

## **ARTICLE VI. -STORMWATER UTILITY**

### **Sec. 34-157. - Purpose.**

This chapter is enacted for the purpose of establishing the stormwater utility and stormwater user fee system and other provisions relating thereto.

### **Sec. 34-158. - Findings of fact.**

The mayor and city council make the following findings of fact:

- (a) The City of Rincon is authorized by the Georgia Constitution of 1983, including, without limitation, Article IX, Section II, Paragraph III, and O.C.G.A. § 36-82-62 to provide stormwater management service systems and facilities throughout the corporate boundaries of the City of Rincon (hereinafter "the city" or "Rincon") and to collect fees for provision of those services.
- (b) In promulgating the regulations contained in this section, the city is acting pursuant to authority granted by the Constitution and laws of the State of Georgia and its City Charter to provide for stormwater collection and disposal. A system for the collection, conveyance, storage, treatment, and disposal of stormwater provides services to all properties within the city limits.
- (c) Failure to effectively manage stormwater runoff can result in:
  - (1) Erosion of lands, which could threaten businesses, residences, and other structures with water damage and may environmentally impair the rivers, streams, and other bodies of water within, and downstream of, the city.
  - (2) Adverse effects to the city's sanitary sewer system operations thereby increasing the potential for infiltration and inflow into the sanitary sewer system.
  - (3) Potential degradation of the quality of both surface water and ground water resources.
- (d) The city presently owns and operates stormwater management systems and facilities, which have been developed over many years. The future usefulness and operational function of the existing stormwater management systems and facilities owned and operated by the city, and the additions and improvements thereto, rests on the ability of the city to effectively manage, protect, control, regulate, use, and enhance stormwater systems and facilities within the city in concert with the management of other water resources within the city. In order to do so, the city must have both a stormwater management program as well as an adequate and stable funding strategy for its stormwater management program operation and drainage-related capital improvement needs.
- (e) The city desires to implement a stormwater management program to address stormwater runoff quality and quantity and to mitigate the impacts of pollution and flooding which may impact the public municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4), private property and downstream receiving waters of the State of Georgia and/or United States.

- (f) Compliance with applicable regulatory obligations, including but not limited to, the city's National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) wastewater discharge permit; the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP); the Georgia Comprehensive Statewide Water Management Plan; the city's watershed assessment and watershed protection plan; and other applicable state and federal water resources related regulations as well as other identified stormwater management program needs will affect the cost of providing stormwater management services, systems and facilities above what is currently being spent for storm water quality management, drainage system maintenance, flood plain management, capital drainage projects and other stormwater management program activities.
- (g) The cost of operating and maintaining the city's stormwater management system and the funding of necessary repairs, replacements, improvements and extensions thereof should, to the extent practicable, be allocated in relationship to the services provided by the city's stormwater management program and the demand imposed by improved property on the city's drainage system and stormwater management program.
- (h) Given the stormwater management program problems, needs, goals, priorities and funding strategy, it is appropriate that the city authorize the formation of an organizational and accounting entity dedicated specifically to the management, maintenance, protection, control, regulation, use, and enhancement of storm water management services, systems, and facilities within the city in concert with other water resources management programs. Therefore, it is appropriate for the city to establish a stormwater utility and impose a stormwater user fee charge upon all improved/developed properties that may discharge, directly or indirectly, into the public MS4 and stormwater conveyance system, whether the property is private or public in nature.
- (i) Stormwater management is applicable and needed throughout the incorporated areas of the city. While specific service and facility demands may differ from area to area at any given point in time, a stormwater management system and service area encompassing all lands and water bodies within the incorporated areas of the city is appropriate given the present and future needs of the city.
- (j) The stormwater management services rendered may differ depending on many factors and considerations, including but not limited to location, demands and impacts imposed on the stormwater management systems and programs, and risk exposure. It is practical and equitable to allocate the cost of stormwater management among the owners and/or tenants of improved properties in proportion to the demands the properties impose on the city's stormwater management systems and facilities which result in services to such properties and the owners and/or tenants thereof. The fair and equitable apportionment of costs via the stormwater user fee charge correlates to the stormwater management services provided to that property and the runoff demand that the property imposes on the public drainage system and the city stormwater management program.
- (k) Stormwater management needs in the city include, but are not limited to, protection of the public health, safety, and welfare of the community. Provision of stormwater management services renders and/or results in both a service to customers and benefit to all properties, property owners, citizens, and residents of the city in a variety of ways although the benefits may be indirect or immeasurable.

- (l) A stormwater management program provides the most practical and appropriate means of properly delivering stormwater management services throughout the city. The imposition of a stormwater user fee charge is the most equitable means to allocate the costs to users of the stormwater management services and to generate revenue to implement the defined level of service for the city's stormwater management program.
- (m) The presence and amount of impervious surfaces on each improved property is the most important factor influencing the stormwater runoff contribution of that property; the corresponding demand the property imposes on the stormwater management program; and the cost of providing stormwater management services to that property by the city. Therefore, the amount of impervious surface on each property is the most significant parameter for calculating a periodic stormwater user fee charge; and the city deems it appropriate to impose a stormwater user fee charge upon all improved properties that may discharge, directly or indirectly, into the public drainage system whether the property is private or public in nature.
- (n) A schedule of stormwater utility user fee charges based primarily on the amount of impervious surface located on each improved property is the most appropriate and equitable means of allocating the cost of storm water management services throughout the city. Stormwater utility user fee charges may be designed with specific modifiers to further enhance customer equity, as well as customer understanding of the user fee charge rate structure, while at the same time minimizing the city's customer account management and maintenance efforts.
- (o) Stormwater utility user fee charges may be supplemented by other funding which addresses specific needs, including, but not limited to, special district service fees, general fund allocations, revenue bonds, use of proceeds from special purpose local option sales taxes (SPLOST) and other forms of revenue, as deemed appropriate by the mayor and city council.
- (p) The existence of privately owned and maintained on-site stormwater control facilities, activities or assets which reduce, or otherwise mitigate, the impact of a particular property on the city's stormwater management program, and the stormwater utility's cost of providing stormwater management services and/or stormwater management systems and facilities, should be taken into account to reduce the user fee charge on that property in the form of a credit, and such credit should be conditioned upon continuing provision of such services, systems, facilities, activities or assets in a manner complying with the standards and codes as determined by the stormwater utility. Credits for privately owned and maintained stormwater management systems, facilities, activities, or assets shall be generally proportional to the affect that such systems have on the reduction and mitigation of the stormwater runoff impacts from the property.
- (q) It is required that the revenue proceeds from all user fee charges for stormwater management services, systems or facilities, together with any other supplemental revenues raised or otherwise allocated specifically to stormwater management services, systems or facilities, be dedicated solely to those purposes. Such user fee revenue proceeds, and other supplemental revenues, shall be deposited into the City of Rincon Stormwater Utility Enterprise Fund. The user fee proceeds and other supplemental revenues shall remain in the enterprise fund, and be dispersed only for stormwater

management capital improvements, facilities, equipment, operating and non-operating costs, lease payments, debt service payments, or other indebtedness related to the stormwater management program.

- (r) In order to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public, the governing authority of Rincon hereby exercises its authority to establish a stormwater utility, as the best available means of addressing the foregoing storm water management program needs and priorities. By means of this article, the city will enact a stormwater user fee rate structure and a procedure for the establishment of a user fee charge billing rate related to the provision of stormwater management services.

### **Sec. 34-159. - Definitions.**

The following words, terms, and phrases, when used in this chapter, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

*Act* means and refers to the Clean Water Act codified at 33 U.S.C. § 1251 et seq., and the rules and regulations promulgated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency pursuant thereto.

*Credit* means a reduction in the amount of a customer's stormwater user fee charge in recognition of a customer's efforts to mitigate the stormwater runoff impact that developed property has on the city stormwater management services and systems, and/or the efforts of a customer to offset the city's cost for implementation of stormwater management program related activities.

*Customers of the stormwater utility* shall include all persons, properties, and entities serviced by and/or benefitting from the services provided by the city's stormwater management program and the stormwater utility. These services include, but are not necessarily limited to, the stormwater utility's administration, management, maintenance, expansion, and improvement of the stormwater management systems for the handling and disposal of stormwater runoff from private and public properties, and the regulation of the public and private storm water management systems, controls, facilities, and activities.

*Dwelling unit* shall mean a structure, regardless of the type or method of construction, which contains one or more bedrooms, a bathroom, and cooking facilities, designed for occupancy by a one or more person(s) regardless of relationship, living as a single-family unit.

*Enterprise fund* means a fund used to account for operations that are financed and operated in a manner similar to private business enterprises where the intent of the governing authority is that the cost of providing services to the public on a continuing basis be financed or recovered primarily through user charges.

*Equivalent residential unit (ERU)* means the stormwater user fee charge billing unit increment related to the median horizontal impervious surface area footprint of 3,000 square feet for a typical single-family dwelling unit within the city.

*Fiduciary fund* means a trust or agency fund used to account for assets held by a local government in a trustee capacity.

*Hydrologic response* defines the manner and means whereby stormwater runoff collects, remains, diverts, infiltrates, and is conveyed from a property. Hydrologic response is dependent

on several factors including, but not limited to, the presence of impervious surface, the parcel's size, the parcel's shape, the parcel's topography, the parcel's vegetative canopy, the parcel's groundwater characteristics, the parcel's on-site operations, the parcel's stormwater controls, the parcel's antecedent moisture as well as the parcel's geologic and hydro-geologic characteristics.

*Impervious area* shall mean and have the same definition as impervious surface.

*Impervious surface* means those areas which prevent or impede the infiltration of stormwater into the soil in the manner in which it entered the soil, in natural conditions, prior to development and causes stormwater runoff to collect, concentrate or flow in a manner materially different from what would occur if the land were in an unaltered/undeveloped natural condition. Common impervious surfaces include, but are not limited to, rooftops, buildings or structures, sidewalks, walkways, patio areas, driveways, parking lots, storage areas, awnings and other fabric or plastic coverings, and other surfaces such as compacted soil and gravel, which prevent or impede the natural infiltration of stormwater runoff which existed prior to development.

*Improved property (or developed property)* means property altered from its natural state by construction or installation of more than 500 square feet of impervious surfaces.

*Manufactured home park* means a common development (with a single property owner or entity) of more than one factory-built or pre-fabricated housing structures that have been partially or entirely assembled at another location and moved into the development.

*Multi-family residential (MFR) property* means developed property containing more than two dwelling units in or attached thereto, situated upon a single lot of record. MFR properties shall not include improved property containing structures used primarily for nonresidential purposes and as defined herein or vacant/undeveloped property.

*Non-single family residential (NSFR) property* shall mean a developed parcel of land that consists of various nonresidential land uses including, but not limited to:

- (1) Multi-family, commercial (including mixed commercial and residential), office/institutional, public, transportation, industrial, manufacturing buildings and storage and facilities.
- (2) Parking lots, parks, public and private schools, universities, and hospitals.
- (3) Streets, roads, water, and wastewater treatment plants; and
- (4) Any other form of use not specifically defined as a single-family residential property (SFR).

*Non-single family residential (NSFR) customer* shall mean a utility customer whose property meets the definition of NSFR whether such customer is the owner of the parcel or a tenant of the owner.

*Parcel* shall mean a designated parcel or tract, established by plat, subdivision, or as otherwise permitted by law, to be separately owned, used, developed, or built upon.

*Private stormwater management systems and facilities* shall mean those natural and manmade channels, swales, ditches, rivers, streams, creeks, branches, reservoirs, ponds, drainageways, inlets, catch basins, pipes, headwalls, storm drains, lakes and other physical works, properties and improvements which transfer, control, convey or otherwise influence the movement of stormwater runoff or water quality, for which operation and maintenance is the responsibility of the owner or

successor or assignee thereof, and which have not been conveyed or dedicated to the city for future maintenance.

*Public stormwater management systems and facilities* (or the city's *municipal separate storm sewer system*) shall mean that portion of the drainage system consisting of natural and/or man-made structures, within the political boundaries of the city which channel or convey storm water from its point of collection to a point of discharge, owned by the city, over which the city has a legal right of access, have been formally dedicated to and accepted by the city for maintenance, or over which the city exercises dominion and control.

*Service area* means the entire land area within the corporate limits of the city.

*Single-family residential (SFR) property* means developed property containing one residential structure with no more than two dwelling units in or attached thereto, situated upon a single lot of record. Improved property may be classified as SFR even if supplemental accessory structures are present such as garages, carports, storage buildings, guesthouses, cottages or barns, or other appurtenant structures or the presence of a commercial use within the residence, as long as such use does not result in significant additional amounts of impervious surfaces, as determined by the governing body or its designee. SFR properties shall not include improved property containing structures used primarily for nonresidential purposes and as defined herein; manufactured homes located within manufactured home parks where the land is owned by someone other than the owners of the manufactured homes; residential condominium developments with more than two units; or vacant/undeveloped property.

*Single-family residential (SFR) customer* means a utility customer of the city residing in a dwelling unit whether such customer is the owner of the dwelling unit or a tenant of the owner of the dwelling unit.

*Stormwater management services* means all water quality and water quantity related services provided by the city which relate to the following:

- (1) Transfer, control, conveyance, or movement of stormwater runoff through the incorporated portions of the city.
- (2) Maintenance, repair and replacement of existing stormwater management systems and facilities.
- (3) Planning, development, design and construction of additional stormwater management systems and facilities to meet current and anticipated needs.
- (4) Regulation of the use of stormwater management services, systems, and facilities; and
- (5) Compliance with applicable state and federal stormwater management regulations and permit requirements.
- (6) Other services as deemed appropriate by the city.

*Stormwater management systems and facilities* mean those natural and manmade channels, swales, ditches, rivers, streams, creeks, branches, reservoirs, ponds, drainage ways, inlets, catch basins, pipes, headwalls, storm sewers, public streets, curbs and gutters, lakes and other physical works, properties and improvements which transfer, control, convey, detain, retain, treat or otherwise influence the movement of stormwater runoff.

*Stormwater utility manager* means the person appointed by the city manager to administer the provisions of this article.

*Stormwater user fee charge* means the periodic user fee charge for the provision of stormwater management services imposed pursuant to this article of the Rincon Stormwater Utility Ordinance. This term shall exclude special charges to the owners and/or tenants of particular properties for services, systems or facilities related to stormwater management, including, but not limited to, charges for development plan review, inspection of development projects, post-construction maintenance and inspection of existing facilities, on-site stormwater control systems and other stormwater management related services provided by Rincon for which a corresponding fee is collected for the service rendered.

*Undeveloped land* means land in its unaltered natural condition or which is modified to such a minimal degree as to have a hydrologic response comparable to land in an unaltered natural condition shall be deemed undeveloped. For purposes of this article, undeveloped land includes property altered from its natural condition by the existence and/or installation of 500 square feet or less of impervious surface.

*User* is defined as any person who uses property, which maintains connection to, discharges to, or otherwise receives stormwater management services from the city.

Sec. 4. - Stormwater utility and enterprise fund established.

- (a) There is hereby established a stormwater utility to be known as the City of Rincon Stormwater Utility, which shall be responsible for stormwater management services throughout the incorporated area of the city, and which shall provide for the management, protection, control, regulation, use and enhancement of the city's stormwater management systems and facilities and stormwater management program services.
- (b) There is hereby established a stormwater utility enterprise fund in the city accounting systems for the purpose of dedicating and protecting all funding generated by the stormwater utility user fee charge to the operation of the storm water management program and stormwater utility, including, but not limited to, rates, charges, and fees as may be established by the mayor and city council from time to time, and other funds that may be allocated to the stormwater utility. Such fund shall be both an enterprise fund and a fiduciary fund, consistent with the definitions within this article.
- (c) All revenues and receipts generated from the stormwater user fee charges shall be segregated and placed into the stormwater utility enterprise fund in trust and be expended solely for stormwater management purposes; provided, however, such fund may also pay a reasonable allocation of costs provided to the stormwater utility by the city's general fund, or other utilities of the city, in order to account for application overhead costs. Stormwater utility user fee charge revenue shall be used only for the operating expenses and/or capital investments of the stormwater utility. However, other forms of revenue and/or financial resources, not accounted for in the stormwater utility user fee revenue, may be allocated as deemed appropriate by the city, to provide supplemental funding to the stormwater management program and stormwater management services.
- (d) The city shall place responsibility with the stormwater utility manager for operation, maintenance and regulation of the stormwater utility and stormwater management systems and facilities owned and operated, or maintained by the city, and other related assets,

including, but not limited to, properties, other than road rights-of-way, upon which such stormwater management systems and facilities are located, easements, rights-of-entry and access and certain equipment used solely for stormwater management.

**Sec. 34-160. - Stormwater utility service area.**

- (a) There shall be one stormwater utility service area in the city which shall encompass the municipal boundaries of Rincon. The city has established that all developed parcels within the municipal boundaries receive stormwater management program services from the city. Improved/developed properties within the defined service area will receive a stormwater user fee charge bill because they contribute storm water runoff to the public drainage system, are directly or indirectly connected to the city's drainage system, and/or receive stormwater management services from the city to varying degrees.

**Sec. 6. - Scope of responsibility for stormwater management systems and facilities.**

- (a) The stormwater utility shall provide stormwater management services for existing and proposed public stormwater management systems and facilities as defined in this article, subject to funding availability and policy considerations made in the best interest of the public health, safety and general welfare, and of the environment. Additionally, the stormwater utility may accept the responsibility for providing stormwater management services to private stormwater management systems and facilities, acceptance of which conforms to policies established by the mayor and city council.
- (b) The city owns in fee simple, or has legal rights established by written agreements, which allow it to operate, maintain, improve, and access those stormwater management systems and facilities which are located:
  - (1) On property owned by, or within the possession and control of, the city.
  - (2) Within public rights-of-way of the municipal street system and, where the city has by agreement with the county or state agreed to maintain public roads and highways on the county road system and/or state highway system.
  - (3) On private property but within legally dedicated easements granted to, and accepted by, the city.
  - (4) On private property where the city has been granted, by written agreements, rights-of-entry, rights-of-access, rights-of-use or other provisions for operation, maintenance, improvement, and access to the stormwater management system facilities located thereon; or
  - (5) On public land which is owned by another governmental entity with whom the city has a written agreement providing for the operation, maintenance, improvement and access to the stormwater management systems and facilities located thereon.
- (c) Operation, maintenance and/or improvement of stormwater management systems and facilities which are located on private or public property not owned by the city, and for which there has been no written agreement granting easements, rights-of-entry, rights-of-access, rights-of-use or other form of dedication thereof to the city for operation, maintenance, improvement and access of such stormwater management systems and facilities shall be and



remain the legal responsibility of the property owner and/or tenant, except as otherwise provided for by state and federal laws and regulations.

- (d) The stormwater utility may provide periodic inspection, testing, or engineering assessment of privately-owned stormwater management systems and facilities to ascertain that said facilities are functioning as designed and approved. After notice to the property owner, the stormwater utility may provide for remedial maintenance of said private facilities based upon the severity of stormwater problems and potential hazard to the public health, safety, and welfare and the environment. In cases where such remedial maintenance is required to be performed by the city, the city shall have the right to bill the owner of said private facility for the costs of such maintenance and impose a lien against the property to enforce collection.
- (e) It is the express intent of this article to protect the public health, safety and welfare of people and property in general, but not to create any special duty or relationship with any person or entity, or to any specific property within or outside the municipal boundaries of the city. The city expressly reserves the right to assert all available immunities and defenses in any action seeking to impose monetary damages or equitable remedies upon the city, its elected officials, officers, employees, and agents arising out of any alleged failure or breach of duty or relationship.
- (f) If any permit, plan approval, inspection, or similar act is required by the city as a condition precedent to any land disturbance or construction activity upon property not owned by the city pursuant to this or any other regulatory code, ordinance, regulation or rule of the city, or under federal or state law, the issuance of such permit, plan approval or inspection shall not be deemed to constitute a warranty, express or implied, nor shall it afford the basis for any action, including any action based on failure to permit, negligent issuance of a permit, negligent plan approval, negligent construction of permitted system or facility, or negligent maintenance of any permitted stormwater management system or facility not expressly dedicated to and accepted by the city for further maintenance in an action seeking the imposition of money damages or equitable remedies against the city, its mayor and city council members, officers, employees or agents.

**Sec. 34-161. - Stormwater utility customer classes.**

- (a) The stormwater utility shall establish specified customer classes within the service area to reflect differences in impervious surface and stormwater runoff characteristics; stormwater management program services provided by the city to the stormwater utility customers; and the respective demand that those customers' properties place on the city stormwater management program and drainage system components. All publicly owned developed properties, other than streets or roads, are subject to the user fee charges on the same basis as private properties. The stormwater utility classes will encompass all developed and undeveloped properties within the city and are defined as follows:
  - (1) The single family residential (SFR) class shall consist of all developed properties classified as SFR customers per the applicable definition.
  - (2) The non-single family residential (NSFR) class shall consist of all developed properties classified as NSFR customers per the applicable definition.

- (3) The undeveloped class shall consist of properties classified as undeveloped per the applicable definition.
- (b) Documentation pertaining to the stormwater utility customer classes shall be kept on file in the office of the stormwater utility manager for public inspection.

**Sec. 8. - Stormwater user fee charges.**

- (a) It shall be the policy of the city that user fee charges for stormwater management services to be provided by the stormwater utility in the designated service area shall be equitably derived through methods which have a demonstrable relationship to the varied demands and impacts imposed on the stormwater management services by individual properties and/or the level of service rendered by, or resulting from, the provision of stormwater management services by the city.
- (b) The basis for calculation of the stormwater user fee charge for developed properties within the city is established in this article. The city shall assign or determine the customer class, amount of impervious area and other pertinent factors as may be needed for the fair, reasonable and equitable allocation of the costs to deliver stormwater management services and to calculate the stormwater user fee charges for developed properties in the city.
- (c) Stormwater user fee charge rates shall be structured so as to be uniform within the customer class, and the resultant user fee charges shall bear a reasonable connection, or rational nexus, to the cost of providing stormwater management services. User fee charge rates shall be in addition to other rates, charges, or fees employed for stormwater management within the incorporated areas of the city as defined herein.
- (d) To the extent practicable, credits against stormwater user fee charges shall be provided for on-site stormwater control systems and activities constructed, operated, maintained and performed to the city's standards by public and private property owners and/or tenants which eliminate, mitigate or compensate for the impact that the property or person may have upon stormwater runoff discharged to public stormwater management systems and facilities, or to private stormwater management systems and facilities which impact the proper function of public stormwater management systems and facilities.
- (e) The stormwater user fee charges shall accrue beginning one (1) month following council approval of this ordinance and be billed in arrears each month to customers.

**Sec. 34-162. - Stormwater user fee charge billing rates.**

- (a) The stormwater utility shall impose a stormwater user fee charge on all developed properties within the service area in accordance with the provisions of this article. The stormwater utility shall apportion the cost of delivering stormwater services to all developed properties based on the demand the property places on the city's stormwater management program, the stormwater services provided by the city and the benefits derived by the property as a result of the provision of services.
- (b) The mayor and city council shall establish by resolution the stormwater user fee charge rates, and the billing rates may be modified by the mayor and city council from time to time to meet the financial and operational needs of the City of Rincon Stormwater Utility. A current schedule of said rates shall be on file in the office of the city clerk of Rincon. In setting or

modifying such rates, it shall be the goal of the city to establish rates that are fair, equitable and reasonable, and which, together with other funding sources available to the City of Rincon Stormwater Utility for services, systems, and/or facilities related to stormwater management are sufficient to support the cost of the stormwater management program, including, but not limited to, the payment of principal and interest on debt obligations, lease payments, operating expenses, capital outlays, non-operating expenses, provisions for prudent reserves and other stormwater utility related costs as deemed appropriate by the city.

- (c) Stormwater user fee charges shall be based upon the total number of equivalent residential units (ERUs) associated with developed properties within the city. Each ERU shall correspond to 3,000 square feet of impervious surface.
- (d) Calculation of user fee charges. The periodic stormwater user fee charges imposed on all developed properties shall be calculated by multiplying the stormwater user fee billing rate (per ERU) times the number of ERUs for each customer account. The number of ERUs that will be utilized to calculate the user fee charge for each customer account shall be in general accordance with the following:
  - (1) *SFR customer class*: Each SFR customer account shall be charged 1.0 ERU per month unless the conditions outlined below applies.
    - a. If two customer accounts are assigned to a SFR property (i.e. a duplex) then each customer account on that parcel will be charged 0.5 ERU per month for billing purposes.
  - (2) *NSFR customer class*: Each NSFR customer shall be charged 1.0 ERU for each 3,000 square feet, or increment thereof, of impervious surface located on the property to establish the total number of ERUs for billing. Fractional ERUs will be rounded to one decimal place to establish the number of ERUs for billing each month.
  - (3) *Undeveloped land customer class*: Undeveloped land shall be assigned 0 ERUs and will not receive a stormwater user fee bill.

**Sec. 34-163. - Stormwater user fee charge exemptions.**

- (a) Except as provided in this section or otherwise provided by law, no developed public or private property located in the incorporated area of the city, containing more than 500 square feet of impervious surface, shall be exempt from the stormwater user fee charges. The stormwater utility user fee charge is not a tax and no exception, credit, offset, or other reduction in stormwater user fee charges shall be granted based on age, tax status, economic status, race, religion, disability, or other condition unrelated to the stormwater utility's cost of providing stormwater management program services and facilities.
- (b) Exemptions to the stormwater user fee charges are as follows:
  - (1) Parcels which contain 500 square feet, or less, of impervious surfaces or partial impervious surfaces shall be exempt from stormwater user fee charges.
  - (2) Linear railroad rights-of-way (i.e. tracks, rails, rail bed) outside of the defined rail yard limits shall be exempt from stormwater user fee charges. This exemption is in recognition of routine drainage system maintenance and capital construction activities undertaken by the railroad company associated with rights-of-way and drainage conveyance systems.

However, railroad stations, rail yards, maintenance buildings, and/or other improved property used for railroad operations shall not be exempt from stormwater user fee charges.

- (3) City of Rincon streets and rights-of-way shall be exempt from stormwater user fee charges. The stormwater utility shall not charge the city a user fee charge for the impervious surface associated with city's streets and other impervious surfaces within the rights-of-way of the city's municipal street system. This exemption is granted in consideration of the city allowing the stormwater utility to utilize the city's existing streets, curbs, gutters, drainage ways and ditches, storm sewers, culverts, inlets, catch basins, pipes, head walls and other structures, natural and man-made, within and owned by the city which controls, diverts, and conveys surface water for the purposes of collecting, diverting, transporting and controlling surface runoff and stormwaters. All other developed property owned by the city shall be subject to the imposition of stormwater user fee charges in accordance with this article.
- (4) Effingham County roads and rights-of-way on the county road system located within the city limits shall be exempt from stormwater user fee charges inasmuch as Effingham County has legal responsibility to perform all drainage system maintenance and capital construction activities with respect to such roads and rights-of-way. This exemption is in recognition of the drainage system maintenance and capital construction responsibilities undertaken by Effingham County. All other developed property owned by Effingham County that is within the service area shall be subject to the imposition of stormwater user fee charges in accordance with this article.
- (5) Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) highways, federal interstates, and rights-of-way on the state highway system within the city limits shall be exempt from stormwater user fee charges. This exemption is in recognition of routine drainage system maintenance, NPDES regulatory compliance, and capital construction activities undertaken by GDOT in association with GDOT rights-of-way road and drainage conveyance systems. However, offices, maintenance buildings, and/or other developed property used for GDOT purposes shall not be exempt from stormwater user fee charges.

**Sec. 34-164. - Stormwater user fee charge credits.**

- (a) The stormwater utility manager may grant credits or adjustments based on the technical and procedural criteria set forth in the *City of Rincon Stormwater Utility User Fee Credit Manual* (credit manual), which is incorporated into this article by reference and made a part hereof. Copies of the credit manual will be maintained by and made available from the stormwater utility manager.
  - (1) Customers may apply for credits and/or adjustments in accordance with the credit manual.
  - (2) A stormwater user fee charge credit shall be determined based upon meeting all technical requirements, standards and criteria contained in the credit manual. The amount of credit, or reduction of the storm water user fee charge, shall be in accordance with the criteria contained in the credit manual.

- (3) Any credit allowed against the stormwater user fee charge is conditioned on continuing compliance, including proper future maintenance of the stormwater management systems and facilities with design and performance standards as stated in the credit manual and upon continuing provision of the controls, systems, facilities, services, and activities provided, operated, and maintained by the customer. The stormwater utility manager may revoke a credit at any time for noncompliance with applicable standards and criteria as established in the credit manual or this article.
  - (4) In order to obtain a credit, the customer must make application to the city on form provided by the stormwater utility manager for such purpose, and in accordance with the procedures outlined in the credit manual.
  - (5) The application for any credit or adjustment must be in writing and must include the information necessary to establish eligibility for the credit or adjustment and be in the format described in the credit manual. The customer's public utility account must be paid and current prior to review and approval of a stormwater utility credit application by the city. Incomplete applications will not be accepted for consideration and processing.
- (b) When an application for a credit is deemed complete by the stormwater utility manager, the stormwater utility manager shall have 30 days from the date the complete application is received to approve the credit in whole, approve the credit in part, or deny the credit. The stormwater utility manager's decision shall be in writing and will be mailed to the address provided on the adjustment request, and service shall be complete upon mailing. Credits applied for by the customer and approved in whole or in part, shall apply to all stormwater user fee charges in accordance with the terms defined in the credit manual.

**Sec. 34-165. - Stormwater user fee charge billing; delinquencies and collections; and adjustments.**

- (a) *Billing.* The property owner or utility customer account holder, as identified from city public utility billing database information, Tax Digest, and other public records of Effingham County, shall be obligated to pay the applicable stormwater user fee charge.
- (1) Stormwater user fee charges shall begin to accrue one (1) month following council approval of this ordinance and shall be billed in arrears on the customer's monthly public utility bill thereafter beginning one month following date stormwater user fee charges begin to accrue.
  - (2) The stormwater user fee charge will be billed and collected on a combined utility bill and collected along with other city utility services from the person in whose name such services have been placed on account with the city. If and when the account is closed or becomes delinquent, the bills for unpaid previous service as well as for current and future service shall be reverted to the property owner.
  - (3) Customers that do not have another utility service shall receive a utility bill with stormwater user fees only or shall be billed via another method and frequency established by the city.
  - (4) The city reserves the right to bill the stormwater user fee charge to either the property owner or the utility customer account holder (i.e. the tenant) as described herein.

- a. The city shall have the authority to bill the property owner's tenant for the stormwater user fee charge in situations where the tenant has opened an account with the city for public utility services; provided, however, the property owner shall remain ultimately liable for payment of the stormwater user fee charge imposed on the property.
  - b. The city shall be authorized to bill the landlord or property owner for stormwater services where accurate and equitable apportionment of the user fee charges to multiple accounts on a parcel is not practical as determined by the city, and/or to facilitate efficient billing and collection of customer stormwater user fee charges. For example, the user fee charge for multi-family properties, i.e. properties with more than two units, may be billed to the property owner, landlord or property management company.
- (5) Frequency of the billing of stormwater user fee charges shall be specified by the mayor and city council.
  - (6) Failure of the customer to receive a utility bill or a stormwater user fee charge shall not be justification for nonpayment. Regardless of the party to whom the bill is initially directed, the property owner of each developed property subject to stormwater user fee charges shall be ultimately obligated to pay stormwater user fee charges and any interest on delinquent stormwater user fee charge payments.
  - (7) If a property is unbilled, or if no bill is sent for a particular tract of developed property, the stormwater utility may back bill for a period of up to three years, but shall not be entitled to any interest or any delinquency charges during the back billed period.
- (b) *Delinquencies and collections.*
- (1) Unpaid stormwater service fees may also be collected by filing suit to collect on an unpaid account and by using all methods allowed by Georgia law to collect on any civil judgment obtained thereby, including enforcement of any lien resulting from any such judgment. Unless reduced to a judgment and a *writ of fieri facias* issued, the unpaid user fee charge shall not constitute a direct lien against the owner or the property.
  - (2) All bills not paid by the due date are subject to the late payment charge, as approved by resolution of the mayor and city council. In addition, all costs of collection, including attorney's fees and court costs, will be added.
- (c) *Adjustments.* The stormwater utility manager shall administer the procedures and standards for the adjustment of the stormwater user fee charge.
- (1) If a customer believes their stormwater user fee is incorrect, the customer may seek an adjustment of the stormwater user fee charge allocated to a property within 60 days of the mailing of such bill to the customer by the city. After such 60-day period, the storm water bill shall be final, and no adjustment may be sought by the customer until the issuance of the next stormwater bill by the city. Any such request shall be submitted in writing to the stormwater manager and shall set forth in detail the grounds upon which the adjustment is sought.
  - (2) Customers requesting the adjustment shall be required, at their own expense, to provide accurate impervious area and other supplemental information to the stormwater utility

manager, including, but not limited to, a survey certified by a registered land surveyor or a professional engineer or as otherwise allowed by the stormwater utility manager. Submittal of this information will be required if the city staff cannot make a determination based on field inspection and/or review of existing city aerial photography. Failure to provide the required information within the time limits established by the stormwater utility manager, as may be reasonably extended, may result in denial of the customer's adjustment request.

- (3) Once a completed adjustment request and all required information are received by the stormwater utility manager, *the* stormwater utility manager shall within 30 calendar days render a written decision.
- (4) In considering an adjustment request, the stormwater utility manager shall consider whether the calculation of the stormwater user fee charge for the account is correct.
- (5) The stormwater utility manager's decision shall be in writing and will be mailed to the address provided on the adjustment request, and service shall be complete upon mailing.
- (6) If the result of an adjustment is that a refund is due the applicant, the refund will be applied as a credit on the applicant's next stormwater user fee charge bill for an amount not to exceed the equivalent of one-year's charges at current rates for that property regardless of whether credits apply to the property. If the result of the adjustment is that the bill will be increased, then the city shall apply the new billing rate on the next billing cycle.
- (7) No adjustments shall be made to any bill upon the expiration of 60 days after the date that such bill is mailed by the city to the customer, it being the intention of this section to establish such limitation period of 60 days upon the customers to seek an adjustment of their stormwater charge.

### **Sec. 34-166. - Appeals and hearings.**

(a) *Appeals.* An appeal to the city manager may be taken by any customer aggrieved by any decision of the stormwater utility manager. The appeal shall be taken within 30 calendar days of the decision of the stormwater utility manager by filing with the city manager a notice of appeal in writing specifying the grounds thereof. Upon the filing of the notice of appeal, the storm water utility manager shall forthwith transmit to the city manager all documentation constituting the record upon which the decision appealed from was taken.

(b) *Hearings.* The city manager shall fix a reasonable time for hearing the appeal and give written notice to the appellant at least ten calendar days prior to the hearing date. The notice shall indicate the place, date, and time of the hearing. The city manager shall affirm, reverse, affirm in part, or reverse in part the decision of the stormwater utility manager after hearing the evidence. If the decision of the stormwater utility manager is reversed in whole or in part, resulting in a refund or credit due to the property owner or customer, then such refund or credit shall be calculated retroactive to the date of the initial appeal. The decision of the city manager shall be final, and there shall be no further administrative appeal. Any person aggrieved or dissatisfied with the decision of the city manager may petition the Superior Court of Effingham County for writ of certiorari.