

Communication and Public Outreach Plan for Stormwater Utility Development and Implementation



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Implementation

INTRODUCTION

This Public Outreach and Communication Plan for Stormwater Development and Implementation will allow municipalities to reach an audience in a manner that has the most impact while they undergo a stormwater utility feasibility study and begin user-fee implementation. In order to maintain transparency and accountability, a communication and outreach strategy using tools and methods that target the sharing of knowledge should be developed. The purpose of this document is to guide that process and tailor the outreach strategy to suit a community's needs.

Comprehensive Outline Addressing All Elements of a Communication Strategy

The following outline provides a comprehensive list of critical elements for a communications plan when developing a stormwater utility feasibility study and user-fee implementation. This outline covers potential scenarios that may be relevant to your community.

When using this outline, start with a mission statement –the purpose of the communication strategy. Several detailed sub plans may evolve as the process of stormwater user-fee evaluation proceeds and implementation steps are initiated.

There are four broad tasks that need to be completed early for any public outreach campaign:

1. Identify the make-up of audience and general behaviors,
2. Craft an appropriate message that will resonate with that audience, and
3. Determine the most effective media for communication and interacting with that audience.
4. Branding – it is critically important that you identify your “brand” or image for all communications regarding the study and ultimate implementation of a stormwater user fee. This can be achieved by use of color, style, and logo for the stormwater program. It serves to create visual recognition of the subject matter.

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PUBLIC OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION PLAN - GENERIC EXAMPLE FOR A STORMWATER UTILITY FEASIBILITY STUDY

Mission: This Public Outreach and Communication Plan addresses key strategies to ensure that consideration of a stormwater utility will be a transparent process, based on consultation with stakeholders and the general public. Engagement will occur in a manner that respects the breadth of knowledge and priorities found across the community. Following the prescribed steps below will ensure that your municipality's stormwater utility feasibility study process is inclusive of all stakeholders, and ultimately successful in managing stormwater in your municipality.

1. Identifying the Target Audience

The following key stakeholders will be targeted for ongoing communication during the completion of a stormwater utility feasibility study. They represent both internal stakeholders and external stakeholders, including the general public. The inventory of stakeholders will expand as additional targets are identified. The intent is to be transparent during this study to ensure that the broadest audience is informed.

1.1 Internal Stakeholders

Internal stakeholders include community leaders such as the governing body, Mayor/Commissioner, key department directors, and operations staff.

1.1.1 Decision makers/ elected officials/Municipal staff

The Town Manager, Finance Director, Public Works Director, Stormwater Manager, and Public Communications Director will serve as an internal stakeholder committee. This group will be informed throughout the study process of the policy and program decisions to be made and will participate in providing guidance and direction to the study team.

1.1.2 Municipal boards, and/or commissions

Various boards and commissions play an important role in framing public input into policy that impacts the management of the storm drainage system. These include the Planning Board, the Zoning Board, and the Environmental Commission or Advisory Committee.

1.1.3 The study team

Includes a consulting team of experts who will work alongside the internal stakeholders.

1.2 External Stakeholders

External stakeholders include business owners, property managers, homeowners, community interest groups, homeowner associations, and rental property owners.

1.2.1 Community and special interest groups

The Downtown Business Development Council, the Association of Apartment Management Companies, all homeowner associations, the Green Team, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Public School Board are key stakeholders in both financial and drainage system operational issues. Neighborhood groups will be identified with the assistance of the Planning Department or relevant municipal staff to ensure that residents and businesses in all areas of the community are targeted for outreach.

1.2.2 Economic and community development partners

Developers and non-taxable property owners are included to ensure an understanding of the stormwater program needs and their role in supporting the overall operations through financial support.

1.2.3 Owners of Large Impervious Areas

Warehouses, commercial office parks, universities, car dealerships, houses of worship, and public school systems own significant amounts of impervious area. These owners will receive the largest bills and have an interest in credit methodologies to reduce their financial burden.

1.3 Stormwater Advisory Committee (SWAC)

A representative group of external stakeholders is set up to provide input on key policy and program recommendations. It is not a decision-making body, but advisory to the municipal leadership. It does not include elected officials or municipal staff who are engaged in internal stakeholder committees.

1.3.1 Composition

A citizen-based stormwater advisory committee of no more than 15 members is appointed by invitation of the Municipal Manager, to representatives of the following stakeholders:

- Chamber of Commerce
- Faith Community Association
- ABC Big Box Store
- Building Director of Key University
- Downtown Owners Council
- Routinely impacted resident – three appointees
- Master Gardeners
- Public Hospital
- Waterfront Development Corporation
- Young Leaders Business Association
- Environmental Commission
- XYZ Contractors
- Local Engineering Firm

1.3.2 Goals of the SWAC

The Advisory Committee (SWAC) goals are to offer guidance and recommendations on the levels of stormwater services provided to the community, which is the basis of the financial analysis for development of a stormwater utility. The SWAC shall review various policy options that impact the rate structure and ultimate rates for a user-fee funded utility. The committee shall be supported by the study team who will provide organizational guidance (i.e., agenda, minutes, background materials). The SWAC will provide guidance on public outreach including audience identification and key messages.

1.3.2.1 General conduct of the SWAC

The SWAC meetings are facilitated by the study team and no chairperson is recommended. The SWAC will not vote on policy but will come to informed consent in structuring recommendations or advice. The members may represent specific audiences, but they will be asked to be open to the opinions and guidance of all members. Information will be provided in advance of each meeting, including background materials on topics to be addressed, agendas, and meeting minutes from previous meetings.

1.3.2.2 Determine extent of outreach and education

The SWAC will advise on the overall direction of the public outreach efforts, assisting by reviewing the draft communications plan and offering guidance on target audiences and messages. They will provide input on specific public outreach goals.

1.3.2.3 Identify reason for need of stormwater utility

The SWAC input will be used to provide the foundational message on a compelling case for the need of new revenues as well as the method of generating the resources. One meeting will be devoted to identifying needs and priorities.

2. Developing the Messages

2.1 Identify Targeted Subjects

The first step to defining key subjects is gaining an understanding of what level of knowledge may exist within each target group. Second, identify what key topics have been identified by the Advisory Committee if you're working with one. If not, the internal stakeholders, leadership as well as operations staff, should identify the critical messages. In this section of the Plan, the content and strategy for disseminating knowledge is identified.

2.1.1 Current service issues

The compelling case for change of services and funding is based on data gathered by the study team, from staff, stakeholders, surveys, and other documents such as stormwater master plans. The issues include:

- Improvements in maintenance of the drainage infrastructure with a long-term goal to maximize the capacity of existing components
- Expanding the use of green infrastructure best practices that will be incorporated through amendments to design standards and partnerships with private property owners.
- Increase capital investments including rehabilitation of the pipe conveyance system over time to reduce the incidence of flooding and improve the resiliency of the drainage network to handle impacts from climate shifts.
- Recognizing that increased revenue demands impact property owners who have varying incomes. Investing in the program will occur over time.
- Problems are real and will not go away without additional resources.

2.1.2 Solutions to service issues and resource needs

Messages will reiterate that the issues are real, that resources are needed, and the critical decision is to identify how to distribute costs to property owners. Secondly, messages will inform all target audiences the options for raising additional resources (compare potential property tax increases to a user fee; identify how grants and debt may be used).

2.1.3 General concept of stormwater utility

Included in messages to educate on level of service, topics on funding will be introduced. Identification of the attributes of a stormwater utility will be addressed with the SWAC and in publications such as postings on the municipal website, newsletters, presentations to stakeholders, and flyers or brochures.

Rate structure is of interest to all stakeholders. A brochure for use with the general public on the user-fees, how they are calculated, and where to get further information should be developed.

2.2 Motivators for Public Support of Additional Resources

The study team will utilize the SWAC to identify the issues facing the community regarding stormwater and gather background on what motivation various stakeholders have to support additional resources. Barriers to support will also be identified. The factors will be focused on the following targeted audiences:

2.2.1 Individuals (non-homeowners, renters, visitors)

2.2.2 Business Owners/Developers

2.2.3 Nonprofits and non-taxable property owners

2.2.4 Elderly and individuals on fixed income

2.2.5 Youth/University students

2.3 Develop Messaging

2.3.1 Messaging Content

The overall strategy for development of messages for specific stakeholders and for the general public of our community shall be targeted to answering the critical questions of “What, Why, When” and ultimately “How.” The answers to these questions may not be the same for all impacted.

2.3.2 Technical information and factual data

Technical information is the most challenging to share, and it must be relatable to each target audience. The material content will be reviewed by the municipal staff responsible for communications to assist in challenging the style and relevance of the message. Jargon will be avoided, and use of acronyms will be limited to those things that are easily understood.

2.3.3 Graphical demonstrating the stormwater system infrastructure

Maps will be employed when describing areas of the community that are underserved, face repetitive flooding, have drainage system failures, and/or need additional stormwater controls. When maps are used, ensure that they are easily read, details are clear, and landmarks are recognizable to orient the reader.

Photos and videos showing impacts to water quality will be clear, annotated, and copyright noted to give appropriate credit to the owner of the images.

2.3.4 Community or customer impact stories

As an optional outreach activity, a video could be scripted and developed to document actual testimonials of needs to improve the drainage system. Members of Council will be included to provide an opportunity to state their support for change in services. Key stakeholders will be engaged to tell the visual story of stormwater in the community. Additional opportunities for promoting community stories include social media posts, Op-eds, and LTEs. Municipal staff responsible for communications will provide support for development.

2.3.5 Strategy

The overall strategy for the Plan is to reach an audience using tools and methods that target the sharing of knowledge in a manner that has the most impact, in order to maintain transparency and accountability. Tools are matched to the target audience, with some specifically focused on an outreach to all stakeholders.

2.3.5.1 Build over time

To resonate with a targeted audience, communication may occur frequently, using different tools and methods (e.g., public service announcements, public meetings, articles in newspapers, interviews on the radio, podcasts, Tweets, and postings on other social media). Knowledge building requires repetitive actions to reinforce the learning.

2.3.5.2 Clear and concise

The tools and message format will be language(s) appropriate to community demographics. All written materials should be available in at least two languages, English and Spanish, with specific materials written for other native languages as guided by the Municipal staff responsible for communications. The content should be tested with the SWAC and with the municipal staff.

2.3.5.3 Visually explain and depict the issues

Visual tools such as a communication matrix can serve portions of the targeted audience who receive information in a more structured manner. Photographs will be employed where appropriate to demonstrate the key topics in the message. Not all of our stakeholders learn through the written

word, so use of other forms of contact such as social media and podcasts will be utilized in conjunction with fact sheets and brochures.

3. Outreach Implementation Methods

3.1 Means of Distribution

3.1.1 Email, direct mailer, and newsletter

Municipalities are encouraged to utilize email, direct mailers and/or a newsletter for those regular updates of the stormwater utility feasibility study and utility implementation. Such general and routine information will be posted to the municipal website and social media sites.

3.1.2 Community partnerships aid in distribution of pamphlets, posters, flyers, fact sheets, and “frequently asked questions (FAQs)” used for outreach to businesses and community centers. Other print media outlets such as local newspapers, business news publications (Chamber of Commerce), and apartment management internal newsletters will be encouraged to carry articles of interest. Municipalities should coordinate with these outlets to get approval to submit material for publication.

The website will have a specific tag to all information on the stormwater utility study, housing all print media and links to other outlets such as social media, Council meeting recordings, and all SWAC materials.

3.1.3 Television commercials, local public television segments, and local news features are costly to produce; however, partnerships with our local television outlets and our own broadcast division for our cable channel to prepare material should be formed, if applicable. Interviews with the Mayor and Council as well as key staff, will be coordinated with the Town Clerk and municipal staff responsible for communications. Recognizing that these are limited in time (usually no more than a few minutes), the topics targeted for this media format will be critical decisions on the program and/or the structure and timing of the utility.

3.2 Meetings and Workshops

3.2.1 Public Forums have a limited role in our Plan. Historically these events are not well attended. These will occur to meet our own mandates for documenting the opportunity for public input. When used, the Forums will target specific audiences and outreach will use “invitations” to the stakeholders to be engaged.

Effective presentations and an agenda should be prepared. A spokesperson will be identified who will coordinate with other speakers, based on the agenda and technical topics.

An open house and town hall forum should be used when a specific neighborhood issue is on the agenda, announcing the meeting through social media, neighborhood organizations, and on the website. The Planning Department or municipal planning consultants will be involved to assist in identifying key neighborhood stakeholders.

Public Forums and open house events, to be effective, require two-way communication, interactive, and transparent collaborative processes. Feedback tools for each meeting, using surveys and the stormwater website link for individual participation, should be prepared.

In public meetings with municipal boards/commissions, and special interest groups, a presentation and storyboards will be used to capture the agenda and key messages. A feedback process will be used at each meeting.

Presentation to local government officials and/or existing authority boards will occur routinely throughout the study process. These meetings will be coordinated with the Municipal staff responsible for communications and be led by the study team project manager and technical leads.

3.2.2 Targeted Stakeholder Groups

Individual or small group meetings with influential community members will be used when specific technical issues or potential financial impacts are noted. For example, the faith community will be engaged in advance of final decisions to discuss their role as stewards of the environment. Other key community groups such as the Downtown Development Association can play an important role in disseminating information and in rallying support. Such meetings will be used when specific tailored messages and means of communication are identified. At no time will engagement occur at this level unless the Town leadership is informed (i.e., members of Council may wish to participate).

- 3.2.3 Demonstrations and neighborhood tours could be used early in the study process for the SWAC, Council, municipal leadership, and other key stakeholders such as the schools and universities. Reinforcing the compelling case for investment in the infrastructure is best done in the field. Technical staff from the stormwater management team will lead the tours, providing area maps and details on the improvement area. Tours on demand will be made available to stakeholder groups upon request. The promotion of tours will be done through representatives of stakeholder groups (e.g., Chamber, Apartment Mgmt. Association).

The attendees will be required to sign a Waiver of Liability and will be notified in advance if Personal Protective Equipment is required. The municipality will provide hard hats and safety vests at a minimum. Photographs of the tours will be placed on the municipal website.

Rain gardens, rain barrels or other low-impact development measures will be targets for tours. Promotion of green infrastructure best practices is a goal of the stormwater management program and will be highlighted on tours. Repeat flood intersections should also be a target for tours. Other topics of emphasis will be design requirements along with the need for promotion of explanatory signage. Use of school sites and the university for education on natural system restoration and best practices are key messages for the tours.

4. Schedule

The following timeline represents the study period key message targets and anticipated decision-points. It is a starting point, and it must be flexible. It will be adjusted periodically as needed. The overall Plan shall be reviewed on a monthly basis to identify progress in the overall study and potential gaps in reaching targeted audiences. Additional meetings and workshops will be added.

5. Evaluation of Goals of the Public Outreach and Communication Plan

- 5.1 Periodically during and at the conclusion of the outreach program, evaluate the messages, methods, target audience responses, and potential impacts. These summaries will be provided to the Municipal Council and leadership. A Survey will be provided as a means of feedback for workshops, presentations, and specific interactions with the public.
- 5.2 After every workshop or public presentation/engagement, data will be gathered on participation rates to measure established public participation goals. The public participation activities are a means for stakeholders to voice questions or concerns. It is important to gather their feedback to allow adjustments in the Plan to improve engagement efforts. Results will guide final messaging and methods in post approval outreach phase.

COMMUNICATION	PURPOSE	MEDIUM	AUDIENCE	DATE
Council Meeting (1 of 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Introduce stormwater program objectives » Summarize current program » Discuss public outreach 	Virtual meeting and Face-to-Face	Council Municipal Leadership	Month 1
Council Input: Are the program objectives accurate? What are some strategies to apply to public outreach and their desired engagement?				
Public Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Present stormwater responsibilities and challenges 	Social media, Website, Municipal-TV	General Public	Month 2
Council Meeting (2 of 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Confirm stormwater program objectives » Review billing data observations » Review impervious area observations and rate structure options » Review future program » Review public outreach strategy 	Face-to-Face	Council and Town Leadership	Month 3
Council input: Will the level of service of future stormwater program activities achieve the stormwater program objectives? Which rate structure option is preferred, considering 'fair' distribution of program costs and long-term data maintenance needs? Will the proposed method of public outreach achieve the desired level of awareness of the Council's strategy and achieve the appropriate opportunity for feedback?				
Targeted Stakeholders Meeting (1 of 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Present stormwater program objectives » Present stormwater responsibilities and challenges » Summarize future program options » Summarize rate structure options » Gather feedback for Council consideration on user fee development concepts 	TBD	Community representatives selected by the Study Team and Town Leadership	Month 4
Council Meeting (3 of 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Review stakeholder/public feedback » Confirm future program » Confirm rate structure and policies » Review cash demand model and available strategies » Review credit policy options 	TBD	Council and Town Leadership	Month 4
Council input: What will the process be for consistent application of policies that implement the selected rate structure? What is the appropriate mix of funding sources for the preferred future program? Who should be eligible for credits? What activities should qualify for credits? How generous should the credit program be?				
Stakeholders Meeting (2 of 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Review Council consideration of previous input from Stakeholders » Review future program » Review rate structure and potential policies » Provide input on public outreach methods 	TBD	Community representatives selected by the Technical Team and Municipal Leadership	Month 5
Public Presentation (1 of 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Present future program » Present rate structure and policies » Present range of rates » Present timeline 	TBD	General Public	Month 5
Public Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Present future program » Present rate structure and policies » Present range of rates » Present timeline 	Social media, Website, Town TV	General Public	Month 5
Council Meeting (4 of 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Review Stakeholder and public input » Confirm cash demand model and rate » Review future stormwater program implementation plan » Review adoption ordinance, credits program, and appeal process 	TBD	Council and Municipal Leadership	Month 6
Council input: Will implementation of the future program achieve the Council's stated stormwater program objectives? Have decisions on the proposed rate structure and future program appropriately considered Stakeholder and public input? What is the method for tracking progress towards stormwater program objectives and adapting program elements?				
Targeted Stakeholders Meeting (3 of 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Present credit policy » Present cash demand model and rate » Present implementation plan 	TBD	Community representatives selected by the Technical Team and Town Leadership	Month 6
High Ratepayer Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Present credit policy » Present cash demand model and rate » Present implementation plan 	TBD	Highest ratepayers	Month 6
Public Presentation (2 of 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Present credit policy » Present cash demand model and rate » Present implementation plan 	TBD	General Public	Month 6
Public Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Present credit policy » Present cash demand model and rate » Present implementation plan 	Social media, Website, Town TV	General Public	Month 6
Council Meeting (5 of 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Review Stakeholder, high ratepayer, and public input » Consider adoption of stormwater user fee 	TBD	Council	Month 6-8
Council action: Consider adoption of user fee and discuss implementation schedule.				

EXAMPLE PUBLIC OUTREACH PLAN - FOCUS ON ADVISORY COMMITTEE EFFORTS

The following public outreach plan targets communication regarding the development of a program of services to be funded by user-fees through the engagement of a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). It is structured as a matrix, noting Activity, Purpose, Target Date, and Method of Outreach. This is a targeted plan with a specific purpose, rather than an overall comprehensive strategy. Using detailed sub plans may be most effective to focus communication efforts during specific steps of utility consideration.

Mission: To educate the public and specific stakeholders on the role and activities of a citizen committee, appointed by the leadership of the Municipality to advise the Mayor and Council on important policies and a comprehensive level of service for stormwater management programs including the feasibility of implementing a stormwater utility. The committee shall review current and future needs along with costs of various options to address stormwater management quantity of flow and quality of discharge. The committee shall report to Council periodically on key policy and program development. The communication plan shall serve to document outreach methods, timing, and purpose.

Activity	Purpose	Target Date	Outreach Method
Launch Public Engagement tab on website	To give the public a place to learn more about the questions being considered by the Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include an E-Mail sign-up for a new Water Resources Funding list • Content: background on old mandates, new mandates, existing programs; gallery of BMPs and impairments, map of streams and of impairments; urban vs. rural • Links to presentation, video, survey 	March 30	E-Mail (specific mailing list maintained by Public Info Officer), Facebook
Presentation & Video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Water Resources – existing program, new mandates, water quality connections • YouTube presentation (audio + slides) 	March 20	Website, E-Mail list, Facebook, Twitter
Survey	Questions similar to those covered by the CAC meeting to get at level of support for water resources programs to do the minimum vs some additional programming with an eye towards water quality (can include questions on rural streams on the cusp, mapping the graywater system, urban streams). No more than 5 questions.	March 30 – May CAC event	Website, E-Mail list, Facebook, Twitter
Flyer	Design a simple flyer for posting on community bulletin boards and online to advertise the Water Resources webpage and survey	April 1	Use committee members to post around County, email to constituents
Engage Community (i.e., community program for public outreach)	Open Question: free-write goals and visions that you as a community member want the water resource committee and elected officials to consider when discussing funding strategies for water resources.	April 1-30	E-Mail, email to CACs and HOAs
Presentation to HOAs	Present to general session during Homeowners Association (HOA) leadership summit, if applicable	April 29 (weeknight)	HOA email list
Update Public Engagement tab on website	Add content on funding mechanisms (type, pros and cons)	One day between: May 1 – May 15	E-Mail, email to CACs and HOAs, media release
Presentation to CACs	Present to general session during CAC joint session	Late May (weeknight)	CAC lists
Public Workshop/ Open House: Funding New Mandates for Water Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displays derived from web content (background and funding) (25 minutes) • Presentation (25 minutes) to discuss LOS considerations/consensus from BOS/ WRFAC, funding mechanisms, and impacts of funding mechanisms • Small panel with WRFAC members talking about the different funding mechanism impacts (2 minutes each for remarks with representation from an urban HOA, rural property owner, large commercial landowner, agriculture, 10-minute Q&A) 	One day between: May 18-29 (but not 5/22 or 5/25)	E-Mail, Facebook, Twitter, Email to HOAs announce at CACs, media
Focus Group/ Stakeholder Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene representatives from the business, resident, and non-profit/faith communities, as appropriate based on recommended funding strategy • Materials sent in advance on background, LOS (from web) • Presentation (25 minutes) to briefly go over mandates, LOS considerations, funding options. Then breakout into three groups for facilitated discussion (60 minutes) to include a brief presentation on the specific impacts to the group by funding type, a round-robin on comments/reactions, and a group discussion on themes. 	One day between: June 1 - 30	Use committee members and E-Mail to invite
Engage Community	Poll question on funding mechanism	May 18 - June 18	E-Mail participants of workshop, email to CACs and HOAs

PUBLIC OUTREACH OPTIONS – LIMITED TIMEFRAME EXAMPLE

When there is limited time to build public awareness, the communication plan must be flexible and adjusted as the timeline allows. Though public understanding of the challenges facing the municipality with regard to stormwater management is critical to the successful implementation of a stormwater utility, intense and targeted messages will change as feedback occurs. The public outreach campaign for the is unique to its particular needs, history, and institutions.

A key consideration in designing this outreach approach is the relatively short time frame involved. As a result, where a typical process may include a prolonged “build-up” to make the case for the utility, this approach will need to combine making the case for the utility while educating the public and businesses about the proposed funding approach.

Another consideration is defining the audiences reached through a targeted Plan. In addition to the elected body (whose enactment process is also part of the overall education), audiences include the public at-large and targeted individuals/organizations. Targeted individuals/organizations may be those with a large stake in the process outcome (large property owners, property owners that are currently exempt from the real property tax, etc.) as well as organizations that have the potential to reach large numbers of residents. In addition, the Environmental Commission or Advisory Committee may serve as a key group to reinforce the messages and case for changing the funding method.

The development of a consistent message is also key to the success of the stormwater utility. Some ideas to keep in mind while developing the message are:

- There is drainage, water quality and other stormwater runoff needs that are currently not being met (with specific examples that are readily identifiable).
- Water quality issues have a direct impact on the local streams and rivers as well as downstream communities. By being good stewards of the environment, the community can make a difference in these efforts.
- Stormwater management affects the quality of life. Flooding and drainage problems reduce property value and disrupt services.
- There is a plan to meet the water quality and drainage infrastructure needs that is thought out, effective and not extravagant.
- The stormwater management strategy does cost more money, over time, than currently budgeted, but this additional investment is well worth it in terms of solving problems.
- The method to generate this new revenue is fair, adequate, and stable, and is more equitable than a tax increase.
- The method is not a tax but a user fee and is very practical in its approach.
- There are highly visible projects to demonstrate that the program is a reality. (It is important to have several key projects defined).

The following is a strawman for approaching public education and outreach. The approach should continue to be refined based on further clarification provided by the stormwater staff.

Mission: Inform the general public, specific stakeholders, elected officials and staff on the stormwater services provided by the community, addressing needs and a forecast plan of services to meet regulatory and operational needs of the storm drainage system. The communications plan includes periodic updates of leadership and elected officials on current services, needs, future strategies, forecast costs, and funding options. The initial outcome of a utility feasibility study will lead to a decision on whether to implement a user-fee to generate revenue for long-term operation of the stormwater drainage network.

Timing	Mayor/City Council	General Public	Targeted Audiences
Preplan		Define brand approach – print material font, color, type size; choose logo and color scheme for all messaging tools.	For use with all materials, tools, communications, presentations.
Month #1	Update on progress of the utility implementation strategy.	<p>Update the webpage for general public friendly information on the City's stormwater challenges, the approach being taken to address these challenges, and FAQs. Consider providing a temporary hot link from the front page.</p> <p>Develop a logo and color scheme for an easily identifiable look. (This has been successful in other communities).</p> <p>Develop an FAQ sheet and simple, colorful outreach brochure no later than the end of the month.</p> <p>Staff attends various events from Late-June through December.</p> <p>Schedule one-on-one meetings with key press that are likely to cover the utility in order to provide technical background information.</p>	<p>Identify target audiences (business groups, church groups, nonprofit groups, civic associations, watershed organizations, major ratepayers, etc.). Solicit help of community environmental members to identify organizations, if appropriate.</p> <p>Develop two or three different presentations, depending on the audiences.</p> <p>Send a letter out to targeted organizations offering to present information on the stormwater program. Identify particularly important target organizations for a follow-up call.</p> <p>Staff attends speaking engagements as necessary.</p>
Month #2		Run PSAs on the process and general stormwater needs on local government TV channels (if available).	<p>Staff attends speaking engagements as necessary.</p> <p>Create an information packet for staff on the program so that they can answer questions. The idea is to empower them to be advocates, even if their area of expertise is in another field. (Can be created from other tools developed).</p>
Month #3	Briefing of Mayor (or other appropriate elected leader)	Press package available to local papers on the Council's proposed action.	Briefing the Environmental Commission or Advocacy Committee.
Month #3 and #4			<p>Provide information packets to staff. Conduct meetings with relevant division staff as needed (Identified by Public Works Director and project manager).</p> <p>Staff attends speaking engagements as necessary.</p> <p>Send a letter out to major ratepayers (top 100) announcing an open house on the utility. Hold the open house in early October.</p>
Month #5	Full Elected Body presentation Or Individual informal meetings if appropriate.	Update of webpage and development of general presentation on the stormwater program and funding that can appear on local government TV. Develop a flyer/brochure that provides a program overview that can be distributed through the library and City Hall.	<p>Staff attends speaking engagements as necessary.</p> <p>Major “ratepayer” open house.</p>
Month #5	Public hearing w/ advance notice.	Public hearing w/advance notice.	Public hearing w/advance notice for stakeholders and property owners.
Late Month #5 and Month #6	Adoption by City Council (i.e., elected body) as part of budget process	Public Hearing notices posted.	City Council and general public on actions to adopt the user-fees and various policies.
Month #7		Stakeholder meetings for properties with highest charge to inform on purpose, timing, and estimated annual charge.	Large property with highest amount of impervious area to inform in advance of receipt of bills.
Month #8		Webpage updated with all the details of the utility, program, and goals.	All public stakeholders with emphasis on property owners.
Month #8		Develop a customer service plan and train appropriate staff.	All staff who have public contact regardless of City organization.



The resource center, created by New Jersey Future, is a one-stop resource for housing technical legal and financial information, case studies and helpful guidance on stormwater solutions, community process and public engagement. [Sign up](#) to receive regular stormwater utility updates.

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Founded in 1987, New Jersey Future is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that promotes sensible and equitable growth, redevelopment, and infrastructure investments to foster healthy, strong, resilient communities; protect natural lands and waterways; increase transportation choices beyond cars; provide access to safe, affordable, and aging-friendly neighborhoods; and fuel a strong economy for everyone. New Jersey Future does this through original research, innovative policy development, coalition-building, advocacy, and hands-on strategic assistance. Embracing differences and advancing fairness is central to New Jersey Future's mission and operations. New Jersey Future is firmly committed to pursuing greater justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion through its programs, internal operations, and external communications.