

# Dover Stormwater and Flood Resilience Utility

## Public Meeting #2 – Comment/Questions

Tuesday, October 17, 2023



The City received the following comments and/or questions at the Tuesday, October 17, 2023 Public Meeting #2 for the Dover Stormwater and Flood Resilience Utility. The comments and/or questions are summarized in **bold** followed by the City's response in *italics*.

- 1. With respect to residential BMPs, will there be a guide or set of DIY videos instructing residents on how to install them? In most cases the cost of hiring a contractor to install them will cost much more than the cost of the stormwater utility.**

**Also, how will the "Residential DIY" Credits be assessed or evaluated? Will there need to be oversight during construction?**

*Response: The City plans to develop a credit manual that will describe what credit activities and measures will be eligible for credits and the technical details involved with constructing or installing such measures. These details will rely on the standards included in the NHDES "Soak Up the Rain" Program, which contains other guidance information and DIY resources for homeowners. The details regarding credit assessment and application program are yet to be finalized but will involve an application process with some level of photo documentation and description of the credit activity/measure to be submitted as part of the application. For residential properties, construction oversight is not likely to be required or will be done on a case-by-case basis.*

- 2. Do gutters and runoff drains qualify for stormwater credits?**

*Response: Credits would apply if the gutter or runoff drains are directed into a dry well, rain garden or other qualifying stormwater BMP consistent with the pending Credit Manual.*

- 3. How would the stormwater utility impact mobile owners who do not own the land; could they get credits if they don't get a water bill directly?**

*Response: Mobile homeowners would benefit from qualifying credits by a reduced utility fee for the overall property. Thus, each mobile homeowner's share of the overall fee would also be reduced depending on how the property owner or manager distributes the cost of the overall fee to each mobile homeowner. The cost to each mobile homeowner will presumably be handled in a similar manner as that used for the water and sewer bill for the overall property.*

- 4. Is the GIS data showing impervious cover areas on parcels publicly available for review?**

*Response: The City intends to make the parcel based impervious cover data publicly available in the Spring 2024 following a City Council vote to adopt a Stormwater Utility Fee. The City still needs to conduct more detailed quality assurance checks of the data as part of the utility implementation and billing development process, which will be completed if the City moves forward with adopting a stormwater utility program. The plan would be to make this information available before the utility program becomes effective.*

# Dover Stormwater and Flood Resilience Utility

Public Meeting #2 – Comment/Questions

Tuesday, October 17, 2023



- 5. Concerned with language in the ordinance Section 123-7D Non-Single Family Credit Program, and the ability of an HOA to claim credits if the HOA does not own property/impervious cover but manages the private stormwater infrastructure.**

*Response: Impervious cover owned by or managed by an HOA or other common land situations would be eligible for credits. Qualifying credits would be applied to the fee associated with the overall property and the resulting fee for the overall property would be distributed to each of the water meter accounts associated with the property. Applications for qualifying credits can be submitted either by individual homeowners or the HOA regardless of how the utility fee is assessed.*

- 6. If the resident is already practicing some resilience by intent (i.e., rain barrels, pervious pea stone patio) is this creditable or only new implementation?**

*Response: Existing qualifying activities and best practices would be eligible for credits pending City eligibility review and approval through the credit application process that will be finalized as part of the utility implementation process in the Spring 2024.*

- 7. There is an understandable skepticism from many that this will result in lower property taxes at residential level. Would be worth addressing directly in a public way.**

*Response: Even though the proposed stormwater utility will change the funding mechanism to pay for the City's stormwater program costs, there is no way to predict how the fee would affect future City budgets, which will depend on budget priorities and needs at the time. Most of the stormwater program costs will be removed from the City's budget and will be paid for by the stormwater utility instead of the general fund. The City's share of the utility fee for City-owned property, however, will still be paid for by the General Fund.*

- 8. Tax exempt organizations would be required to pay this user fee, will that include the State of NH and the Federal Government?**

*Response: It is the City's intent to assess tax exempt properties with a stormwater utility fee consistent with the state enabling legislation authorizing communities to develop a stormwater utility program, which explicitly states that tax-exempt and government-owned properties would also be subject to a proposed stormwater fee.*

- 9. Will the transfer of costs from residential to commercial serve to discourage companies from coming to Dover, or potentially cause them to leave?**

*Response: Most small to medium sized commercial properties are not likely to see a significant change in what they will pay in a stormwater utility fee compared to what they currently pay in property taxes for current stormwater costs. The ability to receive credit for existing or future stormwater management measures provides a substantial reward and/or incentive for onsite measures and fee reduction. The more onsite stormwater management practices that businesses*

# Dover Stormwater and Flood Resilience Utility

Public Meeting #2 – Comment/Questions

Tuesday, October 17, 2023



*and residences adopt, the greater likelihood for a more resilient future and healthy environment. Additionally, the dedicated funding provided by the stormwater utility will allow Dover to proactively manage the stormwater system likely enhancing the attractiveness for businesses to locate within the City.*

**10. Will this potentially (due to increased costs at some commercial level that includes apartments) raise rents as costs are passed along and make Dover even more (housing) unaffordable for middle class to lower middle class folks?**

*Response: The anticipated fee associated with the proposed stormwater utility is expected to pose no greater burden than the typical water and sewer bills being assessed to residents. The stormwater utility fee associated with most apartments and/or leased residential units are anticipated to range between \$40 to \$80 per year but how the fee is assessed to each unit depends on whether unit receives their water and sewer bill or how the property owner/manager distributes the cost of the stormwater utility fee. In addition, these stormwater costs are already being assessed as part of the property tax, this change in funding should not significantly effect on rental fees. As a dedicated and sustainable funding source, the City will be able to better plan and use funds more effectively on flood resilience and water quality improvements leading to a potentially better quality of life and greater safety during flood events.*

**11. Will the stormwater utility fee be assessed on properties that do not drain directly into a City street or storm drain system?**

*Response: Yes, all impervious area generates more stormwater runoff than undeveloped land and even if the impervious area is not directly connected to the City storm drain system, the excess runoff, especially during large rain events, typically ends up in nearby wetlands or streams potentially causing water quality issues and/or limits the amount of water that infiltrates to the groundwater which adversely affects stream flow and available groundwater supplies. Declining water quality in our waterways and decreasing groundwater supplies leads to greater regulatory and restoration costs imposed on the City.*

**12. If the Credit Manual is not completed until billing of 2024, will existing qualifying credit activities or measures be applied to the first utility bill or will there be a delay in the credit adjustment?**

*Response: Following adoption of a stormwater utility via a City Council vote, the program would take effect no earlier than July 1, 2024. The first utility bill would likely be assessed in the Fall of 2024 to assess a fee for the service provided in the previous quarter, similar to the water and sewer bill. Prior to taking effect, a credit application and approval process will be developed and administered by City staff. This will allow at least 3 months to process the initial credit applications received prior to the first billing cycle. Credit adjustments on future billing will be based on completed credit applications received and approved in the previous billing cycle showing documentation of when measures were in place and meet applicable eligibility criteria. If for some reason, approval of completed*

# Dover Stormwater and Flood Resilience Utility

Public Meeting #2 – Comment/Questions

Tuesday, October 17, 2023



*applications is delayed in the initial credit application processing prior to the first utility bill being issued due to application volume or limited staff, the City will apply a retroactive credit to qualifying credit activities in the next billing cycle.*

**13. Several residents have asked how mobile home communities or other leased or common land residential situations would be assessed the proposed stormwater fee or credited for qualifying measures?**

*Response: The proposed stormwater utility fee will be assessed in the same manner as current water and sewer utility bills. If the overall property or building has one central water account that is billed on the overall water usage for the property or building rather than each individual unit, then the stormwater utility fee will be assessed in the same manner based on the overall impervious area associated with the property or building. The method by which the central account holder recoups or distributes the cost of the stormwater utility fee will presumably be the same as that used for water and sewer bills. Similarly, any qualifying credit activities or measures whether done on common land areas or individual leased areas would be applied to the overall utility bill for the property such that all residents who would pay a portion of the utility fee associated with the account would benefit from such measures.*