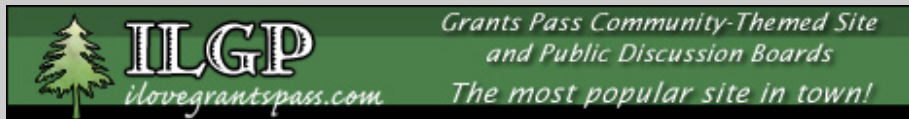


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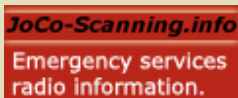


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City Government

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City working on storm water utility fee Fee added to water bills would be used to fund storm water system

By TIM BURLESON

GRANTS PASS, OR - The City of Grants Pass is working on a new fee that, if approved, will be added to water bills. Revenue collected from the Storm Water and Open Space Utility fee would be used by the City to build and maintain infrastructure for managing storm water. The City has said that managing the storm water system is becoming more important as the collection and depositing of storm water runoff into water ways is receiving increasing attention from regulatory bodies.

The storm water utility rate under consideration is \$5.00 per residential equivalent unit (REU). The rates currently charged by other Oregon cities range from \$2.27 REU in Ashland to \$10.00 REU in Portland. All residential customers would see a flat charge of 1 REU added to their monthly water bill from the City. The charge for commercial customers would vary based on their amount of "impervious surface."

The City is also working on a storm water ordinance that would apply to all development projects, residential and commercial. The proposed ordinance would require developers to install low impact measures for dealing with storm water runoff. The proposed ordinance includes requirements that 40 percent of runoff resulting from "impervious surfaces" caused by development is managed and the payment of a storm water system development fee.

An example application of the ordinance provided by the City explains how the ordinance might work. A residential lot that is developed resulting in 2,150 square feet of impervious surfaces would require runoff mitigation equivalent to 860 square feet. The mitigation requirement would be met using landscaping techniques like trees, grassy swales, filter strips and filter basins. The choice of mitigation techniques used to satisfy this requirement would be determined by individual developers.



Martin Seybold, Director of Field Operations, said that the City's storm water system will be designed to deal with storms that are "25-year events" or lesser in strength.

Storm water runoff increases where natural areas are developed (increasing the amount of impervious area). In undeveloped areas there is less runoff, runoff has a slower rate of flow and the runoff is naturally cleaned and more readily recharged into groundwater. In urbanized environments there is a higher amount of runoff that flows more rapidly, contains more pollutant wash off, and there is less groundwater recharge.

It is likely that the City Council will consider the storm water utility and ordinance later this year.

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