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# Powder Springs Postpones Setting Storm Water Fee

City residents and business owners will have until at least mid-August before the amount for the monthly bill will be set.

By [Michael Stone](#) | [Email the author](#) | July 14, 2011

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Powder Springs residents will have at least another month before knowing what they'll be paying in storm water fees.

The [City Council](#) decided at Wednesday's work session to postpone setting the rate until at least the mid-August meeting. The fee will be between \$2 and \$4 per household but is expected to be closer to \$2.

The fee will help Powder Springs cover what City Manager Rick Eckert called "unfunded mandates" from increasing state and federal regulations regarding storm water runoff.

Among other things, the fee will go to drainage system assessments; inspections, maintenance and repair of the city's storm sewer system; storm sewer system inventory and mapping; and education programs.

Mayor Pat Vaughn questioned the delay in setting the fee. The ordinance behind it [was passed in early June](#), and now all that's needed is the actual amount.

"If we don't pass a fee and get started on it ... what are we going to do?" she asked. "How are we going to pay for the things we must do? Where is the money going to come from?"

Councilwoman Cheryl Sarvis said the fee should be set higher so it wouldn't have to be raised soon after being initiated. The citizens committee created to discuss the fee recommended it be start closer to the \$4 mark.

But Councilwoman Rosalyn Neal said: "You can go up a quarter or 50 cents a year. ... I know (the fee) doesn't sound like much, but these people, they can't hardly afford to pay their water bill."

One of the reasons the council postponed the vote—which would have taken place at Monday's council meeting—was because some members wanted more information about what the fee would cost businesses, churches and schools.

For these properties, the fee would go up depending on each one's square feet of impervious surface, which is areas like asphalted ground that water can't penetrate and must "run off."

The average runoff contribution of Powder Springs households—called one ERU or Equivalent Residential Unit—is 2,840 square feet.

That average is what will be used to figure what other properties must pay monthly. For example, if a business has 5,680 square feet of impervious surface, it must pay twice the monthly rate a homeowner would pay. So if the rate was \$2 for homeowners, the business would have to pay \$4 a month.

The rate stays the same for homeowners regardless.

Eckert said Wednesday that former [Public Works](#) Director Rodger Swaim suggested setting a cap at 50 ERUs, meaning that if the fee was \$2, the maximum monthly bill for businesses would be \$100.

Currently, storm water issues are being taken care of through the general fund. If the money in the upcoming storm water account can't cover a project, the city can still dip into the general fund, Eckert said earlier this year. But "certainly a large portion of what we're spending now would be shifted over to" the storm water account, he added.

Vaughn said Wednesday she would ask a representative from a city that already has a storm water fee in place, like Austell, to come speak with the council at the August work session. "We're kind of trying to guess (about) the impact," she said.

Austell residents have been paying \$1 a month since March 1998 and will continue paying that until November, when the rate will be raised to \$3.

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