

Subject: Testimony on Council Resolution No CR 35-2020; Reimbursement rates for the installation of stormwater best management practices on private property.

To: Lonnie R. Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer

From: Julie Costantino, Office of Community Sustainability

Date: February 24, 2020

As you may be aware, for most of Howard County's history stormwater management was not required as part of the development process. As a result, a significant portion of Howard County private property does not have adequate stormwater treatment in place. In addition, as our County has grown, so has the amount of impervious surface, which increases stormwater runoff by reducing natural infiltration. In addition, climate change is increasing extreme weather events producing record high annual rainfalls in our region. As part of the County's MS4 permit we are required to treat 20% of the untreated impervious surfaces in the County. The Department of Public Works coordinates large capital projects on public property, while the Office of Community Sustainability (OCS) oversees private property projects, including residential and nonresidential stormwater incentive programs.

To best address stormwater concerns on private property and provide Howard County residents with the most comprehensive programs possible, it is necessary to update the reimbursement rate schedule. This update requires no additional funding as it utilizes existing funding from current programs. This request, to increase the reimbursement rates, is part of a larger revamp of the residential stormwater programs. The new, larger program will combine two existing programs into a single, simplified residential program. This new program will open the work to more contractors and allow for more diverse residential participation.

The most common reason preventing homeowners from participating is the expense. The current reimbursement rates do not reflect actual costs of these practices, so those who need stormwater management but do not have adequate funding are not able to take advantage of the programs. The proposed rate increases will remove financial barriers, allow for participation by a diversity of income levels, and provide more adequate stormwater management. In addition, this update proposes a 100% reimbursement for homeowners whose household income is 250 percent or less of the poverty level. This is another means for ensuring stormwater management is accessible to all Howard County residents.

The proposed non-residential reimbursement rate changes aim to increase stormwater management opportunities on non-residential properties. The Commercial Stormwater Solutions Work Group of 2016 noted insufficient incentives to install practices as a barrier to program participation. The non-residential reimbursement rate increases acknowledge that these properties are larger and require more expansive stormwater practices which have higher costs.

Another proposed change is establishing a maintenance agreement with the County as part of the reimbursement process. Since these practices are an investment in stormwater infrastructure and count

towards the County's MS4 permit, there must be measures in place to ensure they are maintained over time. A maintenance agreement would clarify maintenance expectations and contribute to the long-term functionality of the practice resulting in a more fiscally responsible investment by the County.

OCS aims to provide programs that meet the needs of the public, are beneficial to the environment, and cost-effective for the County. The proposed updates to the rate schedule very clearly meet these criteria. We hope that you approve these necessary changes that would support more robust incentive programs for Howard County residents.