



Peoria council members relate business complaints over stormwater utility tax

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PEORIA — Bills for the city's newly formed stormwater utility won't go out until June, but Peoria City Council members said Tuesday they're already getting complaints from the business community.

"Most business owners I have spoken with didn't know the amounts they would be paying," 4th District Councilman Jim Montelongo said at the Tuesday night council meeting. He added that some of the area's car dealers and other businesses with large parking lots have expressed surprise over the size of the utility bill.

At a council meeting last year, Montelongo had raised concern over what businesses would pay for the new tax, noting that Weaver Ridge Golf Course feared an annual bill of an estimated \$10,000 at a time when golf revenue is declining.

Public Works Director Scott Reeise said the utility rate was \$3 per 1,000 square feet of impervious space — space that deflects water such as a roof, driveway or parking lot. "We wanted (the rate) to be equitable for everyone in the city," he said, adding that the rate applies equally to homeowners and businesses.

"We also want to encourage behavioral change," said Reeise. He was referring to encouraging taxpayers to make changes on their property that would allow for the infiltration of stormwater. He plans to display a credit manual that details what residents can do to reduce their utility tax at the March 27 council meeting.

Reeise said the city plans to put up a website by May 1 that would allow residents to put in their address to find out what their stormwater utility bill will be.

Denis Cyr, the 5th District Councilman, questioned city plans to increase the utility rate to \$4 per 1,000 square feet in 2020 and to \$5 per 1,000 square feet in 2021. "I know we already voted on it, but that's a 66 percent increase in the rate in just four years. I think we need to talk further about that," he said.

"A lot of people are complaining right now. We need to do a better job of getting the word out about important projects like this," Cyr said.

In other business, council members selected N.E. Finch Co. to demolish the Riverfront Village platform on the Peoria riverfront. Finch had a low bid of \$1.5 million to raze the 20-year-old structure. Denise Moore, the 1st District councilwoman, credited Reese and city staff for working with members of the Riverfront Association and the Spirit of Peoria riverboat to retain additional parking spaces during the demolition. Moore said the association-sponsored Riverfront Market and riverboat provide two of the biggest attractions that bring people Downtown.

The council also approved an intergovernmental agreement with Peoria County that will allow for a new intersection at Allen and Willow Knolls roads. Resurfacing could start as soon as April, said Reese. Peoria County Board Chairman Andrew Rand credited Cyr and Reese for their help in allowing roadwork to advance three years ahead of schedule.

In response to a question by 2nd District Councilman Chuck Grayeb, Reese said that MacArthur Highway between Moss Avenue and West Romeo B. Garrett Avenue would be closed for the next two weeks while Illinois American Water relocates a water main in advance of the upcoming bridge replacement.

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