

FAQS on Newton's Stormwater Fee

What is stormwater?

Stormwater is rain water that runs off impervious surfaces such as rooftops, paved roads, driveways and parking lots. It carries sediment and surface pollutants such as petroleum products, litter/trash, phosphorus and nitrogen as it is washed down storm drains. The vast drain piping network carries the stormwater into one of the many brooks or ponds in the City where it ultimately ends up in the Charles River.

Why do we need a stormwater fund?

The purpose of establishing and implementing a stormwater fund is to generate a stable and adequate source of funding to pay for capital improvement projects, staff and stormwater management expenses. Newton's costs for managing stormwater have continued to rise while budgets have not kept pace. The City's drain pipes and stormwater infrastructure date to the 1800s and are in need of maintenance and repair. Additionally, state and federal laws now require cities and towns to reduce pollution in stormwater runoff.

When and how did this go into effect?

It was approved by the full Board of Aldermen on May 24, 2006; to take effect with this fiscal year 2007 (July 10, 2006).

What will the fee be used for?

The stormwater fee will be used to manage and upgrade the City's stormwater infrastructure, such as catch basins, drain pipes, and channels; and to protect our natural resources such as Crystal Lake, the Charles River, and ponds in the City. Homeowners with frequent flooding issues will also be able to obtain technical assistance*; while educational programs will be developed for residents and schools. [**may* include a site visit, review of problem, suggestions to improve flooding condition and/or literature]

Who is responsible for what?

Like our water and sewer infrastructure, portions of the drain system are owned by the City, while others are privately owned and maintained. Generally, the City is responsible for parts of the stormwater system that are in the public right of way and located on public property. [This includes storm drains, catch basins, culverts, conveyance piping and stormwater outfalls.]

Typically, property owners are responsible for everything on their property, unless there is a deeded easement to the City.

How much will I be charged?

All residential properties with a domestic water meter are charged \$18.75 per quarter on each water-sewer bill.

Any household receiving the elderly discount also receives a discount on the stormwater fee. Instead of \$18.75, such households will be charged \$13.12 per quarter.

All nonresidential properties are charged \$50.00 per quarter on each water-sewer bill.

Why isn't my neighbor who has a septic system being charged?

Because the ordinance links this fee to sewer use, only properties with public sewer will receive this charge.

Irrigation meters are not being charged.

Why am I being charged twice?

If you have 2 or more domestic meters (ex., some 2-family buildings; 2 condos in the same building), each property with a meter receives the stormwater charge.

How was the fee calculated?

The apportionment was calculated mathematically. A sample group of residential and commercial properties was evaluated to determine the average total impervious surface area. An Equivalent Residential Unit (**ERU**) was defined then as the average residential impervious unit area of **3,100 square feet**. One ERU = \$18.75 per quarter was derived based upon the costs of the program. A similar analysis was conducted for nonresidential properties throughout the City. The data showed that nonresidential properties on average have six (6) times the amount of impervious surface area than residential; therefore, pay \$50.00 per quarter.

My neighbor's lot is much larger than mine. Why is the fee the same?

Intuitively, one may think that a large house should pay more; however, the fee is derived from impervious area, not open land. In general, the larger parcels of land with more open space offset the additional impervious area where the stormwater will absorb into, so less runs off into our drainage structures. Nonetheless, it is impossible to have every situation covered by one rule or fee; but it is the intent to have the majority of people fit the rule.

As any law, it is deemed beneficial to the City residents and is the best model we can derive today. Public Works will continue to evaluate the model and explore different means of assessment.

Will the fee go up?

The fee has been set based on the program's goals and objectives. These will be assessed throughout the year and recommendations made to the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen.

Do I have to pay?

The fee is comparable to any City bill. State law dictates that late payments carry interest charges.