

Summit County Surface Water Management District

FAQ

3/20/17

Q: What are the problem areas the program would address first?

A: We envision the participating communities being a strong partner and decision maker on what projects would be addressed in this program. The communities know best which areas they receive the most complaints about and while a larger project may be needed, if the community desires to tackle the smaller drainage issues first, it will then be our role to develop plans and an estimate of what is needed to solve those problems. It will be up to the opt-in community to recommend what issues they would like to address first. The District will provide advice and guidance and then implementation of the decision.

Q: How would neighboring communities fund their share of the project if a drainage issue crosses political boundaries?

A: There are a couple ways we can coordinate with communities that are not part of the County program. With a revenue source to fund the opt-in community's share, we will have the ability to partner with political subdivisions on projects. Where those problems extend into neighboring communities we would look to those public officials to assist us in negotiating with the neighboring community. Neighboring communities may obviously have different priorities so timing of improvements may need adjustment accordingly. Joint applications for funding can be more successful than an individual application. A funding grant can become a strong incentive for moving a project forward. Where funds are unavailable we could offer a community the opportunity to join our program, utilize the county's ditch petition assessment process, or perhaps offer that community a loan.

Q: Will the District be able to work on private land?

A: The Ohio Revised Code provides a process by which the District can acquire easements across private property. The establishment of the District will definitely make it easier to work on private land. The District can develop rules and regulations which require private property owners not interfere with drainage ways that touch their property. For example, we can require that no one dump leaves or debris in ditches. A person doing anything to impede the flow of water could be issued a citation and ordered to remove the blockage within a specified timeframe. If they fail to comply, county crews can remove the blockage and charge the cost to the property owner. In any situation, an appropriate process is required for the county to acquire property or easements, but the establishment of the District will provide a dedicated funding source for such acquisition.

Q: Is the \$4 per month fee set in stone?

A: Nothing is set in stone. We are open to discussion about every part of the Ordinance. However we do caution that if the fee is too low, after billing and administrative costs, we may not be able to tackle any large projects or multiple projects. We also understand, depending on your priorities, this may be desirable. In addition the current Ordinance is written such that Council can change the fee at the request of the opt-in community should the community want more work completed.

Q: Will money collected in a community really stay in that community?

A: Yes. The Ordinance states it will be used “to benefit that community” because, for example, a flooding issue in Copley may only be solved if work is completed in Akron. But yes, all money will benefit the participating community. Current wording of the Ordinance is below.

942.08 DISPOSITION OF SERVICE CHARGES AND FEES.

All money received from Surface Water Management Service Charges and other fees under the provisions of this Chapter shall be credited to the Surface Water Management Fund. All Surface Water Management Service Charges and other fees collected under this Chapter from Zoned Lots or Tracts within a municipality or township shall be used for: (i) administration of the District and (ii) County Ditches, Drainage Systems, Surface Water Management Facilities and/or Improvements and/or Surface Water Management Programs that benefit Developed Land or Undeveloped Land within that municipality or township.

Q: How much money will it cost to administer?

A: This depends on how many communities participate, so it’s hard to have an exact answer at this point. We have been reaching out to other county offices and companies that provide billing services to determine the costs. Obviously the more communities in the program, the cheaper it will be per mailing. Unfortunately, since this is a utility, we are unable to “piggyback” on another county agency’s existing mail program (and we definitely asked them first). We see this being the biggest expense of administering the utility. Developing the rules and regulations and implementing the program would all be performed by county staff. Management of the program will also be performed by county staff, so the District would only have to cover their time spent on District programs. We envision that design services and construction would all be contracted out. We hope this all keeps the administrative costs very low.

Q: How much money will it generate?

A: We have a very general estimate that if all 9 townships participated, it would generate \$4 to \$5 million per year. We have asked our GIS technician to see if he can find Fiscal Office records that would enable him to make a fairly easy calculation per township regarding revenue. Funds raised depends on the count of residential parcels and commercial parcels and the actual calculation of ERUS each commercial property would owe.