

Date: September 9, 2024

To: **Mayor and Council.**

Name and title: Deanna Wasnik, Director of Planning & Development

Subject: Stormwater Infrastructure Fund Public Engagement Results

Attachment(s): Appendix A: Summary of Survey Responses
Powerpoint Presentation

Recommendation(s):

That Council CONSIDERS the options 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 as described in the report dated September 9, 2024 from the Director of Planning and Development, titled "Stormwater Infrastructure Fund Public Engagement Results".

Purpose:

For Council information about the results of the Stormwater Infrastructure Fund public engagement and seeking Council's direction on next steps towards implementing a dedicated fund.

Strategic Priorities:

Continue to improve processes and practices to support effective and efficient service delivery and implement local government actions that advance environmental protection including climate change and adaptation.

Background:

In 2021, Council received for information, the City's new Integrated Stormwater Management Plan (ISMP). Within the plan are key action items to move the City towards sustainable service delivery for stormwater management. One of the top actions in the plan is to create a dedicated fund for stormwater infrastructure. Stormwater infrastructure was also identified as being in the top three most important to fund by the community during budget consultations in 2023. On Feb 26, 2024, Council was provided an update on progress with the ISMP action items, including plans for public engagement for a dedicated fund during the spring/summer of this year.

Currently the stormwater system is mostly paid for using property taxes. But since this money isn't set aside just for stormwater, it has to compete for funding along with other services like parks, sidewalks, and city facilities every year. Creating dedicated stormwater funding will ensure a consistent source of money reserved solely for stormwater infrastructure. With this approach, the City can better manage the community's stormwater needs, including maintenance, repairs, and replacements, and ensure there's enough funding available when it is needed.

Discussion:

Method and Duration of Consultation

An online survey was available to the public from May 21st to June 28th and then re-opened for 7 days on July 22nd after the Toronto flood was in the media. To provide more information about stormwater management and to promote the online survey, Administration advertised through the City's website and social media pages; Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn. Further to this, there were ads on CKPG TV, a segment on the CKPG Today show, an ad in the Prince George Citizen, ads on the radio, a media release, 2 digital newsletters, and a pop-up information session at Pine Centre Mall. An FAQ was created and added to the website based on comments from Facebook posts.

There were 145,402 impressions across the 4 social media platforms (the number of times our content entered a persons' screen), 1,650+ web page views and 314 survey respondents.

Survey Summary

The first question asks which funding option is preferred. The most preferred is Option 4, a utility fee based on a sampling of actual measured hard surface for all residential types that is then applied to all property types, residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional. Respondents chose their preferred option because it seemed the most fair.

Many respondents are interested in having a utility fee incentive program where they can make an effort to reduce the amount of stormwater that enters the system from their properties. Most were interested in rain barrels and rain gardens as a way to do this.

Many of the survey respondents were in favour of having a fee variance based on the level of service; whether a property has a ditch to manage stormwater versus curb, gutter, and catchbasins.

There were 219 comments entered by survey respondents. These comments were grouped into key themes:

- Environmental and Sustainability Initiatives
- Infrastructure and Maintenance
- Support for Rain Barrels and Incentives
- Alternative Solutions and Strategies
- Property Characteristics and Existing Solutions
- City Planning and Regulations
- Complexity and Implementation Concerns
- Fairness and Equity
- Taxation and Financial Burden

More details of the survey responses can be found in the attached Appendix "A".

Next Steps:

Based on what we've heard in the survey, social media, and interactions with the community, Administration is seeking Council's direction on one of the following five options:

1. **Option 1** – create a dedicated levy on property taxes,
2. **Option 2** – create a utility fee based on property type and tiered by size,
3. **Option 3** – create a utility fee based on the zoning's maximum site coverage to determine the amount of allowed hard surface on a property,
4. **Option 4** – create a utility fee based on the actual measurement of the hard surface area in a sampling of all types of residential properties,
5. **Option 5** – do not create a dedicated fund and continue to include stormwater related expenses within the general tax levy, where it will need to compete with other City service categories.

Summary and conclusion:

One of the top priority actions from the Integrated Stormwater Management Plan (ISMP) is to create a dedicated fund to work towards a sustainable stormwater service now and into the future. Public engagement happened over the summer in a variety of ways. The majority of survey respondents chose Option 4 as their preferred method of collecting stormwater infrastructure fees. Administration is seeking direction on next steps in the implementation of a dedicated fund.

Respectfully submitted:

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Approved:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting date: 2024/09/25