



Peoria residents: Ready for another utility bill?

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PEORIA — If area homeowners plan to apply for credits to reduce their stormwater utility bill, there's good news: Application rates have been reduced.

On the other hand, bills for the city's newest fee, a charge to reduce the amount of runoff water going into the city sewer system, will be sent out next month. Due to a staggered billing cycle, some residents may not see a bill for a month or two, but the billing date for all starts June 1. Bills will be sent out quarterly.

The stormwater utility operates like those for electricity, sewage and water with fees (since the city is running it, you can say taxes) based on the amount of stormwater runoff properties contribute.

Public Works Director Scott Reeise updated Peoria City Council members at Tuesday's meeting on changes made to the credit manual that lists what residents and businesses can do to reduce their monthly utility bill.

Peoria residents will be charged \$3 per 1,000 square feet of impervious space on their property. Impervious surface areas include rooftops, walkways, patio areas, driveways, parking lots and structures like sheds that prevent stormwater from soaking into the ground.

The average homeowner will pay about \$8 per month, said Reeise, adding that the city anticipates \$4 million in revenue from six months of utility fees this year.

Residents can save by planting rain gardens, constructing infiltration basins or use pervious pavers, to cite some of the practices outlined in the city's credit manual available at OneWaterPeoria.com. Larger projects will require that management plans be submitted to the city.

To qualify for discounts, residents must file applications and pay application fees with the city, said Reeise, adding that, following up on feedback received after a round of public meetings, the city reduced the cost of a number of those application fees.

Denis Cyr, the 5th District councilman, noted at Tuesday's council meeting that only 95 people turned up at two recent public meetings to learn more about the stormwater utility. "I don't know why we're not reaching more people," he said by telephone Wednesday.

Cyr's concern is that his 5th District includes many of the city's businesses that will be especially hard-hit by utility fees, including Pioneer Park. "There's not a lot of green space in an industrial park," he said.

Cyr, who just completed his first year on the council, admitted that, before being elected to office, he was a good example of someone "the city was trying to reach."

"Up to 16 months ago, I'd never been on the city's website," said Cyr, who believes a lot of residents are unaware of the stormwater costs that lie ahead. "There are still a lot of people I talk with that have no idea about the whole stormwater issue."

The councilman is bracing for the reaction from businesses and residents after stormwater utility bills go out this summer. "I'm going to get hit by a train in July," he said.

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