

September 28, 2025

Dear Mayor, Council, and Town Staff,

The September 16, 2025 Report on “Stormwater Fee Recommendations and Implementation” states most respondents preferred variable fees “**proportionate to the amount of runoff different properties impact** on the stormwater system”; “**based on runoff area** (that) most accurately reflects the **varying runoff contributions** to the town’s stormwater system”; and “**proportioned to the amount of stormwater runoff** contributed to the system.” Respondents understood the need for more funding to deal with infrastructure needs, but they also made clear the need for “fairness, equity, and transparency” in making the fees proportionate to the degree to which individual properties impacted the system.

This policy is not based on proportionality of runoff impact. It disregards the nature of each property in terms of the amount of permeable surface versus hardscape.

The report states that the Town’s preferred fee structure will balance “fairness, equity, and transparency...with ease of administration.” This policy tips that balance in favour of the ease for the Town over fairness for the property owners.

The current tax system is based on assessment of the property’s value, which, while simple to administer, does not accurately correlate to a property’s stormwater runoff; therefore, the tax option is not perceived as a fair way to distribute stormwater costs.

It was made very clear to our family by Town representatives at the public engagement sessions that their analysis of the administration required to deal with variability and consistency in property area would be too time consuming, and therefore ease was chosen over fairness.

The three-tier flat fee for residential properties does not achieve a balance between equity and administration effort/cost. For example, a single detached with almost no hardscape, a small built-structure footprint, a permeable gravel driveway, and a green-scaped yard with no patio would pay \$273, four and a half times as much as the \$60 a linked townhome with a large built-structure and almost no permeable exterior surfaces would be charged. The representatives at the public engagement sessions agreed that, as unfortunate as it may seem, it is efficiency for the Town that trumped equity in determining the fee structure.

This plan offers no incentives for reducing impact on the system. What incentivizes property owners such as ourselves, who are being taxed at a much higher rate regardless of what we do to our property, work hard to minimize runoff by making sure we maximize soft, permeable surfaces on our land when townhome owners with much larger square-foot properties are paying less than a quarter of the taxes we pay? Also, why are even semi-detached houses that are the same in property size and value as single-family homes similarly being privileged?

When we asked about an appeal process for this extra charge, we were told the Town might review things in another five years or so, but no appeal mechanism was made clear. Likewise, the policy documents being put before Council tonight provide no further clarity.

We appreciate the Town’s efforts and engagement, but 58 people attending the third round does not seem to us to represent a “fairly high attendance”. We believe that many, perhaps the majority, of residential taxpayers are completely unaware of what is about to happen to their tax bills if this is implemented. When they do find out, there are sure to be real concerns raised about the inequities in the proposed fee structure and the absence of any incentives to property owners to mitigate run off.

Yours sincerely,
Terry Murphy
Michael Johnson