

SESWA 2019

Athens-Clarke County Stormwater Funding Review



ACCGOV Stormwater Team Members

Todd Stevenson

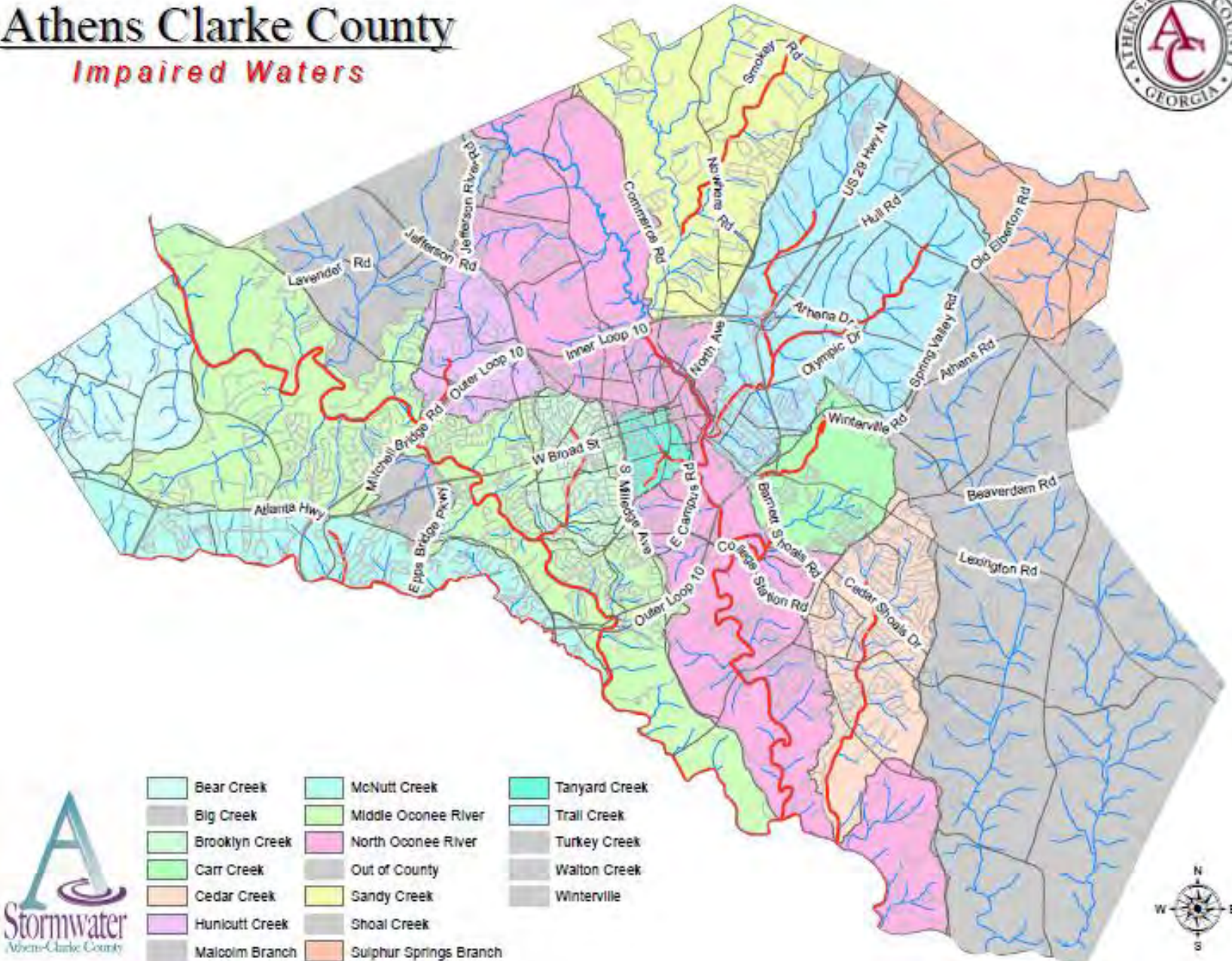
Cecile Riker

Kyle Dalton



Stormwater Fee Addresses:

1. Maintenance of public stormwater systems
2. Clean Water Act requirements
3. Emergency pipe repairs



Backdrop to Funding Review

- Stormwater fee first charged in 2005. **None of the surrounding counties charge a stormwater fee.**
- Single family residential is divided into 3 categories based on impervious surface (IS) area. Audit conducted in 2015-16 **shifted about 10,000 accounts to next higher level.**
- March 18, 2017 Athens Banner-Herald: *Ask Athens-Clarke county's mayor, or any of the county's 10 commissioners, what issue is most frequently brought up by constituents, and you're likely to get a three-word answer – stormwater utility fees. **"Our taxpayers are just pulling their hair out because they think it's so stupid,"** Mayor Nancy Denson said at a recent non-voting commission work session . . .*
- October 9, 2017 Flagpole article: *Oconee County has issued a building permit for Hobby Lobby in Epps Bridge Centre II, signaling that **another big box retailer is leaving the Atlanta Highway commercial corridor for Oconee County.***

“Water Neutral” - Georgia Senate Bill 116

- (a) As used in this Code section, the term 'water-neutral site' means a property designed to achieve control of water runoff from a 25 year, 24 hour storm event in a manner consistent with the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual. (b) No county, municipality, consolidated government, or local authority shall charge a storm-water collection and disposal fee for any property that is certified as a water-neutral site by a professional engineer registered in accordance with Chapter 15 of Title 43.
- Senator Frank Ginn: *“Senate Bill 116, which I’m sponsoring, would prevent a stormwater fee from being charged on water-neutral properties. I authored the bill with help from local elected officials, environmental and design engineers and others to address one simple situation: Georgia does not want to be anti-business.”*

Emergency Response | Pipe Failure – Collins Avenue



Emergency Response | Pipe Failure – Holcomb Drive



Stormwater Rate Study

ACCGOV engaged a team consisting of Stantec Consulting and the Ecological Planning Group to conduct a comprehensive rate study for the Athens-Clarke County stormwater system. The scope of work includes:

- **Phase I:** focus on services the stormwater management program is/will/should provide and the cost/funding of these services
- **Phase II:** focus on how ACCGOV recovers the cost of providing stormwater services, with a close look at rate and credit structure

Core Elements of the Study



Revenue Requirements

- Operating Costs
- Capital Costs
- Financial Policies
- Level of Service

Cost Allocation

- Evaluate Available Data
- Quality vs Quantity
- Review Billing Units
- Compare Results to Current Revenue

Rate Design

- Evaluate Objectives
- Identify Structures
- Review Credits
- Customer Impacts

OPPORTUNITY TO ENSURE EQUITY

ACC has had the same rate structure for over a decade; this review is opportunity to ensure equity and garner community input



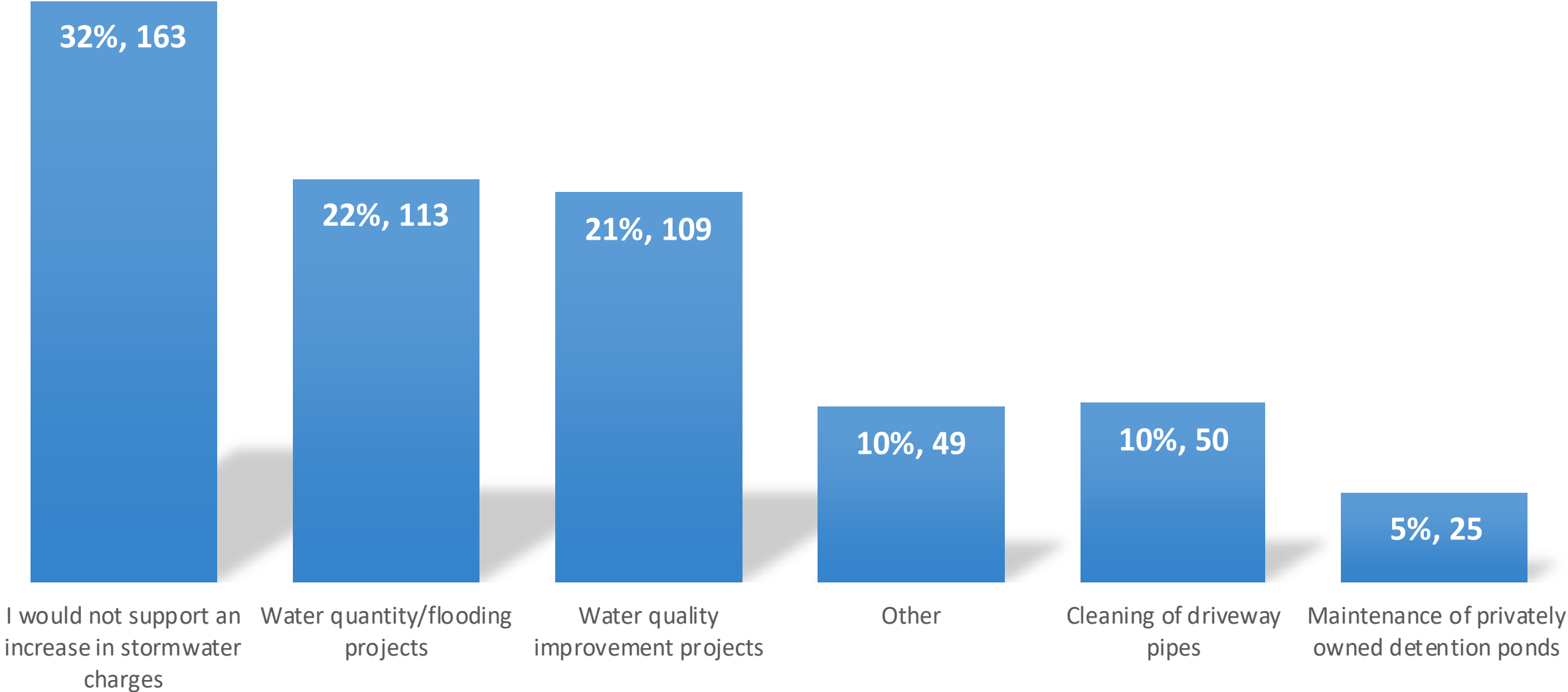
Public Engagement

Welcome!
Please sign-in and...

Public Engagement – Phase I

- Community-wide Survey
 - Online survey hosted through Stormwater website
 - ~300 respondents
 - Gauging customers' understanding of current fee, preferences for additional services, etc.
- Two Public Meetings
 - Presentation overviewing study, utility system and level of service
 - Stations to solicit input / provide information
 - Q&A dialog with ACC Staff
 - ~20 participants

Would you support an increase in stormwater charges if it helped Athens-Clarke County to address:



Public Engagement – Phase II

- Water Bill Stuffer
 - Two page letter outlining stormwater services
 - Sent to all ACCGOV water utility customers
- Postcard Mailer
 - Notified property owners of upcoming public meetings
 - Sent out 25,000 postcards to local Stormwater Utility customers
- Online Comment Form



You're Invited

ACC Stormwater is hosting open house meetings to provide information about the current Stormwater Utility Fee review. As a Stormwater customer, your feedback is welcome and will play a valuable role as we move forward. We hope to meet you at one of the following locations:

ACC Library	Thursday, January 24
J.J. Harris Elementary	Tuesday, January 29
Barnett Shoals Elementary	Wednesday, February 6
Timothy Road Elementary	Monday, February 11
Winterville Depot	Thursday, February 26

All meetings will be held from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

We want to hear from you!

We are hosting an online comment form for customers who cannot attend a meeting in person. To access the form or learn more about the fee review, visit www.accgov.com/stormwater.

In case you missed it...

ACC Stormwater is working with Stantec Consulting to conduct a comprehensive review of the Stormwater Utility Fee. The first phase looked at level/extent of services and a funding strategy for fixing failing stormwater pipes. Fee revenue is insufficient to address failing pipes, and therefore, a rate increase is being considered. The second phase will examine rate structure and fee credits.

Public Engagement – Phase II Continued

Six Public Meetings, Open House Style

- ✓ ACC Library: January 24, 38 attendees
- ✓ J. J. Harris Elementary School: January 29, 18 attendees
- ✓ Barnett Shoals Elementary School: February 6, 21 attendees
- ✓ Timothy Road Elementary School: February 11, 27 attendees
- ✓ Winterville Depot: February 21, 19 attendees
- ✓ Follow up meeting at Winterville Depot: February 26, 7 attendees

Open Houses included:

- Stations to solicit input / provide information
- Q&A dialog with ACC Staff and Stantec / EPG Staff
- Comment forms

Total of 130 attendees



Open House at ACC Public Library



Phase I – Recommendations

Level of Service Recommendations

I) Operations

- Add dedicated crew for televising and inspecting stormwater pipes
- Add additional full time employees to enhance operations of the vacuum truck

II) Capital (i.e. pipe replacements)

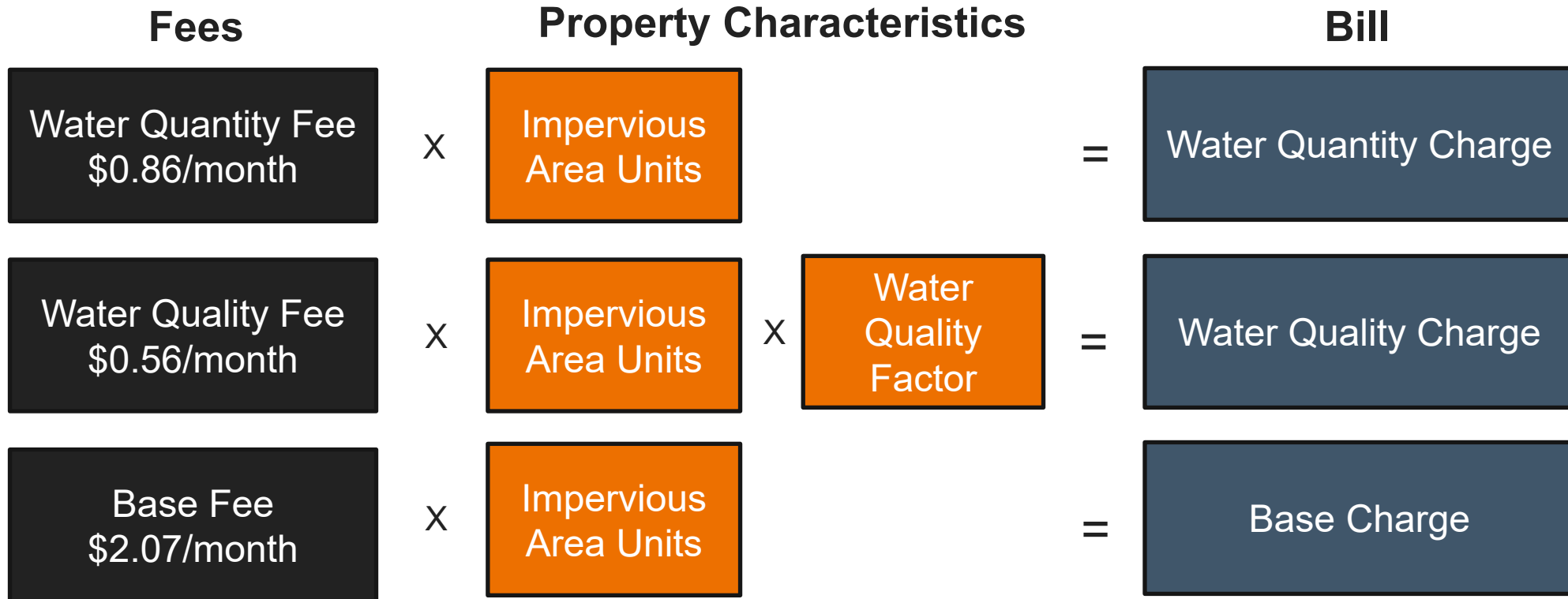
- Replace priority pipes over next ten years

Stormwater Funding Requirements

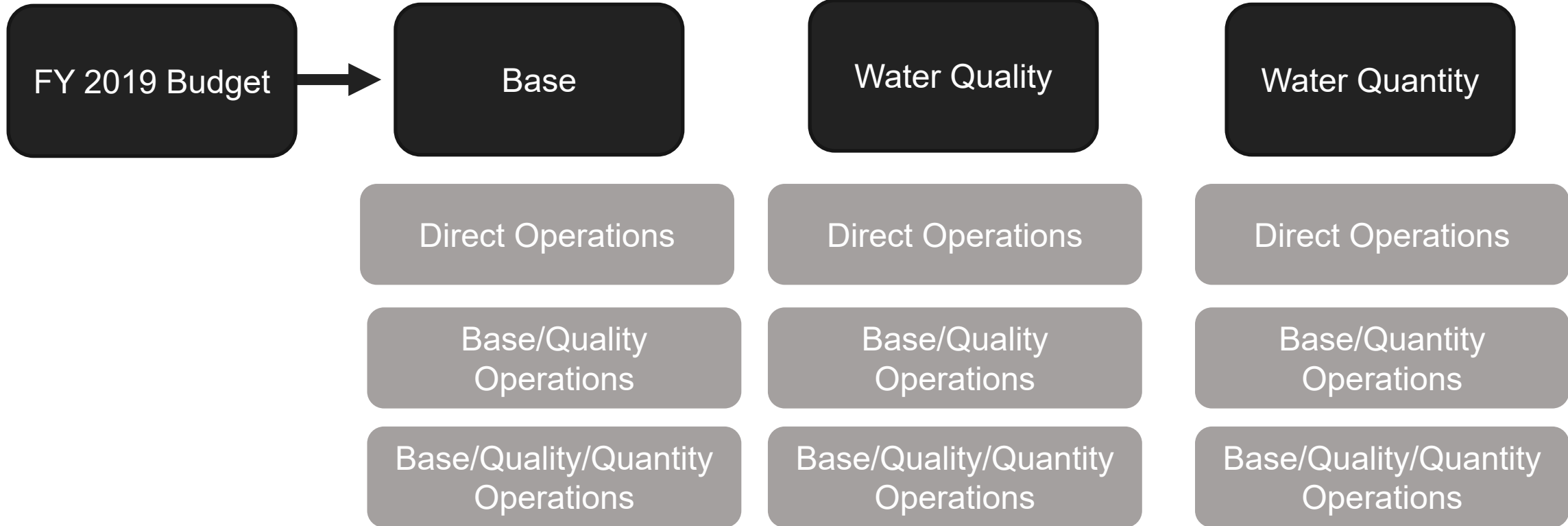
- Additional operations expenditures can be funded from existing stormwater fee revenues
- Pipe replacement will require increases in the stormwater fee resulting in a \$1.50 increase in typical monthly bill over the next ten-years

Other Recommendations

Current fee structure links stormwater cost components with property characteristics to allocate costs



Cost of Service Process



PHASE I TAKEAWAY

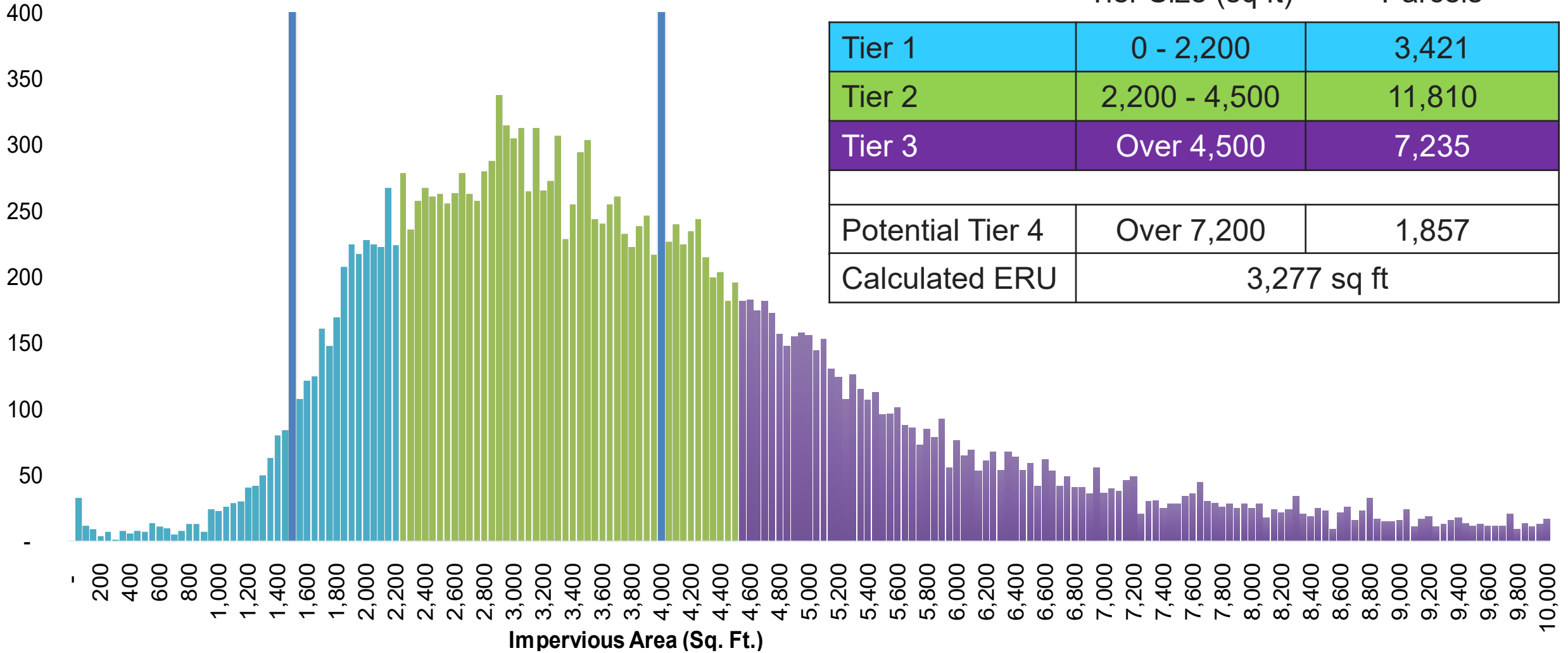
Rates revenues will support current operations and enhancements, additional funding needed for pipe replacements

Phase II – Fee Structure Recommendations

- New impervious area layer should be developed based on 2018 aerials
- ERU definition and single family tiers should be based on analysis of updated impervious area
 - ERU based on median impervious area on single family home
 - Tiers based on statistical distribution around the median
 - Examine additional fourth tier
- Update naming convention for single family residential (instead of small, medium, large – use Tier 1, 2 and 3)
- Cost components of fee should be updated to match cost of service results

Preliminary Updated Residential Tiers

Parcel Count



Phase II – Credit Program Recommendations

- Add additional credits to recognize programs and activities that reduce the burden on ACC's drainage system or SWMP
- Adopt a formal credit policy manual to provide direction to the public on credit eligibility and the application process
- Update the stormwater user fee bill to include information on the credits received by individual customers
- Conduct public education to inform the public about any changes to the credit program

Current Credit Program

Riparian Area Credit – Customers with property that drains into North Oconee River, Middle Oconee River, McNutt Creek and the lower portions of Shoal Creek and Cedar Creek automatically receive up to 100% credit on the quantity portion of their stormwater fee

Education Credit – Public and private schools are eligible for a credit of 5% to 20% on their total user fee bill for teaching an approved environmental science curriculum

Stormwater Facility / Detention Pond Credit – Parcels served by on-site stormwater facilities (e.g. detention ponds) are eligible for up to a 100% credit on the water quality and quantity charge

Agricultural BMP Plan Credit – A property that is in active agriculture and also has an approved Farm Plan from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is eligible for a 100% credit on the water quality charge

Expanded Credit Program – Additional Credits

Credit Name	Credit Description
Watershed Stewardship	For groups of people who have volunteered for watershed events (Rivers Alive, Athens Water Festival)
Septic Tank Maintenance*	For properties with septic tanks that have been regularly serviced
Green Infrastructure	For properties with stormwater practices on site that successfully infiltrate the first 1.0” of rainfall or residential properties that have installed a rain garden or rain barrel
Natural Area Preservation	For properties that are protected in a conservation easement
Tree Canopy*	For properties with significant tree coverage that exceeds ACC’s requirements
Low Density*	For properties where 90% or more of the total parcel is covered with forest
Gravel Driveways	For residential properties that have partially-pervious gravel driveways
Industrial Stormwater Permit	For commercial properties who have complied with their NPDES Industrial Stormwater Permit and are in good standing with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division
Stormwater Facility / Detention Pond	For properties that have a detention pond on site that was built prior to 2008 and does not meet Georgia Stormwater Management Manual standards, but has been maintained and is functioning as designed

**Received the most “votes” from the public at the Open House*

Impervious Area Update

- ACCGOV staff has initiated an update of the impervious area database for stormwater billing
- Impervious area will be based on recent 2018 aerial imagery
- Schedule will allow for processing of data and final fee structure recommendations and adoption prior to FY 21



ACCGOV Stormwater Utility Billing



Online Payment System

Launched June 2019

- Home
- Select Account
- Account Information
- Payment History
- Make Payments
- Auto Pay

Billing History

- Service Summary
- Edit Account
- Manage eBilling
- Accessibility
- My Profile
- Logoff
- Contact Us

[Billing History](#) / [Billing Statement](#)

Billing Statement

Account Number: 000716925-000128372 **Customer Name:** STEVENSON CHARLES T & DEBORAH

Location Address: 108 MEADOW CREEK DR, ATHENS GA **Mailing Address:** L, 128 ELDERBERRY CIR ATHENS GA 30606

Prior Bill Activity Info

Bill Date: 08/11/2018 **Due Date:** 08/31/2018

Bill Amount: \$45.69 **Balance Forward:** \$0.00

Current Charges: \$45.69

Current Charge Detail

Code	Service Description	Comp	Detail Description	Consumption	Amount	Rate Group
ST	STORMWATER FEE	BASE	BASE CHG ACC MSF	0.00	\$27.02	A//MS
		QUAL	QUAL CHG ACC MSF 1.0	0.00	\$7.44	A//MS
		QUAN	QUANTITY CHG ACC MSF	0.00	\$11.23	A//MS

Showing 1 to 3 of 3 entries

*Your current account balance as of 04/02/2019 is \$0.00

June & July Mayor & Commission Meetings

- At June meeting, acceptance of Phase 2 report delayed
- Phase 2 report accepted at July meeting but some questions were raised
 - SPLOST for pipe replacement?
 - TSPLOST for pipe replacement?
 - Work Session for alternative funding sources?

Next Steps

- Refine enhanced credit program
- Complete impervious area update
- Analyze data and develop fee structure recommendations
- Revise stormwater bill format
- Present stormwater fee structure and credit recommendations in early Spring 2020

**QUESTIONS OR
COMMENTS?**