



**Town of Agawam, MA
Stormwater System Assessment and Utility/Fee Planning**

**Stakeholder Informational Workshop #3
September 25, 2017**

Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: Monday September 25, 2017
Time: 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Location: Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main St, Agawam, MA
Prepared by: Rich Niles (Amec Foster Wheeler)
Patty Gambarini (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission)

Attached for reference are the attendee sign-in sheet and stakeholder invitation, followed by a summary of key discussion points and information related to the project.

Summary:

1. Presentation

Rich Niles presented an overview of the project and work completed thus far with Town staff and the Task Force. This was an introductory meeting with stakeholders, however, it included a lot of material that the project team has developed. Questions were held until the end to allow for the material to be covered and Niles informed everyone that there would likely be questions that could not be fully answered at this time, but the project is ongoing and their concerns will be considered as future decisions are made. All stakeholders are welcome to attend the Task Force meetings, as well as future stakeholder meetings and other public engagements. Niles reiterated the key goals of the study, which are to:

1. Obtain a local consensus on Agawam's current and future stormwater management program needs, priorities and costs.
2. Execute a robust public engagement process to promote a deeper understanding of stormwater issues and funding needs.
3. Study the possibility of establishing a stormwater utility in Agawam.
4. Develop recommendations and a consensus for next steps.

The presentation focused on Agawam's stormwater management needs/costs and the primary funding options of raising taxes or implementing a stormwater utility fee.

2. Questions and Comments

Following the presentation, the stakeholders had numerous questions and comments around the stormwater program and how it is funded. This information is summarized below.

Question: What would the fee look like at Sarat Ford or Six Flags?

- Response: As discussed during the presentation, final rates have not yet been determined, but we have the potential range of fees for those properties that we can share. Also, it is important to know that these sites, like others, could possibly qualify for a credit.

Question: For FY17, \$892,000 is already taken out of the general fund so it's not clear when the five-year time frame starts.

- Response: We can update the budget to start with the FY18 general fund allocation.

Question: There is a catch basin that leads to a detention pond in my back yard at 10 Shelley Lane and the pond is silting up. Am I going to be responsible for maintaining this?

- Response: Currently residential property owners are responsible for facilities on their property. The Town has discussed the possibility of the DPW taking over the maintenance of these facilities if funds are included in the future program costs. Michelle Chase noted that this would only be on residential properties.

Question: If we were caught up on everything we need to do, what would the annual budget look like?

- Response: Probably in the range of \$2-3 million, which represents up to 2% of the Town's storm drain assets. But there is a lot of catching up to do and the current budget projections provide a reasonable start.

Question: Are you open to other ways of funding this work? I have an idea for another source that could help to supplement.

- Response: Yes, we are looking for the best options for funding the stormwater program.

Question: Have you ever seen taxes lowered when raising a stormwater fee?

- Response: There have not been enough stormwater utilities in Massachusetts to give you a good answer on that. Reading, for example, implemented their stormwater fee to supplement what is coming from the general fund. It depends on how and what the Town decides to fund through the general fund versus a stormwater fee.

Comment: The idea of discharging more stormwater into streams really causes problems downstream.

Question: How do we take care of culverts that are plugged on private property? Under town bylaws, we cannot go on private property to improve the stormwater system.

- Response: This is something that needs to be addressed moving forward, but generally the Town intervenes in emergency situations when it begins affecting public property or the welfare of the community.

Comment: Detention basins should work as infiltration basins.

- Response: Ideally yes,, but the Town's stormwater program needs to provide a higher level of service to adequately manage existing systems before it can dedicate resources to retrofit detention basins to function as infiltration basins.

Question: My neighbor's property floods because of the public storm system and his driveway is deteriorating. The road runs off onto his driveway. Is he going to have to pay the fee?

- Response: With adequate funding, the program could identify, prioritize, and fix problems like this that are associated with runoff from public roads. But the plan is that everyone pays since all town residents and companies benefit from a properly operating and maintained storm drain system.

Question: The presentation is geared towards a stormwater fee. Will this become a vote?

- Response: The City Council will get a report from the Task Force with recommendations for next steps. The goal is to understand the needs and costs for the program and then define how these costs will be covered. The stormwater utility is one viable option. If the Council supports the recommendations, they would conduct a public hearing and then take a vote.

Question: What is the approximate time frame to implement a stormwater utility fee?

- Response: The time frame to implement a stormwater utility ranges from community to community. For this current work, the plan is to finalize recommendations sometime early next year. To get to implementation, it typically takes up to a year or more to refine the data and prepare billing systems. Recently, the Town of Millis finished a stormwater utility feasibility study in June 2017 and decided to prepare a draft bylaw for their fall 2017 Town Meeting to approve implementation of a stormwater utility. Their goal is to fully implement the fee by July 2018, so this would be about one year from completing the study.

Question: Where does the mandate stop and the improvements to the storm system begin?

- Response: That is a gray area as the MS4 permit requires that the Town properly maintain their system to protect water quality. There are some clear compliance related issues to specific permit requirements that are driving costs, but there are also many issues related to properly maintaining the storm system and addressing existing problem areas.

Comment: We do have a backlog with a lot of areas in the stormwater system that are falling apart. We can now identify these issues with the DPW's new camera system, which has revealed pipes in poor condition and filled with sediment. In many areas, the Town's culvert crossings do not meet design standards, so we are going to see a lot more washouts and will need to add updating these crossings to our backlog.