

## QUESTIONS

### Has Grimes implemented a Stormwater Utility Fee?

No, the City Council has been investigating a Stormwater Utility Fee for several years. The yearly estimated expenses for stormwater related items are \$620,000. The proposed fee structure would collect approximately \$310,000. Grimes would continue to use property tax or general fund dollars to backfill the remaining stormwater items. The City will hold a Public Hearing on the first reading of the ordinance on September 25, 2012. The goal is to implement the fee by January 1, 2013.

### Do other cities have Stormwater Utility fees?

Yes, a large number of municipalities in the United States have established stormwater utility fees to fund their stormwater management programs and facilities. Nearby communities in Iowa include: Johnston, Waukee, Clive, Urbandale, Windsor Heights, Des Moines, West Des Moines, Ankeny, Ames, Norwalk, and Indianola.

### Who pays the fees?

Owners of all developed land in the City of Grimes pay Stormwater Utility Fees. This includes residential properties, commercial properties, industrial properties, churches, schools, and other non-residential properties that have been developed. Undeveloped land, agriculture, and vacant properties are not charged stormwater utility fees.

Stormwater Utility Fees are billed monthly by the City of Grimes. The Stormwater Utility Fees are included on existing water and sewer utility bills.

### What is an ERL?

An Equivalent Residential Lot (ERL) is the total area for an average residential lot in the community. The City of Grimes has established that one ERL is equivalent to 10,000 square feet.

### What is the Stormwater Utility fee rate?

The City proposes a fee of \$5.00 per ERL per month beginning January of 2013. There will be a 5% annual rate increase for the Stormwater Utility Fee. The fee will be reviewed by the City Council each year to determine if rate adjustments are necessary.

### How are the Stormwater Utility fees calculated?

Property owners are charged stormwater utility fees based on total land area for each property. The Stormwater Utility Fee system is based on property area divided by one ERL (10,000 square feet).

All single-family residential, two-family residential, and mobile home properties are charged a fee for one (1) ERL. Apartment units are charged a fee for one half (1/2) ERL.

Commercial, Industrial, Schools, Churches and other non-residential properties are charged a fee for multiple ERLs as determined by property size compared to the average residential lot area. Non-residential properties are charged for no less than 1 ERL and no more than 40 ERLs.

Example 1: a single-family residential property is billed for 1 ERL; 1 ERL times \$5.00/ERL equals a Stormwater Utility Fee of \$5.00 per month.

Example 2: an apartment unit is billed for 0.5 ERLs; 0.5 ERLs times \$5.00/ERL equals a Stormwater Utility Fee of \$2.50 per month.

Example 3: a commercial property with 150,000 square feet of land is billed for multiple ERLs; 150,000 square feet divided by 10,000 square feet (1 ERL) equals 15 ERLs; 15 ERLs times \$5.00/ERL equals a Stormwater Utility Fee of \$75.00 per month.

### Are these new fees related to water rates?

No, water rates were increased in Grimes to pay for the water plant in 1999. Since the time, water rates in Grimes have been frozen at the same level while many communities around Grimes have seen yearly increases.

### Will there be an opportunity to reduce fees?

An ERL Credit Program will be developed for commercial, industrial, and other non-residential properties that provide stormwater management facilities and water quality components above the City Code Requirements. The program will offer credit and a reduction of monthly stormwater fees for qualifying properties. The City of Grimes will review formal requests and determine credit eligibility for each case.

### What is the Homeowner Grant Program?

A Homeowner Grant Program will be developed to offer financial assistance to residential property owners who would like to make stormwater improvements at their properties. Grant funding will be considered for projects related to channel repairs, bioswales, rain gardens, rain barrels, and similar projects to improve water quality. Annual funds for this program will be limited. The City of Grimes will review formal requests and award funding to qualifying projects in the order received.

### What if I have questions about the fee?

If you have questions concerning the proposed stormwater fee, please contact the City of Grimes at 515-986-3036.

## STORMWATER UTILITY GRIMES, IOWA



Information &  
Frequently  
Asked Questions

CITY OF GRIMES

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Stormwater Runoff and Stormwater Management

Federal laws regulating stormwater runoff require the city of Grimes to evaluate stormwater management and develop and implement a comprehensive stormwater quality program to protect property and improve water quality.

Stormwater runoff is rainfall or snowmelt that flows from saturated ground or impermeable surfaces such as roofs, driveways, streets, and parking lots. During storms, increased runoff can cause flooding problems if not managed properly by stormwater utilities.

In Grimes, stormwater facilities generally include: intakes, storm sewers, culverts, ponds, swales, ditches, and streams.

Stormwater may pick up contaminants such as oils, grease, fertilizers, pesticides, metals, and trash which can impair water quality and disturb natural habitats.

Stormwater management is essential for flood mitigation and pollution prevention.

Congress addressed the environmental impact of stormwater by amending the Clean Water Act in 1987. It requires cities to obtain federally enforceable NPDES permits.

These mandates are unfunded so a city must develop a method to pay for treatment.

### Stormwater Utility Fees

A Stormwater Utility Fee is an equitable method for the City of Grimes to collect revenue that will be used specifically for administration of a stormwater management program and implementation of stormwater projects. It provides a stable funding source and program flexibility which will result in stormwater improvements for the community.

Additionally, the purpose of a Stormwater Utility Fee is to enable the community to address safe and efficient capture of stormwater runoff, mitigate damaging effects of runoff, correct stormwater problems, and fund stormwater management.

Stormwater Utility Fees are billed monthly to all customers to fund the City of Grimes stormwater programs and facilities.

### Stormwater Utility Fee Utilization

An important task for communities is to manage stormwater through well-planned, -constructed, and -maintained stormwater facilities to prevent flood damage and pollution of receiving waters.

The City of Grimes is continually making efforts to provide reliable systems and improvements for collection, conveyance, detention, treatment and release of stormwater for quality and quantity management.

The Stormwater Utility Fee will be utilized for the following activities which are necessary for maintaining adequate stormwater management programs and facilities.

- NPDES Phase II Permit: water quality regulations and monitoring
- Capital Improvements: new construction and repairs
- Channel repairs and improvements
- Inspections and maintenance
- Floodplain management
- Master planning and watershed management
- Construction site inspections
- Education and public outreach

### Taxes vs Stormwater Utility Fees

The largest revenue source for the city's General Fund is property taxes. It is used to finance those operations most identified with the city—police, fire, and the library.

Relying on taxes for stormwater management is not effective for the following reasons: tax exempt properties don't contribute, taxes have variability, assessed property valuations are not proportional to stormwater utility use, and stormwater projects may become low priority for the shared funds.

A stormwater utility fee is a user fee, similar to water and sanitary sewer utility service fees. Users of these services are charged for the demand they place on the system.

A stormwater utility fee has been found to be the most effective tool for equitable stormwater management funding.

Iowa Code Section 384.84 makes provisions for the creation of a stormwater utility fee for a community.

Stormwater fees are protected and cannot be used by the City for any purpose other than stormwater related items.

### Before



### After



CITY OF GRIMES

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