



# Albemarle County

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 17-429, **Version:** 1

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**AGENDA DATE:** 7/5/2017

**TITLE:**

Update on Stormwater Utility and Infrastructure Maintenance

**SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST:** Receive update and provide feedback on progress toward establishing a stormwater utility, including the development of a stormwater infrastructure maintenance policy

**ITEM TYPE:** Regular Information Item

**STAFF CONTACT(S):** Walker, Letteri, Henry, and Harper

**PRESENTER (S):** Greg Harper

**LEGAL REVIEW:** Not Required

**REVIEWED BY:** Douglas C. Walker

**BACKGROUND:** For the last several years, Albemarle County has been considering how to best support a water resources program that complies with federal and state mandates and that meets growing community expectations. Attachment A includes a brief history of Board actions related to this effort. In 2014, the Board appointed an advisory committee to develop recommendations for a funding mechanism. On September 7, 2016, the Board adopted the committee's recommendations, generally summarized as:

- **scope of program** - implement a water resources program that fully complies with regulatory requirements, such as those associated with the cleanup of Chesapeake Bay, and that meets other long-term needs and responsibilities, such as drainage infrastructure maintenance and watershed improvements
- **funding mechanism** - support this program with a County-wide stormwater utility having a fee structure that relates the fee to a property's contribution to stormwater runoff, based in part on the amount of impervious area

The Board directed staff to begin taking actions to establish a stormwater utility, including authorization to engage a stormwater utility consultant.

**STRATEGIC PLAN: Infrastructure Investment** - Prioritize, plan, and invest in critical infrastructure that responds to past and future changes and improves the capacity to serve community needs. **Natural Resources Stewardship** - Thoughtfully protect and manage Albemarle County's ecosystems and natural resources in both the rural and development areas to safeguard the quality of life of current and future generations.

**DISCUSSION: Stormwater Utility** - County staff have been working with the consulting firm Amec Foster Wheeler (AFW) to proceed with establishing a stormwater utility. During the months of April and May, several

meetings were held with key County staff to develop an implementation process and schedule, settle issues related to processes and technologies, and compile various information to inform the development of rate models and mapping/billing systems. The members of the former Water Resources Funding Advisory Committee were invited to participate - in an advisory role to staff - in the development of the utility rate structure, credit policy, and ordinance amendment. This group first met on June 13 and will be active as needed throughout the calendar year. The community engagement plan will be aligned with key milestones and will include a webpage and "what's my fee" look-up tool.

Staff anticipates the utility to be introduced in FY 19, with the first billing occurring in May 2019 to coincide with the issuance of 2019 first-half real property tax bills.

A summary of the anticipated implementation schedule is provided as Attachment A.

**Conveyance Infrastructure Management** - The stormwater utility rate must be linked to the cost of implementing the envisioned water resources programs. The major programs as summarized in the Committee's 2015 report include 1) meeting increasing state mandates, 2) maintaining drainage conveyance infrastructure, such as pipe and channel systems, and 3) restoring impaired watersheds. Staff are currently working to determine the extent and cost of an asset management program for conveyance infrastructure located throughout the County.

The County currently implements a reactive program - taking action only when infrastructure failures occur within public easements or when the Board determines there is a public interest. The envisioned program would include assessing the condition of infrastructure, attaining easements where necessary, doing maintenance and repairs as needed prior to failure, and various supporting efforts such as mapping, scheduling, and budgeting.

The first phase of developing a program is determining the portions of the storm sewer system for which the County should assume responsibility - generally those portions serving a public purpose but not within the jurisdiction of the Virginia Department of Transportation. Staff are developing a proposed policy - to be brought to the Board for consideration this fall - that would subsequently guide staff in determining County responsibility. A policy would 1) create consistency, 2) avoid duplication of efforts with other entities, and 3) eliminate the need for the Board to be involved in cases in which a failure occurs on private property and is not already within an easement - such as the 2014 sinkhole on Carrsbrook Drive.

As a first step in the process of developing a policy, staff have been creating a map of all stormwater conveyances within the County - focusing on the urban areas. The conveyances include culverts, pipes, channels, and structures such as manholes and inlets. As of June 9, staff has mapped approximately 200 miles of linear conveyances and approximately 6,400 structures. Staff will utilize the infrastructure map to determine the cost implications of policy variations.

Staff anticipates having additional work sessions with the Board beginning in September 2017 to formalize a policy. The policy will then allow staff to refine the cost of the conveyance infrastructure program and to incorporate this cost into the stormwater utility rate.

**BUDGET IMPACT:** This update on work progress does not have an effect on the budget.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

No action is required. This work session is an opportunity for staff to update the Board on work efforts related to establishing a stormwater utility.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

A - Brief History and Anticipated Implementation Schedule

