Storm Water Utility Q&A

Q: What is a storm water utility?

A: A storm water utility is similar to any other utility (electricity, recycling service, garbage service, sanitary sewer service, or water service). The utility owner charges a fee (i.e. utility bill) based on the cost of servicing its customers. For example, revenue from a garbage pickup fee is used to pay for trucks, drivers, garbage cans, and sanitary landfill activities.

Q: Who is the utility owner?

A: Millcreek is the utility owner. Revenue from the utility would be used by Millcreek to pay for storm water related activities such as street sweeping, storm water construction projects, ongoing maintenance, and regulatory compliance.

Q: What benefits do storm water services provide?

A: Storm water services protect people and property from flooding during storm events. Storm water facilities are also an important roadway management tool because they allow for better roadway design to prolong roadway life.

Q: Why is a storm water utility important?

A: Currently, road and storm drain projects compete for funding. Most storm drain projects get completed after a failure and constitute emergency expenditures. A more practical and cost-effective way to carry out these projects would be to identify them in advance, schedule them for ideal construction windows, and bid them out. The implementation of a storm water utility is being investigated as a potential solution to the storm water system funding problem facing Millcreek.

Q: What are the costs of managing the storm water system?

A: The storm water system requires expenditures for the following components:

Operations and Maintenance: This category includes regular repairs, street sweeping, pipe cleaning, and removal of debris from catch basins and detention structures.

Regulatory Compliance (MS4 Permit Compliance): In recent years, the EPA has instituted more stringent requirements for storm water systems. These requirements are outlined in the city's MS4 (*Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System*) permit. MS4 compliance activities include construction inspection, code enforcement, and water quality testing.

Capital Expenditures: Capital expenditures include the construction and replacement of facilities to capture storm water and keep it from damaging property. Examples include pipes, catch basins, culverts, and detention structures.

Q: How were the administrative cost determined?

A: The administrative cost needed to provide for management, engineering, inspection and billing are the annual costs to employ the staff needed to fulfill administrative tasks related to the Operation and Maintenance, Regulatory Compliance, and Capital Expenditures (listed in the questions above) which are broken down in the following table:

Employee / Contract	Annual Cost					Amortized over 5-yr Period			Total	% Time	Weighted Total
	Salary	Benefits*	Vehicle Operation	Software / Supplies	Office Lease	Vehicle Cost	Office Equip	Field Equip			
Director/Designee	120,000	35,000	2,000	5,000	28,800	8,000	1,000	1,000	200,800	15%	30,120
Administration	50,000	35,000	-	1,000	15,360	-	2,000	-	103,360	12%	12,403
Storm Water (SW) Engineer	100,000	35,000	2,250	3,500	24,000	8,000	700	1,500	174,950	100%	174,950

SW Lead Inspector	70,000	35,000	2,500	3,500	19,200	8,000	500	5,000	143,700	100%	143,700
SW Inspector	60,000	35,000	2,500	2,500	9,600	8,000	500	2,000	120,100	100%	120,100
SW Inspector	60,000	35,000	2,500	2,500	9,600	8,000	500	2,000	120,100	100%	120,100
Billing (Rocky Mtn. Power estimate)									90,000	100%	90,000
Billing Specialist	50,000	35,000	-	18,000	15,360	-	2,000	-	120,360	100%	120,360
Storm Water Coalition									8,200	100%	8,200
											$819,933

*Avg. Cost of Providing Benefits

A brief description of each Employee/Contract from above:

Director/Designee – Department oversite; seeks grants opportunities and coordinates with city council, contractors, contracts, and compliance agencies (only requires a small percentage of employee's time). Performs Quality Control/Quality Assurance for the SD Utility.

Administration – City HR/payroll personnel/financial specialist. (This is an estimated breakdown from more than one existing city employee).

SW (Storm Water) Engineer – Professionally Licensed Engineer who designs and manages other consultant designers in the creation of SW plans and specification. Provides Construction Engineering services for the city. Provide Operation and Maintenance (O&M) direction on existing and future Storm Drain infrastructure and maintenance equipment, specifically vactor truck and street sweepers.

Inspectors – Supervise Trustee crew labor (prisoner laborer crew). Inspection activities both for mandated regulatory compliance and new SW construction improvement.

Billing (Rocky Mtn. Power estimate) – The estimated cost for RMP to bill Millcreek's 30,000 service addresses.

Billing Specialist – Millcreek employee to track changes to the service addresses, including tracking credits, past due billings, etc.

Storm Water Coalition – Contract which fulfills the mandated MS4 public outreach requirements ("We All Live Downstream" campaign, etc.)

Q: Are all Admin positions new hires?

A: No, only 3 additional positions are needed (Inspectors and Billing Specialist) for the additional Capital Improvement and O&M. The ongoing mandated MS4 permit and current Capital Improvement resources will be shifted from the general fund to the SD Utility. This will free general funds for road work, etc.

Q: Will storm water utility revenue be used for anything other than storm water functions?

A: No, revenue collected through the storm water utility can only be used for storm water utility activities.

Q: What is MS4 Permit Compliance?

A: MS4 stands for *Municipal Separate Storm Water Sewer System*. This refers to drainage systems that are not treated in a sewage treatment plant (nearly all storm water systems in the western US--including Millcreek's--fall into this category). The EPA sets standards for storm water runoff to reduce the discharge of pollutants from MS4's into surface waters such as rivers and streams. Compliance includes litter prevention and cleanup, public education and involvement, regular water testing, code enforcement, and other pollution monitoring and prevention activities.

Q: Do other Utah governments have a storm water utility?

A: Yes, most municipalities in Salt Lake, Utah and Davis Counties have already instituted a storm water utility.

Q: What are the advantages of creating a storm water utility vs raising taxes?

A: Advantages include the following:

- Currently, only those who pay taxes contribute to storm water system installation and maintenance. As a result, government buildings, churches, and schools do not pay for storm water systems, even though their large parking lots and building structures produce relatively high amounts of runoff. A storm water utility is seen as a fairer system because these entities, along with all residential and commercial users, each pay to help maintain the storm water system from which they benefit.
- Property taxes are based on property value, utilities are based on the amount of water the respective property contributes to storm water runoff. Thus, the amount each user pays under a storm water utility will be more representative of the benefit they gain from the system.
- Having a separate funding stream for the storm water system means that it will not compete with other services (especially road maintenance) for funding. This provides two distinct benefits:
    - Funding from the storm water utility fee will be used solely for storm water system activities. This will help ensure that the storm water system will be adequately funded.
    - Having the storm water system funded independently will leave more funding available for roads and other activities of the city.

Q: My property is not connected to the storm drain. Why would I participate if I am not using it?

A: Storm water systems are designed to mitigate storm effects both up- and downstream of the physical storm drain pipes, gutters, basins, etc. Storm water systems also provide drainage on the roads we all use to get to work, school, the store, etc. Therefore, even those whose property is not directly connected to the storm drain still receive the benefits of having a storm water system in the area.

Q: How much will the utility cost?

A: The storm water utility project team is currently performing a rate analysis that will set the utility at the level required to cover the city's storm water related expenses. When this analysis is complete, this website will be updated to show the proposed utility. It is expected that the utility will be similar to other utilities currently charged in neighboring entities.

Q: I maintain a private detention pond (or other storm drain facility). Should I pay the same as other properties which don't?

A: The draft implementation plan offers credits to commercial and multi-family properties which reduce flows into the storm drain system. Criteria for credits are an ongoing discussion, with a recommended maximum credit of 50% for those that qualify for all credits.

Q: What is the process that goes into establishing a storm water utility?

A: The storm water utility project team is conducting a detailed storm water rate study. A policy manual will be adopted to help ensure that budget policies and structure are an exact fit for Millcreek. The recommended utility will be specific to Millcreek's funding needs.

When the storm water utility project team has concluded their work, a recommended utility (with an underlying rate study) will be set. The City will host a public open house with the project team in attendance to answer questions and receive feedback.

All feedback will be considered before holding an official public hearing with City Council in advance of the City Council voting on the utility.

If adopted, the utility is currently targeted to be in place by Fall 2020.

Q: What is an ERU?

A: An Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) is the calculated amount of impervious area on a typical single-family residence. ERU's are used to quantify the amount of runoff generated by residential and non-residential properties in proportion to a typical single-family home.