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Storm Water FAQs

Stormwater:

1. What is storm water?

Storm water is rain water that runs off impervious surfaces such as streets, driveways, parking lots, rooftops, or other tightly packed surfaces. Impervious surfaces reduce the ability of storm water to be absorbed or infiltrate into the ground.

2. Why did Town Meeting and the Board of Selectmen vote to establish a Storm Water Enterprise Fund (SWEF)?

The Town of Reading is required by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to develop a storm water management plan that reduces the discharge of pollutants to our storm water drain system and water ways. The Town is required to be in full compliance with the terms of our National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II permit by 2008 to meet federal and state mandates. The Town established a SWEF to provide a dedicated and adequate source of funding for our storm water management program.

3. Why is storm water management necessary?

Storm water often contains surface pollutants including petroleum products, soaps, detergents, and lawn fertilizer which eventually empty into the Aberjona, Ipswich, and Saugus rivers. Effective storm water management also helps reduce flooding and the erosion of river banks.

4. How is the SWEF fee calculated?

Single and Two-Family properties will be billed at a flat rate. All other properties will be assessed an annual storm water fee based on the total amount of impervious surface area on the lot, which will be billed quarterly. Condominium properties will be billed based on the total amount of impervious surface, at a maximum of the single and two-family rate, for each condominium unit. The amount will appear as a separate charge on your quarterly water and sewer bill. The fee will follow for the following different types of property:

Property Type - Storm Water Fee

- Undeveloped - No fee
- Single & Two-Family Residences - Flat fee of \$10.00/ quarter or (\$40.00 annually)
- Multi-Family, Commercial/ Industrial - Fee is based on Total Impervious Surface Area.

5. How is total impervious surface area determined?

Impervious surface areas were measured using the Towns mapping system (GIS). Buildings, driveways, and parking areas, were delineated from aerial photos. The surface area of these features was calculated and will be assessed at a rate of \$40.00/ 3,210 sq. ft. (annually) for multi-family, commercial, and industrial properties.

6. For what purposes will SWEF fee revenue be used?

Storm water fee revenue will be used to hire two laborers that will perform stream and detention basin maintenance activities. The SWEF will allow the Department of Public Works to address a backlog of stream and drainage maintenance issues that have not been completed due to staffing and funding limitations. Storm water fees will also fund capital expenditures for drainage system mapping (GIS layer), illicit discharge detection, and general drainage system infrastructure improvements.

7. Will residents be assessed a SWEF fee if their property is located on a private way or on a town accepted street that does not have catch basins or storm drains?

Yes, although a property may be located on a private way or on a town accepted street that does not have catch basins or storm drains, the owner will be assessed a storm water fee since the property still produces runoff into the Town's storm water system.

8. Are there certain types of properties that are exempt from the storm water fee?

The Board of Selectmen approved a rate structure as recommended by the Water, Sewer, and Storm Water Management Advisory Committee that does not provide any exemptions for municipal properties, schools, or properties owned by religious or registered non-profit organizations.

Undeveloped property (without impervious surfaces) is the only category of property that will not be assessed a storm water fee.

9. Has the Town made any provisions for storm water abatements?

Yes, to encourage property owners to minimize the amount of runoff from properties and to reduce the amount of pollutants entering Town waterways, the Town has instituted the following storm water abatement program:

Single & Two-Family Residences:

Single and two-family residential properties that install and maintain infiltration systems or other means to reduce runoff will be eligible for an abatement of up to 50% of their total assessment.

Commercial/ Industrial/ Multi-Family:

Commercial/ Industrial/ Multi-Family properties that install and maintain state-of-the-art storm water treatment and infiltration systems will be eligible for an abatement up to 50% of their total assessment.

10. What are some typical storm water devices that qualify for abatements?

- Drywells
- Infiltration Chambers

- Detention Ponds

11. What are some typical devices that do NOT qualify for abatements?

- Drinking water filtration systems
- Rain Barrels
- Sump Pumps

12. Where can I obtain more information or file for an abatement?

Property owners or condominium associations (on behalf of condominium owners) seeking additional information or would like to file for an abatement should contact the Department of Public Works, Engineering Division at (781) 942-9082. The Abatement Application Form may be obtained through the Town of Reading website, or may be picked up at the Engineering Office at Reading Town Hall, 16 Lowell St.

13. Is the storm water abatement permanent?

The storm water abatement percentage will only change if the impervious surface area changes.

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