

MEDIA RELEASE

Notice: Public Meeting to discuss Thomaston Stormwater Program.

The Mayor and City Council of the City of Thomaston are exploring a stormwater utility and user fee system to address priority stormwater drainage issues. The City is considering a rate/fee in the amount of \$3.95 per billing unit and the billing unit would likely be set at 2,780 square feet of impervious surface. The typical residential customer would be charged one (1.0) billing unit per month. Non-residential customers would receive a custom bill based on the total amount of impervious area on their property.

An Open House Meeting is scheduled on Tuesday, March 6th 2018 at 6:00PM to discuss the Stormwater Program. This meeting is open to the public.

Open House Meeting Location:

**Thomaston City Hall
106 East Lee Street
Thomaston, GA**

The stormwater user fee charge would be based on impervious surface (i.e. rooftops, driveways, parking lots) because impervious surface has a direct correlation to the amount of stormwater runoff individual properties discharge to the City's drainage system. Customers that reduce their impact on the City drainage system through approved credit practices, such as detention ponds, would be eligible for a reduction of their stormwater user fee charge. One of the primary benefits of utilizing a fee-based system to fund the City's stormwater management program is that it ensures that all developed properties pay their fair share of the costs to manage their parcel-specific stormwater run-off impacts and for the cost of the stormwater services provided by the City to that parcel and/or customer.

The City of Thomaston believes a stormwater user fee charge is the most equitable method available to fund implementation of the City's stormwater management program, which includes inspecting stormwater infrastructure, performing upgrades and repairs, and taking a more proactive approach to operating and maintaining the City's stormwater system. The City has approximately 80 miles of City streets with stormwater pipe systems; drainage ditches; and the associated inlets and outlets critical for effectively conveying stormwater and preventing flooding.

Approximately 65 communities in Georgia have implemented a Stormwater Utility and user fee system, including the Cities of Griffin, Senoia, Fayetteville, Peachtree City, Americus, Albany, Cornelia and many others throughout the State. The proposed rate of \$3.95 per billing unit is below the average for stormwater user fee rates in Georgia today.

The City is planning a public outreach program that will include public open houses, direct customer notification, and a webpage. The City is also in the process of preparing a Stormwater

User Fee Credit Manual that includes the criteria and procedures for receiving credits on your stormwater user fee. Once finalized, the Credit Manual as well as additional stormwater program information will be made available on the City's website.

Media Contact: Russell Thompson
 City Manager
 City of Thomaston
 706-506-1730
 rthompson@cityofthomaston.com

City of Thomaston

Stormwater Management Program & Stormwater User Fee

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Stormwater Runoff? Stormwater runoff is rainfall that drains off rooftops, driveways, sidewalks, parking lots, roads, compacted soil, gravel, and other surfaces that prohibit the infiltration of rainfall into the ground. The stormwater runoff then flows into the City drainage system and into our local creeks and rivers. All developed properties in the City contribute stormwater runoff to the drainage system and, in some cases, to recurring drainage problems. In addition to flooding problems, stormwater runoff washes chemicals, debris, trash and other pollutants into the drainage system and our local surface waters.

What is the City of Thomaston's responsibility for managing the impacts of stormwater runoff? The City of Thomaston is responsible for the management of stormwater runoff and drainage issues within the City's public drainage system. The City must undertake various activities including the cleaning of ditches and pipe systems; replacement of aging culverts and drainage structures; construction of new culvert systems to improve stormwater drainage, development regulation, and regulatory compliance. Aging infrastructure and lack of resources to implement priority capital drainage projects have driven the City's need to consider the development and implementation of a more comprehensive stormwater management program (SWMP).

How is the City of Thomaston proposing to address expanding SWMP needs? The City of Thomaston is exploring a stormwater utility and stormwater user fee that will be dedicated solely to addressing stormwater management and drainage issues. The stormwater user fee provides the resources necessary for the City to deliver stormwater services to residents, businesses, institutions and government facilities.

What is a Stormwater User Fee? A stormwater user fee is a charge for stormwater management services provided by the City to all developed properties in the City. A stormwater user fee charged by the City for stormwater services is that same as a water and sewer fee charged by the City for delivery of water and sewer services. Under the plan proposed, the stormwater user fee revenue collected can only be utilized for to fund stormwater services provided to customers within the City.

How do you calculate a stormwater user fee charge for an individual property and utility customer account? The stormwater user fee charge is based on the amount of impervious surfaces on a parcel. Impervious surface means those areas which prevent or impede the natural infiltration of rainfall and stormwater runoff. Common impervious surfaces include, but are not limited to, rooftops, buildings or structures, sidewalks, walkways, patio areas, driveways, parking lots, storage areas, awnings, fabric or plastic coverings, and other surfaces such as compacted soil and gravel. The square footage of impervious surface on a property has a direct correlation to the amount of stormwater runoff

discharged from that property. Developed parcels with greater amounts of impervious area will have a larger impact on the City's drainage system and will therefore be charged a higher user fee.

Are gravel and compacted soil charged at the same rate as other types of impervious surfaces? No, gravel and compacted soil would be charged at a reduced rate of 85% to account for the minor amount of superficial infiltration that can occur. This reduction factor of 85% is based on the hydrologic characteristics of these types of materials as compared to undeveloped conditions.

How would my stormwater user fee be calculated? The stormwater user fee would be based on a billing unit of 2,780 square feet of impervious surface. The billing unit of 2,780 square feet is the approximate median of impervious area on a typical single-family parcel. Single family residential (SFR) properties would be charged a flat rate of 1.0 billing unit per month. Non-single family residential (NSFR) properties will be charged a custom user fee charge based on the number of billing units associated with the total impervious area on the property. For example, if a commercial site has 27,800 square feet of impervious surface, that customer would be charged 10 billing units per month.

$$27,800 \text{ square feet of impervious surface} / 2,780 \text{ square feet} = 10 \text{ billing units}$$

This methodology would be applied to all NSFR properties in the City.

How much would customers be charged per billing unit? The City is considering a stormwater user fee rate is \$3.95 per billing unit per month, or \$47.40 annually. Using the example above, the customer with 10 billing units will receive an annual stormwater user fee of \$474.00 which equates to a monthly fee of \$39.50 per month. A single family residential customer would pay only \$47.40 per year (or \$3.95 per month.)

Why did the City decide to implement a stormwater user fee charge? The City has evaluated its stormwater program needs and concluded that additional resources were needed. The City has evaluated the feasibility of charging a stormwater user fee as opposed to increasing property tax millage and has determined that the user fee approach is a more fair and equitable way to allocate costs of SWMP services. Under a stormwater utility, the user fee is not based on the assessed "value" of a property, like ad-valorem taxes, rather it is based on the demand that each customer imposes on the drainage system and the corresponding SWMP services provided. All developed property that receives stormwater services from the City pay a user fee, regardless of their tax status. This user fee approach is very similar to water, sewer, and sanitation fees.

Is there any way to reduce my Stormwater User Fee that is being charged? Yes, the City is in the process of creating a credit manual. The credits are based on specific activities that a customer undertakes on their property to reduce the impact of stormwater runoff on the City's drainage system. Both residential and non-residential customers may be eligible for credits to reduce their stormwater user fee charge by following the procedures outlined in the City's Stormwater User Fee Credit Manual.

What will be the billing frequency and the billing mechanism? The City Council may elect to charge

the stormwater user fee on the monthly utility bill or on the annual property tax bill. Either way, the City is considering instituting this charge to fund SWMP services in 2019.

Who do I call if I have additional questions? Contact Russell Thompson, City Manager by phone at 706-506-1730 or via email using rthompson@cityofthomaston.com