

# EUGENE CITY COUNCIL

## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



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### Work Session: Stormwater Program Update

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Meeting Date: September 16, 2015  
Department: Public Works  
[www.eugene-or.gov/pw](http://www.eugene-or.gov/pw)

Agenda Item Number: B  
Staff Contact: Mark Schoening / Craig Carnagey  
Contact Telephone Number: 541-682-5243 / 541-682-4930

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#### **ISSUE STATEMENT**

This work session is an opportunity for the council to review the current stormwater program and rate structure and to consider an amendment to the definition of stormwater service to include the operations and maintenance of parks to address the systemic funding gap in parks services. The council will be requested to direct the City Manager to schedule a public hearing on an ordinance to allow the use of stormwater service funds for the operations and maintenance of parks.

#### **BACKGROUND**

In 2010, the council reviewed a report which described the funding gap to operate and maintain City parks and recreation facilities. At that time, the council passed a motion requesting the City Manager to develop funding options to sustainably maintain parks and recreation facilities for FY12 budget consideration. Due to increasing budget pressures for that fiscal year, no specific funding options were brought back to the council for consideration.

On January 28, 2013, the council directed the City Manager to revise a proposed stormwater ordinance related to parks services funding so that the ordinance would postpone until fiscal year 2014 any decision by the council to actually establish a monthly fee for FY14. At a February 4, 2013, work session, the council tabled the motion for adopting an ordinance creating a mechanism for a monthly stormwater and parks service fee.

On October 29, 2014, the council received an update to the 2010 report, reviewed the current state of Eugene's parks and natural areas, and unanimously requested the City Manager present funding options for council consideration for the FY16 budget to sustainably operate and maintain the City's park system.

On February 11, 2015, the council reviewed short- and long-term funding options to address the systemic funding gap for operations and maintenance of parks. The council requested a continuance of the discussion after the FY16 budget process and requested additional information on the current stormwater fee mechanism.

## **Stormwater Program and Rate Structure**

The City's stormwater system includes pipes and other constructed features such as catch basins and curb inlets as well as "green infrastructure," a combination of constructed and natural features such as planters, swales, wetlands, streams, rivers, and open channels. Rainwater that does not soak into the ground runs off the land and is conveyed by the stormwater system to local area waterways such as Amazon Creek and the Willamette River.

The stormwater program supports services that provide clean water, flood protection and healthy habitat for fish and wildlife including the following activities -

- Maintain and repair more than 600 miles of stormwater pipes and waterways
- Clean over 15,000 catch basins and curb inlets
- Collect and recycle over 18,000 cubic yards of leaves each year
- Eliminate illegal connections and discharges
- Sweep more than 40,000 curb miles of streets each year
- Provide stormwater education to 3,000 students each year
- Protect, restore, and maintain streams, rivers, and wetlands
- Plant over 600 trees along local streams and rivers each year
- Remove garbage from streams and the banks of the Willamette River
- Improve how rainfall runoff is managed in developed areas through system retrofits
- Replace public drywells to protect groundwater quality
- Administer clean water regulations for construction sites, industries, and new development
- Plant, preserve, and maintain street trees and median vegetation
- Monitor water quality in the local waterways through sampling and data analysis

Developed properties in Eugene pay stormwater fees to support the stormwater program. There are three components to the stormwater rate structure. The impervious service component is based upon the measured impervious area on a developed property. Small residential properties (building footprint is equal to or less than 1,000 square feet) and medium residential properties (building footprint is greater than 1,000 square feet and less than 3,000 square feet) are two user categories with all properties within a specific category paying the same amount for the impervious area component. Large residential properties (building footprint is 3,000 square feet or greater) and commercial/industrial properties are two user categories in which properties within either category pay the same rate per 1,000 square feet of impervious area.

The second component of the stormwater rate structure is the street-related component. The impervious area of the street network is segregated into two components. The curb and gutter and a portion of the pavement is considered part of the stormwater system. The remainder of the pavement is considered impervious area and residential properties are assessed a flat fee for this portion of the street network. Commercial/industrial developed properties pay a rate per 1,000 square feet.

The final component of the stormwater rate structure is the administrative component. All developed properties are assessed a flat fee for this component.

Developed properties that pay stormwater fees may qualify for reduced fees if the quantity of stormwater discharge to the public system is reduced or the quality impact is reduced through on-site stormwater treatment.

### **Stormwater and Parks Fee**

At the February 11, 2015, work session, the council discussed one option for addressing both short- and long-term funding needs through an amendment to the current stormwater ordinance. The previous proposal from 2013 included numerous changes to the ordinance. However, a narrow change to the definition of “stormwater service” to include the “operation and maintenance of City-owned parks and open spaces” would allow the current revenue collection mechanism to fund parks. The incremental cost of administration would be insignificant since the collection mechanism already exists.

A proposed change to the ordinance provides the policy framework of funding for parks costs by amending the stormwater fee to a fee for stormwater and parks. The specific amount of the stormwater and parks fee would be set, as it currently is for the stormwater fee, through the administrative ratemaking process specified in the Eugene Code and based on costs included in the budget. An update to the definition of stormwater service to include park operations and maintenance would not have an effect on stormwater rates for FY16. Potential rate or service increases would occur during the FY17 budget process with input from the public, budget committee and council. Funds could be used to pay for current services or reinstate parks services that have been cut in recent years.

### **TRIPLE BOTTEM LINE ANALYSIS**

#### **Social Equity (Positive Effect)**

The importance of parks ranks high in determining the livability people feel about their community. The use of parks and open space is free to all community members regardless of socioeconomic levels or age groups. Each month over 90,000 people use City parks. The proposed use of stormwater funds for park operations and maintenance would help offset the reduction of services over the last several years, including reopening park restrooms, restoring park custodial work, and increasing park security. These improvements to the safety and cleanliness of parks will have a positive effect across the entire system and benefit a broad spectrum of the population of Eugene.

#### **Environmental Health (Positive Effect)**

A stormwater service fee to include the operations and maintenance of parks and natural areas would enable the Parks and Open Space (POS) Division to do more to protect the environment and conserve resources. Two examples would be cleaning up more of the trash and debris associated with illegal camps, and constructing more efficient irrigation systems in parks. The trash and debris from illegal camps in parks along local waterways pose significant environmental health hazards. Having more resources to clean up and provide outreach to prevent these camps from occurring in sensitive locations would help reduce the impact to the environment and risks to public health in parks. Replacing outdated, inefficient irrigation systems in parks would help reduce water usage and utility costs and establish more drought-resistant landscapes. Cleaner waterways and water-wise landscapes in parks have multiple positive benefits to the health of the urban environment.

### **Economic Prosperity (Neutral Effect)**

Well maintained parks contribute to the local economy by attracting tourists, as well as being part of what many businesses and people look for when considering where to relocate. Good parks also have a positive impact on nearby property values. [One study](#) estimates the overall economic value of Eugene's parks at more than \$40 million a year. A stormwater service fee to include the operations and maintenance of parks and open spaces on the Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB) utility bill may be viewed as a negative impact on low-income utility users. EWEB offers a number of programs to help income-eligible customers who are having trouble paying their utility bills. The economic impact can be further mitigated for all ratepayers by setting the fee at a generally affordable level.

### **RELATED CITY POLICIES**

Council goal for Accessible and Thriving Culture and Recreation - a community where arts and outdoors are integral to our social and economic well-being and are available to all.

Council goal for Fair, Stable and Adequate Financial Resources - a government whose ongoing financial resources are based on a fair and equitable system of revenues and are adequate to maintain and deliver municipal services.

### **COUNCIL OPTIONS**

1. Direct the City Manager to schedule a public hearing on an ordinance to change the definition of stormwater service to include the operations and maintenance of parks and open spaces.
2. Direct the City Manager to pursue additional short-term and long-term funding options.
3. Take no action.

### **CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION**

The City Manager recommends that the council agree to schedule a public hearing on a revision to the stormwater ordinance that amends the definition of stormwater service to include the operations and maintenance of parks and open spaces.

### **SUGGESTED MOTION**

Move to direct the City Manager to schedule a public hearing on an ordinance to amend the definition of stormwater service to include the operations and maintenance of parks and open spaces.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Fiscal Year 2016 Stormwater Rate Brochure

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Staff Contact: Mark Schoening  
Telephone: 541-682-5243  
Staff E-Mail: [Mark.A.Schoening@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:Mark.A.Schoening@ci.eugene.or.us)

Staff Contact: Craig Carnagey  
Telephone: 541-682-4930  
Staff E-Mail: [Craig.T.Carnagey@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:Craig.T.Carnagey@ci.eugene.or.us)