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Eureka set to implement new fee to improve stormwater system

EUREKA — Residents can expect to see a new charge soon on their utility bills intended to fund 20 years of infrastructure improvements.

The city of Eureka and MSA Professional Services hosted an informational public meeting Monday to discuss the implementation of a stormwater utility that will fund improvements to the stormwater system and prevent citywide flooding.

The City Council adopted an ordinance in October creating the new utility fee, which will first appear on bills in May as a \$6 charge for a single-family residence.

“The lines were never made large enough anyway. The problem is we’ve got 80-plus-year-old lines that we added on to and added on to as the city grew,” said Public Works Director Rusty Klaus.

The fee’s implementation comes after an in-depth analysis of the causes and concentrations of flooding throughout Eureka, MSA client service manager Greg Crowe explained. It is expected to generate more than \$21,000 a month and nearly \$260,000 annually.

Grant money awarded to the city after the remnants of Hurricane Ike dumped heavy rains on central Illinois and caused significant flooding in Eureka was used to fund the analysis.

Five areas were identified as the most immediate needs for upgrades with a total estimated cost of \$5.2 million, which the stormwater utility is expected to provide over the next 20 years. The first project, a \$180,000 upgrade to the stormwater system on Hilldale Avenue, just east of Eureka High School, is expected to begin later this spring.

Other projects, however, may not follow for a while. The city wants to accrue enough money to fund the projects up front before turning dirt.

While single-family residences will be charged a flat rate of \$6, multifamily residential parcels could be charged up to \$6 per living unit, though that price can and will be adjusted based on the amount of impervious surfaces such as rooftop, driveway or parking lot.

Likewise the fee for commercial, industrial and tax exempt properties will be calculated based on the amount of impervious surface on each parcel.

City Administrator Melissa Brown said while the city likely will consider offering a one-time credit to property owners who utilize stormwater retention practices such as rain barrels or rain gardens, the only credits available now require an evaluation by an engineer and would not be cost effective for single-family residences.

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