

**TUESDAY MARCH 25TH 2025
NOTES FROM STORMWATER ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY WORKSHOP**

ACTION ITEMS: Recommendations from the Commission:

1. Mayor – City Manager to ask Stantec to calculate and present a 4-tier system to include tweaking the sq. ft - with less disparity between the 4 tiers.
 2. Commissioner Peebles – Would like to also ask them to tweak the vacant properties numbers.
 3. Mayor – city to pull the numbers for putting it back on the utility bill, for both commercial and residential – based on a monthly bill.
 4. These items are to be presented to the commission at the next meeting.
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MEETING NOTES:

Present: Jesse Nelson, Mayor
Sam Peebles, Commissioner
Pat Perno, Commissioner
Jamie Warrick, Commissioner
Judy Vandergrift, Commissioner
Vickie Gainer, City Manager
Chief Ramie, Sergeant at Arms
Amy Myers, City Legal Counsel

Mayor Nelson convened the Public Workshop at 4.02 P.M.

Mayor Nelson opened explaining the process that will follow:

First presentation from Stantec.

Followed by further input from the City Manager.

Commissioner Peebles will further comment on his views of the tier system.

Commissioners will then have an opportunity to discuss and query the tier system.

Presentation by Commissioner Warrick.

Followed by feedback and recommendations from the Finance Review Committee.

Will then we will hear from the public.

The City Manager advised Stantec is online for this workshop to assist with questions.

City Manager Gainer also explained the purpose of the workshop. She mentioned that the city has been working with Stantec at the direction of the Commission to provide a number of scenarios to look at and review.

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Stantec presented their findings:

Mayor – sought clarity that we are looking at a one time increase that should sustain us for the next five years, without increases each year thereafter. Stantec confirmed that it was correct based on all the information we have right now. Mayor - Will there be any reserves possible from this increase? Stantec said that was calculated in to try to obtain a 3-month reserve.

Commissioner Peebles shared his comments and views on the tier system:

To him it made sense to spread out the tiers to a 5-tier system to try to achieve a better average spread. Even though he likes the tier system, we could also use a rate system across the board. He asked if they could use CRA funds for properties in the CRA area as an assessment break if they built their own retention pond, or other things like that? Mr. Janke – would have to look into the plan to see if it were an allowable project for funds. Commissioner Peebles thought it might be good to get citizens to sort out their own issues, so it isn't a city expense and somehow incentivize them this way and minimize their assessment fees. Expressed his thanks to Stantec and the city for the time they've taken putting this together.

Commissioner Perno - We have been doing this for 4 years now. This new system will use the surtax to help fund it another way. The majority of our people fall within one tier, and they are all getting charged the same average. He felt that spreading it out any further would just increase costs. Three or four tiers fall in line perfectly in his opinion.

Commissioner Peebles - the proposed new 3-tier system on this presentation is better than the previous 3-tier system.

Commissioner Warrick - Commissioner Peebles' idea about incentives is good. He would like to see more money spent on concrete canvassing as a good investment.

Commissioner Vandergrift - Likes the proposal of moving to tier 4 / 5 to make it more equitable to the citizens. Are we looking at the 50% increase now? Mayor – yes, although we are not voting today. Mayor Nelson advised that when it was initially started, there were supposed to be incremental increases each year, but circumstances prevented that. A one-time increase therefore makes more sense. Commissioner Vandergrift – so these are real numbers? Mayor – yes.

Commissioner Warrick presented:

Mayor – you said \$2m in revenue? Commissioner Warrick – yes, if the numbers are right.

Commissioner Peebles – how would that be handled with places like Walmart that are much larger? Commissioner Warrick said the cities he spoke to said they just put it on their water bill. Lynn Haven's would be based on every 3900ft. Apartments – individual units will pay individually like a normal residence, and the master units will pay per the commercial property rate.

Commissioner Perno – would go along with putting it on the utility bill if that is what the people want. Also agrees on reducing the vacant land rates. Commissioner Warrick said he has had residents asking him to try to arrange that they are able to pay it monthly rather than a lump sum each year. City Manager – other cities use different software to us so we may not be able to do what they do.

Commissioner Vandergrift - So, people are not concerned about the money, but rather the payment method? Commissioner Warrick said yes, but it's more about how much they have to pay. Commissioner Vandergrift – we want to be equitable, the vacant land is not fair, and the monthly payment option – if we sort out those

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issues - would you be happy to use the tier system? Commissioner Warrick – yes. Commissioner Perno – people with vacant land still have stormwater runoff even with pervious land.

Ms. Ashbrook on behalf of the Finance Review Committee (FRC):

Three main issues:

1. The FRC didn't like the 70% option and preferred the 50% plus some surtax money option, but WITH a Cost of Living increase each year.
2. The FRC had a real problem with the tiers and felt two of the tiers should be spread out a lot more to make it more equitable.
3. The FRC thought it might be a nightmare to put it on the utility bill, and the mechanics behind it. Also strongly felt the vacant land should not be exempt at all.

Commissioner Vandergrift – so you didn't like the 5-tier? Ms. Ashbrook - Not the way it was structured here due to the one tier being so much higher than the others and one of the tiers went down. The middle of the road person would be paying more than more well-off people.

Commissioner Warrick – any conversation about the vacant paying less? Ms. Ashbrook – no.

Commissioner Peebles – so you liked the 5-tier but just spread out more? Ms. Ashbrook – felt the 4-tier being spread out more would be better.

Questions & Answers - Public:

Mr. Beshearse – when you speak about sq ft of impervious you are not considering the size of the lot. Paying on the utility bill will shift the payment to the renters/lease, and you're not sure how you will collect against the vacant properties. Using the surtax is okay but must remember it is not a free pot of money. He doesn't hear so much of how much the tax is, but they really expect the capital projects get done. He said he favors the 5-tier system.

Mr. Walker – been at this for 20 years and it is not working. \$50k paid out to cintax each month, is that part of what the citizens are going to pay? He lives in the CRA area, houses built a long time ago and on stilts because they are below the water table. The new buildings dump a tremendous amount of water on his property. He said that some of the new properties are pumping their stormwater into the sewer system. He feels they are paying tax on tax on tax.

Mr. Scray – Asked the commission if Governor DeSantis' property taxes go away, how are you going to collect your assessment fees? He went on to explain a system he had worked out using a \$3m budget, applying to 1-tier of \$287 per ERU, and every vacant property has a \$100 flat rate (although he would like them to pay more).

Mr. Langford – his recommendation is to separate the residential and non-residential and put the residential back on the water bill. For example, he can put huge diesel trucks on his back yard and not pay for impervious land, but that is effectively impervious. You cannot solve this for a negative number. Just use a flat rate. It used to be on the water bill, so this is not a unique idea. It is simply the amount was not an accurate amount. Put the residential back on the water bill and have a hybrid system to be able to include the commercial.

The mayor asked the commission to give the staff some directions.

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Tier system versus the water bill and what each should look like.

Commissioner Peebles – water bill makes sense, but the financial review committee recommended not.

The Mayor asked Ms. Nickell to speak about the master meter vs individual meters. Ms. Nickell – the city has about 10 master meters that services about 1000 units. When the city charges the water bill it is multiplied by the number of units. The vacant lots are also not currently billed, so that would take some time to set up. In the event of someone moving out the city does not have property owners to send the bill to. Also, if they don't pay the stormwater fee their water will be turned off.

Commissioner Warrick would like the city to investigate the cost and possibility of putting it back on the water bill and bring those details back to the commission. The City Manager said that at the finance review committee the director did say it would be a financial nightmare.

Commissioner Warrick asked if we know how much we pay the tax collector currently. A small percentage. Attorney Amy Myers advised it is 2%.

Commissioner Vandergrift – what is the deadline for this? Mayor – this is already holding up the budget process and a decision needs to be made before the end of April.

Commissioner Vandergrift – would like the numbers of what it would look like with a 4-tier and Commissioner Warrick's system.

Recommendations from the Commission:

5. Mayor – City Manager to ask Stantec to calculate and present a 4-tier system to include tweaking the sq. ft - with less disparity between the 4 tiers.
6. Commissioner Peebles – Would like to also ask them to tweak the vacant properties numbers.
7. Mayor – city to pull the numbers for putting it back on the utility bill, for both commercial and residential – based on a monthly bill.
8. These items are to be presented to the commission at the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 5:19 PM

Notes taken by CJ Rushing.