



Borough of Chambersburg

*A full service municipality in Franklin County
celebrating over 65 years of consumer owned natural gas service
over 100 years of community electric and a
regional wastewater, water, and municipal solid waste utility*

Changes Coming to the Storm Sewer Pollution

Control Fee – Only non-single-family properties impacted

January 2022

Beginning in 2022, all 993 non-single-family-residential properties in the Borough (business, multifamily, industrial, commercial, church or institution) will pay the fee based upon the actual impervious area on their lot. Called an ERU, each non-single-family lot has been measured against the “equivalent residential unit”, and will be invoiced a multiple of ERUs based on actual impervious surfaces at the per ERU rate. If you own property that is not a single-family house, you should prepare for the change. The current per sanitary sewer connection fee of \$5 per month will change to \$5 per month per ERU beginning in January 2022. Call the Storm Sewer System Manager, Andy Stottlemyer, at 717-251-2434 to learn about your property's ERU value today and BE PREPARED!

Statement From the Borough of Chambersburg:

In 2014, Town Council in the Borough of Chambersburg adopted a plan for the creation of a new Storm Sewer Utility, one of the first such utilities to form pursuant to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to manage and regulate stormwater in smaller communities. This new utility would be an operating fund of the Borough similar in scope and mission to various other Borough utilities managed by staff under the authority and direction of Town Council.

A committee of citizens, businesspeople, leaders, and stakeholders was formed and met for over a year to come up with an implementation plan to fund the new utility and the required work of the state permitted Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4).

While the Borough has operated a storm sewer system for almost a century, available tax resources supported the system; and the plan was to establish a separate fee structure where all property owners, rather than just the 60% that pay real estate taxes, would help cover its cost of operation. In 2015, following renewal of the Borough's Pennsylvania DEP MS4 permit, the Borough carved the system out of the General Fund and established a fee-based Storm Sewer Utility department in a separate enterprise fund.

The new utility fee began in January 2015. A Storm Sewer Pollution Control Fee was added to Borough utility bills in that year. Chambersburg is unique in that it is the only municipality in Pennsylvania to operate almost all utilities. These non-profit community utilities provide water, sewer, electricity, natural gas, and trash to households and businesses. Their reliability is award-winning, nationally-recognized, and the rates are remarkably low. A Chambersburg utility customer with both natural gas and electric service from the Borough might save as much as \$1,000 per year when compared to utility customers just outside the Borough. Furthermore, in 2022, the Borough approved no increases to electric rates (second lowest residential rate in Pennsylvania) or natural gas rates (lowest residential rate in the Commonwealth).

The Borough experienced little controversy in the implementation of the Storm Sewer Pollution Control Fee in 2015. Because of the good work of the citizen committee and the foresight of Town Council, the Borough has eased residents and businesses into both understanding the necessity of the fee, and the requirements of having a fully functioning Storm Sewer Utility.

Chambersburg has dozens of miles of storm sewer pipes, channels, inlets, catch basins ponds, etc., and other facilities requiring inspection and maintenance as a part of the State permit, but also the important necessity to manage and respect storm water and its impact on the community environment. Some communities have delayed the implementation of storm sewer system management. This was never an option in Chambersburg's large urbanized environment.

In 2022, Chambersburg Town Council will invest \$2 million of Federal American Rescue Plan Act funding into necessary projects to address long-neglected capital needs in the system.

The Storm Sewer Utility has undergone a three-year process to change their rate structure. As originally contemplated by the 2014 study that recommended its establishment, in 2022, the utility will switch what has been a flat rate, per sanitary sewer connection, to a rate based upon impervious area. This new methodology may result in rate changes for commercial, industrial, and institutional customers (shopping centers, schools, churches, the hospital, etc.), which may all see significant changes in their Storm Sewer Pollution Control Fee based on the amount of impervious area on their tax parcels.

The rate change for single-family residential customers will not be noticeable. Under the old system, only single-family residential customers were paying a fair fee. Now, every type of property will pay their fair share based upon their relationship to the impervious area of an average single-family residential home. Impervious areas are made up of surfaces that prevent the percolation of water into the ground, including buildings and paved areas on a property. It is the best system to judge what a property might owe to support this utility according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

To determine the new fee the Borough digitally mapped impervious areas for every property. Then a team determined an "equivalent residential unit" or ERU value for each non-residential property. In essence, how many houses is your non-residential tax parcel (shopping centers, schools, churches, the hospital, etc.) equivalent to in comparison to the average impervious surface of a single-family home. This ERU value determines both how many homes a property owner's non-residential property is equivalent to and the new monthly fee. Beginning in 2022, the new rate will be expressed in single-family home "equivalent residential units" or ERU.

When the Town Council adopted the new fee schedule on December 13, 2021, they included a steep discount to help the transition for non-single-family customers. Town Council set the 2022 per month per ERU fee at \$5 with all non-single-family dwelling customers receiving a 30% credit for a period of one year, from January 1 through December 31, 2022. The Town Council also approved a Storm Sewer Management Program Credit Policy Manual that explains how property owners can comply with the credit requirements to retain the 30% credit beyond December 31, 2022. Noncompliance as of December 31, 2022 will eliminate the 30% credit with the first full utility billing cycle in January 2023.

In January 2022, the average single family home will see no change in their Storm Sewer Pollution Control Fee as the flat fee is already \$5 per month. The results for commercial, industrial, and institutional customers may be much more significant; based on the size of their lot and impervious area created by the structures on the lot.

For example, if a commercial building is the equivalent of six single-family homes, the rate may increase from \$5 per month to \$20 per month (in this example, the utility fee would be reduced to \$20 per month with the 30% credit). The Town Council approved 2022 budget includes this transition in January 2022. Commercial, industrial, and institutional customers should determine their ERU values now and their 2022 credits..

In November 2021 the utility mailed a notice to each non-single-family residential customer to inform them of their property's ERU value as determined by the amount of impervious area on their lot. If you do not own property inside the Borough, this issue does not affect you. Furthermore, if you own a single-family home inside the Borough, you will notice no change.

It is important to note that there will be ways to reduce the amount of the new Storm Sewer Pollution Control fee. Best Management Practice (BMP) facilities can be installed and maintained on one's property to reduce the contribution of stormwater and pollutants to the Borough storm sewer system. You can also reduce the amount of impervious area on a property by removing buildings or parking lots that are part of the impervious area measured to establish the new Storm Sewer Pollution Control Fee.

The new Storm Sewer Pollution Control Fee and Credit Program was the recommendation of the citizen committee in 2019. The Town Council delayed implementation of the change to 2022 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Several fliers and mailers have already been sent to every property in the Borough. Staff also invited non-residential property owners to focus group sessions in September 2019. The Town Council approved a new Local Law in late 2021 to make these changes effective. We want to make sure that non-single-family property owners know that this change is coming soon.

Please contact Andy Stottlemeyer, Storm Sewer System Manager, at 717-251-2434 or astottlemeyer@chambersburgpa.gov if you have any questions regarding a property's ERU value or the Borough's Storm Sewer Utility. You can also visit the Storm Sewer Utility website at <http://www.borough.chambersburg.pa.us/government/stormsewer.html> and click on the MS4 Council Presentation 7-12-21 link to learn more about the new Storm Sewer Pollution Control Fee and Credit Program proposed for implementation in 2022.