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Susquehanna Township to Hold Stormwater Utility Fee Information Session to Discuss Rising Costs of Stormwater Management Program.

Susquehanna Township, Harrisburg, PA (September 16, 2019)

“For the past several years, Susquehanna Township has been experiencing more stormwater runoff and associated problems than ever before, and definitely more than our aging system can handle,” stated Frank Lynch, President, Susquehanna Township Board of Commissioners. “It’s time for us to repair our aging system and build, new modern components that embrace the technological, scientific, and environmental approaches of today. But we need money to do it.” Beginning in 2020, Susquehanna Township is proposing to pay for stormwater management services through a utility fee administered by the Susquehanna Township Authority. A stormwater fee is an equitable way for communities to raise money needed to fix the most immediate stormwater problems and meet ever evolving Federal and State regulatory requirements. Currently, Susquehanna Township has no dedicated revenue source to pay for storm sewers, flood-reduction efforts, stormwater best management practices, or basic maintenance of this critical infrastructure system.

In accordance with United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) requirements, the Township is required to eliminate 2,417.2 tons/year of sediment from Township waterways over the next five years. There are numerous methods to eliminate sediment; nearly all require construction activities to stabilize and repair stream banks, restore flood plains, or to retrofit stormwater basins. The sediment reduction permitting and construction activities are estimated to cost the Township several million dollars over the next five years.

“The rising cost of meeting these increasingly strict regulations relating to the runoff draining into the storm sewer system is falling squarely on the municipalities that own and manage these systems,” said David W. Kratzer, Jr, Township Manager. “A stormwater fee is the most equitable way to pay for these unfunded EPA and DEP mandates that impact our entire Township.” Susquehanna is not alone in concluding that a utility fee is the most equitable and appropriate way to address this challenge; Lower Paxton, Swatara, and Derry Townships are among the number of local municipalities that currently charge stormwater utility fees. Many others are also in the process of implementing fees. All the revenue collected would be used to cover expenses related to the storm sewer system.

The township’s municipal separate storm sewer system, or MS4 system, includes approximately 530,000 linear feet of storm pipe; 5,500 inlets, such as the grated inlets at curbside; and 1,023 outfalls, where the system drains into creeks or streams. It is separate from the sanitary sewer system, which carries wastewater to the wastewater treatment plant.

A stormwater utility fee would also be charged to property owners in order to ensure continued use and upkeep of the existing stormwater management system.

The amount of the fee has not yet been determined, but it will be based on the total square footage of impervious area on a lot. Such data was collected through orthophotography captured during a flight commissioned by the Township. When water can't soak into the ground, it instead flows into the storm sewer system. "If stormwater can't soak into the ground, it has to enter our stormwater management system, and once it enters the system, it costs our community money," said Anthony Salomone, Chairperson, Susquehanna Township Authority. "We've largely grown accustomed to paying for sanitary sewer and public water service. Similarly, we need to pay for the critical infrastructure that keeps our homes and businesses from flooding."

If you are interested in learning more about Susquehanna Township's proposed stormwater utility fee or have questions about it, please contact David W. Kratzer Jr. at 717-545-4751 or attend the public meeting at Progress Fire Hall, 3440 Maple St. Harrisburg, PA 17109 on September 25, 2019 from 6:30 – 8:00 pm.