



Rivanna River Basin Commission

A CONFLUENCE OF INTERESTS

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January 2, 2013

Charlottesville City Council
P.O. Box 911
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Re: Proposed Stormwater Utility Fee for Charlottesville Property Owners

Dear Mayor Huja and Charlottesville City Councilors,

The Rivanna River Basin Commission applauds the City of Charlottesville’s ongoing exploration of funding sources to offset the significant costs of managing stormwater originating in the city. The City’s consideration of the proposed stormwater utility fee provides an opportunity for Charlottesville to set a good example for the other localities in the Rivanna watershed faced with similar challenges. Though the RRBC will not endorse one strategy over another for assigning financial responsibility for stormwater management, the Commission recognizes the City’s efforts to address stormwater management at its source and to prioritize the protection of water and natural resources.

There are segments of the Rivanna River and its tributaries adjacent to or part of the city that are listed as impaired by the Virginia Dept. of Environmental Quality because they do not meet water quality standards for aquatic/biological life or bacteria levels, both of which result at least in part from excessive stormwater flows into waterways. For local quality to be achieved, it is essential to reduce the stormwater runoff into area streams and to repair and to replace the aging infrastructure that contributes to this problem. In addition, the city’s stormwater management is permitted through a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit. These permits will become more prescriptive in the upcoming permit cycles in order to assure the Commonwealth and US EPA that suitable effort is being made to reduce nutrients and sediment to the Chesapeake Bay from upstream sources.

RRBC has served on the most recent stormwater utility advisory committee and believes that the approach undertaken by city staff to develop the proposed stormwater utility fee has been thoughtful, inclusive of a variety of stakeholders, and is based on assigning, as much as is practical, costs to property owners based on the amount of stormwater generated using the widely-accepted metric of imperviousness.

The RRBC’s legislative mandate includes providing “guidance for the stewardship and enhancement of the water and natural resources of the Rivanna River Basin.” RRBC will continue to work with the City and its Rivanna watershed neighbors to help assure that stormwater management is prioritized to meet regulatory requirements, improve local water quality, and encourage citizen awareness and participation.

RRBC’s *2012 Rivanna Watershed Snapshot* highlights the importance of stormwater management in the Rivanna watershed. In 2013, RRBC commences work on the Rivanna Watershed action plan, a roadmap and toolkit that will help local governments with assessing impacts on water quality during the course of development review. We will be working through the RRBC Technical Advisory Committee, which includes Charlottesville staff, to ensure the utility of these tools and consistency with the City’s stormwater management programs.

Sincerely,

Marvin F. Moss, Chair
Rivanna River Basin Commission

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