implementation efforts. The group would have a membership of 9 persons with representation from civic associations in the affected areas, citywide interests, as well as include some persons with experience and technical knowledge.

DISCUSSION: The recommendations of the Task Force are summarized below in three areas (Budget, Programs & Legislation, and Early Warning & Communications):

- **Recommendation #1 (Budget):** Approve a 100% Stormwater Utility (SWU) Fee rate increase with additional, varying much smaller increases in subsequent fiscal years for the Stormwater Management Utility 10-Year Plan to fund needed capital and operating investments for capacity and maintenance projects. This increase would allow the City to reprioritize existing CIP projects by accelerating funding for stormwater capacity and maintenance projects and prioritizing and accelerating planned and new CIP projects. This recommendation includes:
  - Acknowledgement that City Council's recent (December 6, 2020) appropriation of $2 million accelerated urgent capital and maintenance projects for FY 2021.
  - A phased in increase in the SWU fee billing unit rate from $140 to $210 to $280 in FY 2022 and a projection (Attachment 4) for subsequent 5% annual increases in FY 2023 and FY 2024. In FY 2025, increases to the fee and debt service will be implemented to continue accelerating prioritized projects.
  - Shifting a significant portion of funding from water quality capital projects that address Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load cleanup mandates to stormwater capacity capital projects that address flooding, while maintaining regulatory compliance.
  - Acceleration of the fee rate: To reflect the urgent need, staff recommends increasing the fee immediately. The SWU fee is billed two times a year at the bi-annual rate by including it as a line item on the real estate bill. The updated rate would be effective upon approval, with the first bills with the 50% increased fee ($140 to $210) mailed in May 2021, and the second increase of $210 to $280 mailed in October 2021. Changing the rate to be effective upon approval would generate approximately $6.3 million in revenue from the May billing rather than the previously anticipated $4.25 million and another $8.5 million from the October billing. The fee would be billed as shown Attachment 3.
  - The previous inclusion of the annual review of the fee by City Council and effective date in the ordinance unnecessarily dictated administrative aspects of the fee. There is no statutory requirement for a formal fee review and the SWU fee is effectively reviewed by City Council annually during the budget process. In addition, the proposed ordinance language grants City Council more flexibility in the review and administration of the fee.

The recommended SWU fee increase follows Council guidance to be aggressive and accelerate project delivery to address the following flood mitigation elements:

- Solutions in 11 under-capacity areas, including the Hooffs Run Culvert, by programming $170 million in capital funding for capacity projects over 10 years, a 750% increase from previously-approved funding levels. (See Attachment 5 which also responds to Council guidance to include a schedule of delivery for proposed capital capacity projects.)
- Accelerate funding for spot projects by $2 million annually to increase delivery to about 8 to 11 projects annually (from about 3 to 5 projects), to move faster on the additional projects being identified during ongoing neighborhood meetings.
- Increase stream and channel maintenance by $0.4 million annually to maintain the City's flood channels' conveyance capacity by performing more frequent sediment removal from the increased accumulation caused by more intense storm events.
- Increase funding for stormwater infrastructure maintenance and State of Good Repair by $1.5 million annually.
- Increase staffing capacity by 12 new positions (engineers, project managers, inspectors and equipment operators) in T&ES as well as in DPI in order to deliver accelerated capital projects and perform aggressive system maintenance.

➢ **Recommendation #2 (Programs &Legislation):** Develop programs that incentivize flood mitigation on private property, including a City-sponsored pilot grant program and ongoing technical assistance support for residents. Additionally, the City should support State legislation that provides authority and funding to support localities dealing with the impacts of inland and urban flooding, including legislation that:

- Expands the City's authority to implement a citywide grant program for projects on private property
- Increases Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) funding and revises funding proposal scoring criteria to account for water quantity needs.
- Authorizes a Joint Subcommittee on Inland and Urban Flooding.
- Provides local authority to regulate additions/modifications to single family detached residential structures where land disturbance is less than 2,500 square feet.

➢ **Recommendation #3 (Early Warning & Communications):** Enhance the City's flood early warning systems by taking the following actions by summer 2021:

- Add new stream and flow gauges to increase flood monitoring
- Upgrade the City's rainfall data collection capabilities and flood warning systems
- Enhance the City's alert capabilities to reach more residents in the event of an emergency
- Increase flood-related weather watches, advisories, and warnings
- Explore a real-time, public-facing rain and stream gauge dashboard
- Expand flood warning road signage

Additionally, the Task Force recommends the City implement an enhanced communications strategy related to flooding in Alexandria, including the following actions (with timetable in the memo text below):

- Adopt a program identity (tentatively named "Be Flood Ready Alexandria")
- Create a streamlined landing webpage for flooding information
- Establish a periodic eNewsletter on flooding issues, information, and resources
- Update Alex311 to facilitate residents' ability to report flooding issues
- Host community meetings with affected neighborhoods to hear feedback from residents and share the

latest information on flooding
- Offer technical assistance to residents and businesses who have experienced flooding on their property
- Expand social media engagement
- Develop an enhanced stormwater project tracker

Interdepartmental Strike Team Flooding Management Task Force Report
The Task Force objective was to produce a written report to the City Manager by the end of 2020 that provides interdepartmental staff recommendations addressing identification of needed capital investments, staffing levels, operating program enhancements, project prioritization, funding strategies, legislative requests and immediate actions to expand the City's flood warning sign and rain gauge program, and overall communication.

The team assembled three subcommittees (Budget, Legal/Legislative and Early Warning & Communications) that each convened periodically to discuss assigned topics, review input from neighborhood meetings with affected residents and identify action items. The subcommittees reported back to the larger Interdepartmental Flooding Management Task Force on a biweekly basis to seek broader input and refine recommendations. Each subcommittee report-out is below.

Budget Subcommittee
The Budget Subcommittee discussed funding strategies and priorities that incorporate feedback and information from residents, neighborhood engagement, Alex311 service requests, onsite investigations, as well as direction from City Council. Detailed recommendations on the acceleration, funding, and prioritization of capital and maintenance projects include:

- *Immediate Funding.* At the start of the team's investigation, $2 million in a loan was proposed by the City Manager and approved by Council to begin to accelerate urgent capital and maintenance projects in FY 2021. These funds have already been used to begin heavy cleaning of the Hooffs Run Culvert. The Task Force proposes to use the remaining funds to accelerate infrastructure planning, provide enhanced outreach and perform other critical maintenance.
- *Acceleration and Aggressive Implementation of Capacity Projects.* The previous recommendation presented to City Council on November 16 included an increase of approximately $110 million for capacity projects and the implementation of nine projects using a 10-year storm design standard. At that meeting, Council directed staff to address more problem areas more aggressively, accelerate capacity project implementation to complete more projects sooner, consider a higher design standard to increase infrastructure capacity and resiliency, anticipate land acquisition, and consider public-private partnerships. This report therefore recommends Council:
    - Increase the SWU fee in two phases from $140 to $210 to $280 by late FY 2021 (with additional increases in subsequent years to boost project delivery)
    - Increase bonding with a focus on the near term, and
    - Shift approximately $31.5 million from water quality projects to capacity projects.

Below is a summary of proposed funding for 11 capacity projects in FY 2022 to FY 2031 (see Attachment 5). The projects are categorized by (a) those scheduled for design and construction from FY 2022 to FY 2025 and (b) those scheduled for years FY 2026 to FY 2031. The above actions would provide over $170 million over 10 years for capacity project design and construction. The focus would be on accelerating project delivery in the near term, with design funding for the top three prioritized projects available in FY 2022. Additionally, funding would account for:

- Intent to design projects for capacity greater than 10-year storms (up to 25-year storms) with ongoing cost-benefit analysis

- Property acquisition
- Possible public-private partnerships
- Design and cost contingencies
- A mix of strategies, including conveyance, storage, and green infrastructure to address capacity and climate resiliency

Sustainability, Green Infrastructure & Low Impact Development

These large-scale stormwater capacity projects include a mix of strategies, such as conveyance, storage, and green infrastructure to address both capacity and climate resiliency. However, it is important to note that low impact development retrofits, property acquisition, and public/private partnerships will also be considered. Concurrent to the development of critical, near-term projects, staff intends to investigate non-standard flood mitigation solutions and coordinate with stormwater planners who have had success in similar coastal communities. Reducing unnecessary impervious area, encouraging more infiltration, retrofitting on private property, and providing innovative, green solutions are critical parts of a comprehensive solution.

FY 2022 to FY 2025 Projects

The top projects were prioritized based on planning-level cost-benefit analysis and identified capacity issues. *These projects will mitigate flooding for the greatest number of residents, direct investment to areas where the most significant property damage is occurring and provide the greatest overall system benefit.* The prioritization sequence incorporates multiple data points such as the previous (2016 planning-level) storm sewer and capacity analysis, property impacts documented through Alex311 service requests, refinement of those priorities through recent and ongoing neighborhood engagement meetings, and infrastructure connectivity from a systems perspective. These inputs were used to further prioritize capacity issues compared against reported issues and feedback from neighborhood groups. This prioritization includes a systematic (holistic, watershed) perspective to provide the needed capacity (conveyance and storage as practicable) that must first ensure downstream capacity is adequate before upstream issues can be addressed. For large capacity capital projects that are costly, multi-year projects at the multi-block level, there is a greater level of certainty of project sequencing for the first three to four years. The estimated funding for the top three capacity projects is as follows:

1. Commonwealth Ave and Glebe Road: Design Fully Funded in FY 2022 and Construction Fully Funded in FY 2023. Planning level estimate of $34 million.

2. Ashby Street and Glebe Road: Design Fully Funded in FY 2022 and Construction Fully Funded in FY 2024. Planning level estimate of $16 million.

3. Hooffs Run Culvert Bypass: Design Fully Funded in FY 2022 and Construction Fully Funded in FY 2025. Planning level estimate of $60 million.

Project schedules are developed early in the project lifecycle during project scoping. While project design typically lasts about 1 to 2 years, and construction takes at least another 1 to 2 years, the feasibility and complexity of design and construction for these large infrastructure projects will factor into final project delivery.

Projects 1 and 2 focus investments into the highest priority under-capacity areas. Project 3 (the Hooffs Run Culvert Bypass) is important from a systems perspective given the potential positive impact on other upstream priority areas in the Hooffs Run watershed.

All planning and modeling to date is based on conceptual cost estimates and preliminary assessments, so there

is considerable risk that costs could be higher than anticipated. During the design of the first three projects, staff will conduct further cost-benefit analysis of including additional flood mitigation and resiliency in the design of future capacity projects to determine the potential positive impact of designing these projects beyond the City's 10-year storm design standard. It should be noted that even if the City designs capacity projects for larger, more intense storm events, there is always the risk that an even more significant rain event will occur. In those situations, greater capacity will help, but it cannot eliminate the risk of flooding entirely. If a higher design standard than the 10-year storm is used, and therefore individual projects likely cost far more than projected and afforded in this model, fewer projects will be delivered overall unless additional funding can be provided.

During the weeks leading up to and including the January 12 meeting, there have been concerns expressed by those impacted by flooding as well as by Council members about the projected pace of implementation of the proposed large capacity and spot improvements. While this many projects of this order of magnitude cannot be accomplished in the short term, staff believe that it would be productive to hire and consult with engineering and project management firms to identify approaches to acceleration and provide a "second opinion" as to the schedule. This effort would also consider the best delivery methods to use (such as design-build for large projects). No Council action would be required other than to approve the proposed fee rates to undertake this advisory work, as the City Manager can, and would, authorize the initiation of such work.

FY 2026 to FY 2031 Projects

Project sequencing from FY 2026 to FY 2031 was based on the same considerations as the earlier projects; however, these may require reprioritization as further cost-benefit analysis, feasibility, and other design considerations become more available. These projects also include funding for potential property acquisition and/or public-private partnerships. Additionally, annual budget considerations could impact project sequencing and delivery. The estimated funding for the remaining six years of the capacity project element of the 10-Year Plan is as follows:

4. Edison and Dale Streets: Design Fully Funded in FY 2026 and Construction Fully Funded in FY 2026. Planning level estimate of $13 million.

5. Dewitt Avenue: Design Fully Funded in FY 2026 and Construction Fully Funded in

   FY 2027. Planning level estimate of $15 million.

6. East Mason Avenue: Design Fully Funded in FY 2026 and Construction Fully Funded in FY 2027. Planning level estimate of $1 million.

7. Notabene Drive and Old Dominion Boulevard: Design Fully Funded in FY 2027 and Construction Fully Funded in FY 2028. Planning level estimate of $4 million.

8. Mt. Vernon Avenue, East Glendale Avenue, East Luray Avenue, and East Alexandria Avenue: Design Fully Funded in FY 2027 and Construction Fully Funded in FY 2028. Planning level estimate of $10 million.

9. East Monroe Avenue and Wayne Street: Design Fully Funded in FY 2028 and Construction Fully Funded in FY 2029. Planning level estimate of $3 million.

10. Russell Rd & W. Rosemont Ave: Design Fully Funded in FY 2028 and Construction Fully Funded in FY

2029. Planning level estimate of $6 million.

11. Russell Rd & W. Rosemont Ave (south): Design Fully Funded in FY 2028 and Construction Fully Funded in FY 2030. Planning level estimate of $8 million.

The schedules for both capacity projects and spot improvement projects outlined in this memo are aggressive, based on generic stormwater construction projects, and intended for financial planning and budgetary purposes only. Until substantial design work is completed for each specific project, the schedule and budget will only be estimates that will include significant contingencies. As additional information is collected and the design of each project is further defined, more precise construction schedules and cost estimates can be developed.

The remaining key budgetary elements of the 10-year action plan include:

- *Increase Spot Improvement Projects.* Spot projects are small- to medium-sized capital projects that alleviate localized drainage and flooding concerns and can be implemented in 3 to 18 months from the beginning of design. These projects are typically identified through Alex311 complaints, field observations, neighborhood meetings, and onsite investigation. An additional $2 million in annual funding from the recommended SWU fee increase would allow for 8 to 11 projects to be completed annually, compared to the 3 to 5 projects that are currently implemented each year.
- *Stormwater Maintenance.* The recommended SWU fee increase would provide additional funding for stormwater infrastructure and channel maintenance. Approximately $1 million annually is recommended for aggressive inspection and maintenance for State of Good Repair, including cleaning, condition assessments, and stormwater infrastructure repairs. An additional $0.5 million annually is recommended for small and midsize stormwater maintenance projects to accelerate infrastructure repairs beyond maintenance. Finally, an increase of $0.5 million annually is recommended for maintenance of the City's larger flood channels, which includes minimizing blockages at bridges by removing and thinning excess vegetation and restoring conveyance capacity by removing sediment that accumulates more quickly due to more frequent, intense storm events.
- Technical Assistance and Public-Private Partnership Flooding Grant Pilot Programs. (See "Programs" below.)

Programs & Legislative Subcommittee

Ongoing neighborhood engagement has revealed that one of the most common types of property impacts from flooding events is flooding of basements that are being used as dwelling spaces. Floodproofing measures, which can immediately alleviate these kinds of impacts, have already been installed or considered by several property owners.

Staff considered options to encourage flood protection on private property in Alexandria and recommends piloting a City-sponsored grant program in FY 2022. However, staff recommends further analysis before making any program permanent in FY 2023 or beyond. A priority for through July 2021 will be the creation of a Floodproofing Pilot Grant Program (with some retroactivity) as this can be developed with relative expedience and provide an immediate benefit to residents and businesses.

The purpose of the pilot grant program would be to provide grant funding to residents and businesses who have incurred damage to their primary residence or business as a result of at least one of three recent severe flood events. Staff recommends that this program be modeled after the City's Backflow Preventer Program, which provides up to 50% reimbursement (maximum $2,000) to those who have installed backflow preventers as a result of sanitary sewer backups. Additional program development and analysis would occur prior to making the program permanent, although funding is budgeted in the 10-year plan from FY 2023 and beyond.

Recommended parameters for the pilot grant program include:

- Reimbursement for 50% of the cost of improvements, not to exceed $5,000 reimbursed
- Total funding for FY 2022: $750,000
- Retroactive to July 2019
- Examples of possible reimbursable expenses include installation of flood-proof doors and windows, and berms or walls designed to prevent water from entering a structure

Staff has identified a number of guiding principles for the program, which include an equitable approach, incentivizing actions that exceed the City's Floodplain Management Ordinance requirements and encouraging projects that provide broader public benefits. Staff anticipate developing an administrative framework and detailed eligibility criteria for the pilot grant within 3 to 6 months, with the program expected to launch by Summer 2021 in time for FY 2022.

Staff intends to provide technical assistance to property owners (where appropriate) to determine potential sources of flooding and potential types of floodproofing practices that may mitigate flooding issues. Where improvements may be warranted on private property, any work would ultimately be performed by the private property owner or professional contractors hired by the private property owner and under supervision of the private property owner.

This subcommittee, in coordination with the City's Legislative Affairs Director, also identified several priorities that are now included in the 2021 General Assembly Legislative Package to support flood mitigation efforts in Alexandria:

- *Grant Program Authority.* While staff believes the City has authority to implement the pilot grant program described above, additional State enabling legislation would be helpful before expanding the program more broadly. Therefore, staff recommends supporting legislation that grants localities authority to use Stormwater Management Fund dollars on private property for flood mitigation and protection measures with a clear public benefit.
- *Stormwater Local Assistance Fund.* Through the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF), the Commonwealth provides funding to localities to support projects related to Chesapeake Bay water quality. However, additional funding is needed to address water quantity issues, as climate change is generating more frequent severe inland flood events. Therefore, staff recommends supporting legislation that increases SLAF funding and prioritizes projects which have both a water quality and a water quantity benefit.
- *Joint Subcommittee on Inland and Urban Flooding.* The General Assembly currently has a Joint Subcommittee on Coastal Flooding to coordinate and develop recommendations related to recurrent flooding in coastal areas. Given that climate change-induced inland flooding is an emerging issue across the Commonwealth, staff recommends supporting legislation that authorizes a similar joint subcommittee to consider issues related to inland and urban flooding.
- *Land Disturbance.* Currently, the State requires tidewater jurisdictions of the Chesapeake Bay to regulate activities that disturb greater than or equal to 2,500 square feet of land. To allow for the evaluation of stormwater impacts, staff recommends supporting legislation that expands local authority to regulate additions or modifications to single-family detached residential structures where land disturbance is less than 2,500 square feet.

Early Warning & Communications Subcommittee

This subcommittee considered feedback from residents, City Council, and the City Manager to identify areas of improvement. Staff agreed that the City needed to improve both the information that is available to residents who seek it and improve the City's methods of actively reaching out and engaging with residents. Staff

recommends strategies related to messaging, information-sharing, two-way engagement, tools and resources, and improved internal systems. Additional details and timelines are provided below:

Messaging:

- *Program Identification | Timeline: January 2021*

Program Identification can increase program recognition and general awareness of the City's flooding management efforts. Staff is considering "Be Flood Ready Alexandria," which is clear, understandable, and easy to remember by residents. Other options considered also included "Flood Resilient Alexandria" or "Flood Aware Alexandria."

Information-Sharing:

- *Improved Flooding Webpage | Timeline: Interim improvements by January 2021; new page launch by March 2021*

Currently, there is much flooding-related information hosted on various City webpages, but navigating these pages is not very intuitive. Staff proposes to create a streamlined flooding webpage to serve as a central hub for the City's flood program. This will increase residents' access to valuable information and resources related to flooding.

- *Flooding eNewsletter | Timeline:* Launch by March 2021

Active methods of communication are also necessary to bring flooding information to residents. Staff recommends initiating a periodic eNewsletter to residents who opt in, which will include general flood information as well as the latest updates on flood management in the City.

Two-Way Engagement:

- *Alex311 Updates | Timeline: January 2021*

Staff is developing a new Alex311 category dedicated specifically to flooding issues, which will be shared within the community. This will allow residents and businesses to report flooding more easily to the City. Staff will equip 311 call-takers with a robust knowledge-base to improve the speed and accuracy of responses. Additionally, these improvements can help the City gain a better understanding of where residents and businesses are being impacted by flooding.

- *Community Meetings & Technical Assistance | Timeline: Ongoing*

Staff is conducting a number of community meetings in affected neighborhoods to develop a community dialogue, deliver updates on City projects and communication plans, and provide resources to residents. Staff will also offer technical assistance to residents who have experienced flooding. Staff plans to follow up with neighborhoods on themes and action items that may have been identified through community conversations.

- *Social Media Engagement | Timeline: Ongoing; Expand by end of December 2020*

While social media has been an ongoing part of the City's community engagement process on flooding, staff plans to increase these efforts by the end of the calendar year to improve information sharing.

Tools & Resources:

- *Project Tracker | Timeline: January 2021*

Staff proposes to refine the existing project tracker on the City website to provide a clearer picture of what the community can expect from these projects.

- *Enhanced Alert Capabilities | Timeline: January 2021*

Staff recommends enhancing the City's alert capabilities, which will allow the City to reach additional residents and businesses via phone alert in the event of an emergency, similar to reverse 911.

- *Increased Weather Watches, Advisories, and Warnings | Timeline: January 2021*

Expanding the City's eNews notifications and web banners to include flood watches and advisories, in addition to flood warnings, will allow residents and businesses to have greater advance notice of possible flooding and make necessary preparations.

- *Rain and Stream Gauge Dashboard | Timeline: July 2021*

To improve the community's access to flood-related information, staff proposes to explore a real-time, public-facing rain and stream gauge dashboard. This will allow the public to see current water levels where gauges are present.

- *Flood Warning Signage | Timeline: April 2021*

While the City currently maintains several dynamic flood warning signs that are triggered by water levels in key areas, additional static signage could increase awareness of the potential for a roadway to flood. Staff recommends strategically adding flood warning signage in key areas that have experienced flooding.

Improved Internal Systems:

- *Expanded Rain and Flow Gauges | Timeline: Complete by May 2021*

Staff proposes to more than double the amount of rain and flood gauges to better monitor conditions in the central and eastern part of the City.

- *Improved Rainfall Data Collection and Flood Warning Systems | Timeline: Complete by May 2021*

Upgrading systems for collecting rainfall data and early warning will strengthen the City's ability to track flooding over time and respond to flooding incidents.

FISCAL IMPACT: The recommendation is to increase the SWU fee for all ratepayers in two phases by the end of 2021, with additional smaller increases in future years, and to shift substantial funding emphasis from water quality projects to accelerate the delivery of capacity projects and maintenance activities. Staff recommends that Council adopt the rate in January 2021 with billing to follow in May 2021 (due June 15, 2021) and October 2021 (due November 15, 2021). This follows Council guidance to aggressively accelerate the flooding response program. The proposed amendment to the adopted ordinance would provide an estimated $6.3 million with the May 2021 billing and $8.5 million with the October 2021 billing. All stormwater utility

fees are separately accounted for as a standalone enterprise outside of the City's General Fund and can only be used for stormwater expense purposes. Any stormwater funds remaining unspent from a fiscal year stay in the stormwater fund for future use. This is akin to what sometimes is referred to as a "lock box".

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Ordinance Cover
2. Ordinance
3. 2021 Stormwater Utility Fee Table
4. Stormwater Utility 10-Year Action Plan
5. FY 2022 to FY 2030 Storm Sewer Capacity Projects
6. Flooding Webpage Conceptual Outline
7. Stakeholder Advisory Group Resolution
8. Presentation

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