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Arapahoe County and Centennial to consider stormwater authority

Proposal would address major unmet stormwater drainage needs in the city and in the developed portion of unincorporated Arapahoe County

At its regular meeting at 7 p.m. on Monday, August 21, Centennial City Council will consider a proposal to create an independent stormwater authority to address an estimated \$75 million in unmet stormwater drainage needs. The Arapahoe County Commission will consider the same proposal on Tuesday, August 22, at its regular session at 9:30 a.m. Three area special districts are also considering joining the stormwater authority: Arapahoe County Water and Wastewater Authority (ACWWA), East Cherry Creek Valley Water and Sanitation District and Inverness Water and Sanitation District.

Stormwater flooding regularly threatens many properties in the area, and the problem has grown over the years as more and more land development has resulted in a high proportion of paved surfaces and less open ground to absorb water. Construction and maintenance of stormwater drainage facilities have historically not kept pace with the need, resulting in a large backlog of flooding mitigation projects.

In addition to addressing stormwater flooding issues, the proposed stormwater authority would be responsible for local compliance with federal clean water standards. Local jurisdictions are increasingly bearing the considerable costs of compliance with strict federal clean water requirements. Unlike tap water, stormwater runoff is not treated to filter pollution picked up as it runs back into the nation's waterways. Cities and counties with substantial populations across the country have been required in recent years to formulate plans and programs to protect the quality of stormwater runoff. The next phase of these federal requirements will institute fines on local jurisdictions that are out of compliance.

In 2002, a citizens group recommended the formation of an authority that could address stormwater flooding concerns. Since that time a task force of Arapahoe County and Centennial public works personnel has made a thorough study of stormwater needs, inventoried flooding problem areas, and compiled associated costs.

The joint proposal would allow the five jurisdictions to take advantage of cost sharing and economies of scale, and eliminate cost duplication. A number of other jurisdictions around the Denver metro area have formed similar stormwater authorities.

It is projected that the fee for the average homeowner in the authority area might be approximately \$5 to \$6.25 per month. Residents currently paying a monthly stormwater fee to Arapahoe County Water and Wastewater Authority would not be levied twice.

The revenues from this fee would be used to build new stormwater drainage structures in areas that need them, to upgrade and maintain aging and inadequate structures, and to comply with state and federal water quality regulations.

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