



The City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

Office of the Public Works Department
320 East Mosby Road
Harrisonburg, Virginia 22801

STREET MAINTENANCE
TRAFFIC ENGINEERING
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING
REFUSE/ RECYCLING
RESOURCE RECOVERY
CENTRAL STORES
STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Phone: 540-434-5928 FAX: 540-434-2695

TO: Eric D. Campbell, City Manager
FROM: Thomas Hartman, PE, Director of Public Works
DATE: September 6, 2019
RE: Proposed Drainage Improvements Policy

Summary

The Public Works Department is interested in expanding its current stormwater management program to better integrate water quantity projects throughout the city and to provide additional options for management of drainage concerns for private property owners.

Background

During FY18, the Public Works Department documented 97 requests for service due to erosion, standing water, storm pipe or ditch issues, and street flooding. There are more than 200 areas in Harrisonburg with drainage issues that have been recorded over the past several years. Approximately 30% of the total areas of concern have occurred on public property and are handled by the Public Works Department through regular maintenance (debris removal on public property, cleaning of storm drains, etc.) or upgrades to public infrastructure (installation of curb and gutter in conjunction with other projects, installation of larger pipes, etc.).

The remaining areas of concern are private property issues. Private property issues are confirmed through deed research and site visits. If a citizen calls about a drainage issue that is verified as a private property issue, they are informed that the issue must be handled independent of the City. There is no formal process for citizens to request a private drainage improvement project be considered – either for larger drainage issues that affect multiple private properties or smaller drainage concerns on individual properties.

Drainage Improvements Program

The Drainage Improvements Policy establishes a way for citizens to request consideration of improvements for larger drainage issues that would benefit a neighborhood or larger regional area.

Citizens with concerns about drainage issues that have caused or are threatening damage to multiple properties may utilize the policy to request city-funded improvements. As with the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program, citizens with drainage concerns would reach out to Public Works staff with their concern through an application. Staff would then complete a preliminary study to determine: if a project is feasible, the need for improvements, if a project would benefit the public, and if there is an adequate outfall for the project. Feasible projects would be sent to the Stormwater Advisory Committee for approval. Depending on whether the project would have water quality features to yield pollutant removal or not would dictate the funding structure and need for donated easements. The project would then undergo a comprehensive engineering study and be ranked for project completion based on available funding. This project ranking and prioritization will be based on the project ranking factors and scoring guidelines in the Drainage Improvement Program Policy. It should be noted that water quality benefits are scored highly so that alleviating severe drainage issues with water quantity projects might also be paired

with potential pollution reduction features. The resulting pollutant removal can then be submitted towards the City's Chesapeake Bay TMDL compliance.

The Public Works Department anticipates a phased approach for program implementation, where the primary focus of the first year would be establishing a sound policy and collecting applications. Some preliminary studies may be completed based on availability of funding in the current budget. Depending on the amount of applications received, Public Works staff would reevaluate the Stormwater Utility Fee.

Key Issues: The Drainage Improvement Program would provide opportunities to address regional drainage concerns on private property.

Environmental Impact: Positive impacts are anticipated. Projects will be evaluated to ensure that the public benefit and utility of the proposed project are significantly greater than any adverse environmental and downstream impacts. Every effort will be made to design quantity projects with features that provide water quality improvements.

Fiscal Impact: The Stormwater Utility may be reevaluated.

Prior Actions: The Mountain View Drive stream restoration project, which is currently in the design phase, was an erosion issue that was brought to City Council by affected property owners. The Harrisonburg Conservation Assistance Program was implemented this year to provide cost-share assistance to property owners wishing to implement water quality projects and manage smaller drainage issues.

Alternatives: The alternative would be to not implement the Drainage Improvements Program. Public Works would continue its current operations by addressing drainage issues on public property. Drainage issues on private property would not be addressed by the City.

Community Engagement: Following the Council presentation, city staff will begin public outreach.

Recommendation: Adoption of the program.

Attachments: Council Presentation, Drainage Improvement Program Policy

Review:

The initiating Department Director will place in Legistar, in sequence of transmittal, the names of each department that must initial their review in order for this item to be placed on the City Council agenda. The completion of review only addresses the readiness of the issue for Council consideration. This does not address the recommendation for approval or denial of the issue.