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STORMWATER CHARGE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Goal: To receive feedback on the development of the stormwater charge and raise awareness and educate Newmarket residents, businesses and other Newmarket stakeholders on the implementation and importance of stormwater management in Newmarket.

Measurement: Communications and Finance will measure how successful this campaign is by measuring the number of customer service calls, emails and social media messages we receive regarding the stormwater charge. Public interest can also be gaged by the social media ads we place and the website analytics through our website.

Background: Town of Newmarket is looking to implement a stormwater charge for 2017.

Stormwater management protects the community and the environment from stormwater runoff. Stormwater runoff is water that flows off properties mostly due to rain and snow events.

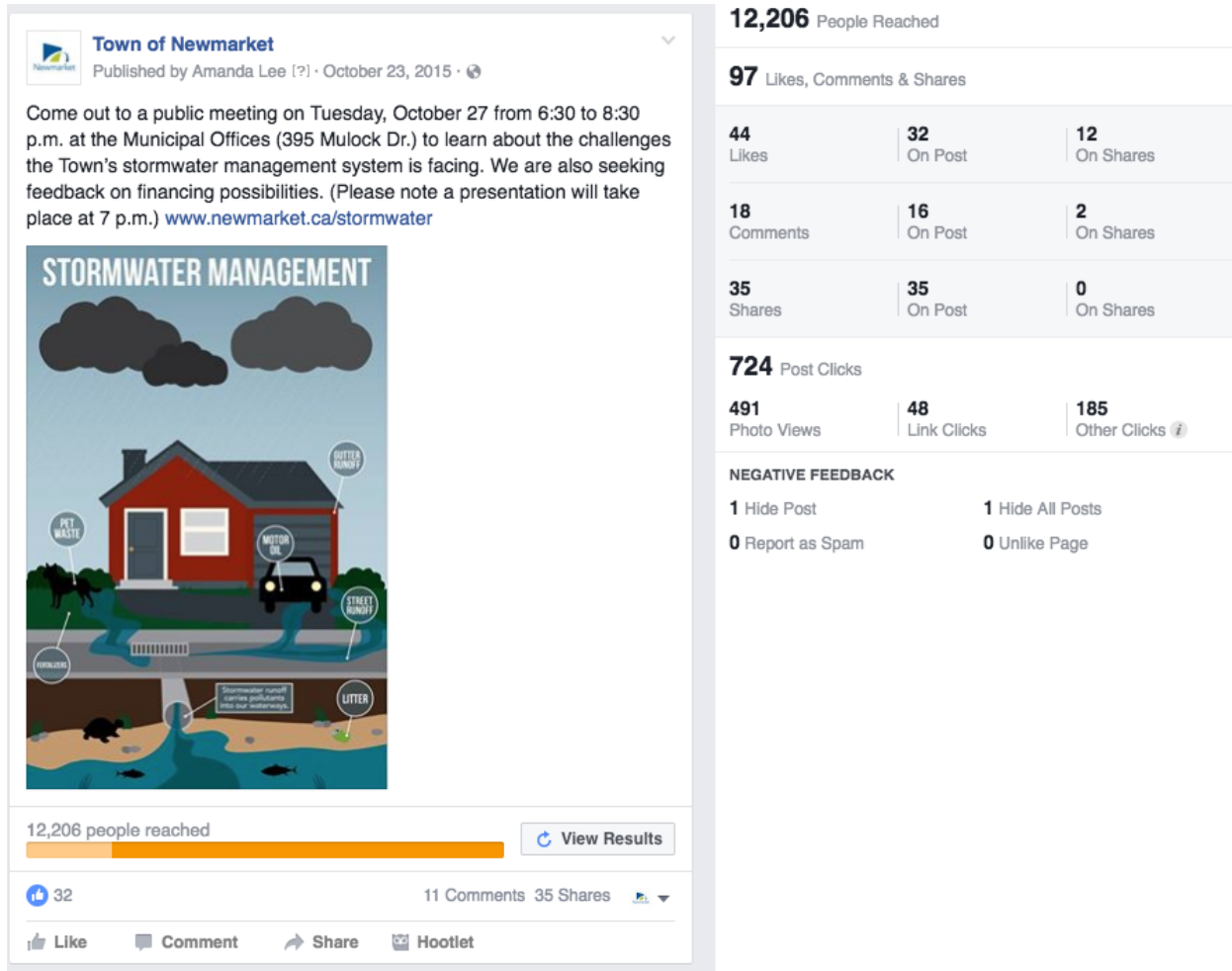
The Town is currently exploring the possibility of establishing a stormwater charge, a user rate based on the size of the property. The stormwater charge would help fund the three major cost drivers for the service, which are flood prevention, environmental protection and aging infrastructure.

The stormwater charge, if adopted by Council, will come into effect on January 1, 2017, residents will see the stormwater charge on their June property tax bill under the 'special charges' section.

Previous Communication Efforts:

- Public Information Centre in October 2015
 - Advertised through Town Page Ads
 - Social Media Postings (Twitter, Facebook etc.)
 - Media Advisory
- The analytics from the Facebook advertisement to invite residents and stakeholders to a Public Information Centre (PIC) about the stormwater charge are shown in Figure 1.
- A total of 12 people attended the PIC regarding stormwater management;
- The Town created a webpage explaining the rationale for exploring implementing a stormwater charge.
- Online survey about the stormwater management rate advertised through Town Page, social media, website, Newmarket Now and media advisory, a total of 22 surveys submitted.
- The Town of Newmarket, in partnership with the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce hosted a focus group with Newmarket businesses on September 26, 2016 to share details about the stormwater charge and how it will affect them.
- The Town created a 2 minute video to explain the rationale of the stormwater charge and how it works. This video has been shared on the Town Website and Facebook page prior to the November 28 Committee of the Whole.

Figure 1: Facebook Analytics of Town Advertisement for the Stormwater PIC



Further Communications: The following are communication tactics available and the project cost of each tactic.

TACTIC	PROJ. COST	IMPLEMENTATION DATE	PERFORMED BY
Media Release	\$0	After adoption by Council (est. Dec 2016)	Communications (Finance to approve)
Web Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is it - Why is it important - How are fees calculated - Will there be a rebate program for residents? - What is the Town doing with the SWM charge - Credit program for 	\$0	Launched after adoption by Council (est. Nov 2016)	Communications/ Finance

businesses - How to apply for a credit program - Frequently Asked Questions			
Twitter	\$0	Tweet out release Nov/Dec 2016, Jan/Feb 2017	Communications/ Finance
Facebook – Post	\$50	Dec 19-25	Communications
Facebook – Post	\$200	Jan 1-31	
Graphic – with link to website for more information on implementation			
Mail-out Households/ Businesses 1) All Household Flyer to property owners 2) All Household Flyer in property tax insert 3) Flyer mail-out to businesses with letter 4) Flyer mail-out with letter to exempt properties	\$4000	Nov-June 2017	Communications/ Finance
Marquee Signs (outside of facilities)	\$0	Nov/Dec/Jan	Communications/ Finance
Town Page Ads	\$0	Nov X 2 Dec X 2 Jan X 2 Feb X 2	Communications/ Finance
ERA Ad – 1/2 page	\$1,204	May 2017 (2 nd week)	Communications/ Finance
SNAP'D – 1/2 page	\$750	May 2017	Communications/ Finance
Storm charge calculator Promoted via January Twitter Campaign	TBD	Jan 2016	Information Technology
Internal Training with Customer Service FAQ will be provided -Workflow chart if there are questions that require more information (i.e. regarding the business credit program or	\$0	Nov 2016	Finance/Customer Service

stormwater charge) will direct residents to the appropriate staff member for questions			
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STORMWATER CHARGE – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is stormwater?

Stormwater is the rain and melted snow that flows from your property, onto the streets and into the storm drains. If not sufficiently managed, stormwater picks up debris, chemicals and other pollutants from rooftops and paved surfaces that runs into our creeks and rivers.

2. What is the stormwater charge?

The stormwater charge is a new user fee that will be used to help fund Newmarket's stormwater management program. The stormwater charge will come into effect on January 1, 2017. It will appear on your 2017 Property Tax Bill under the 'special charges' section.

3. What is stormwater management?

The Town provides a stormwater management service to protect the community and environment from stormwater runoff. Stormwater runoff is water that flows off properties mostly due to rain and snow events.

Hard surfaces like roofs, driveways, and parking lots increase the amount of runoff from each property. Stormwater management controls water flow quantity in order to help prevent flooding and water flow quality in order to protect the environment.

4. Why is the Town implementing a stormwater charge?

Newmarket is a growing community and there is more stormwater than ever before due to climate change. A stormwater charge will help fund Newmarket's Stormwater Management Program which will help prevent against floods, provide environmental protection and help fund the stormwater infrastructure.

- **Flood Protection**

- Severe weather events that previously happened every forty years now happen every six. As a consequence, damage from storm events has recently become the biggest cause for insurance claims in Canada. This rate will help us adapt and protect homes and businesses in Newmarket from severe weather events.

- **Environmental Protection**

- As water runs off properties, it can carry contaminants with it. Runoff from urban and rural areas have upset Lake Simcoe's ecosystem. The Town is developing a comprehensive stormwater management master plan, as per the regulatory requirements outlined in the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, to restore waterways and breeding grounds.

- **Stormwater Infrastructure**

- The Town has 53 ponds, 55 kilometers of waterways and 225 kilometers of sewers that are maintained and replaced as they age. This user rate will provide a funding source that is reliable, predictable, and fair to ensure the service can continue to be effectively run in the future.

5. How will the stormwater charge benefit me?

The stormwater charge will benefit our community by helping to maintain our stormwater management infrastructure. This in turn will protect our homes and business from flooding and rivers and lakes from pollutants.

6. How will the stormwater charge affect the average resident?

Currently, stormwater is charged through your property taxes and water/wastewater bill. If approved by Newmarket Council, current amounts for stormwater will be removed from your property tax and water/wastewater bill and put toward a stormwater charge.

This is like opening a separate savings account for stormwater and setting aside funds dedicated to stormwater. This will ensure there is enough money for future stormwater management improvements.

With the implementation of this charge, the average resident will see their tax levy go down by \$45 and their annual water and wastewater bill go down by \$10. They will also see a new stormwater charge of \$40. If the Town adopts the stormwater charge, the average resident will save \$15 on stormwater management in 2017. This represents a shift to user pay where properties that produce more stormwater runoff will pay more.

7. How will my stormwater charge be calculated?

The stormwater charge is based on the size of your property and the runoff level group. Runoff levels are divided into three groups, high, medium and low. Natural areas have a low runoff level, residential and institutional properties have a medium runoff level, and industrial and commercial properties have a high runoff level. Therefore, the size of your property multiplied by the runoff level group rate equals your stormwater charge.

8. If I currently don't receive a property tax bill, will I still be charged a stormwater charge?

Property owners that do not receive property tax bills such as hospitals, charities and places of worship will still be required to pay the stormwater charge. The stormwater charge is a user fee and not a tax. These property owners will begin to receive a property tax bill, which will reflect the stormwater charge in the 'special charges' section of the bill. Your property will still be tax exempt.

9. What is the difference between the stormwater charge and the water and wastewater charge?

The stormwater charge is a new user fee that will be used to fund Newmarket's Stormwater Management program. The water and wastewater charge is part of the Newmarket portion of your hydro bill. The water and wastewater charge is used to fund the maintenance of water and wastewater infrastructure and separate from the storm drain infrastructure.

10. Where does the stormwater currently go?

Stormwater from rain and snow melt naturally soaks into the ground in a process called infiltration. With Newmarket being an urbanized community with houses, roads, parking lots and other hard surfaces, these factors prevent water from infiltrating into the ground. The disruption to the water cycle means that stormwater runs off to other areas, such as ponds and watercourses, which can lead to flooding and other environmentally damaging effects.

11. Stormwater from my property does not flow into the Town's storm drains. Can I forgo paying the stormwater charge?

All property owners in Newmarket are subject to the stormwater charge. Stormwater infrastructure removes pollutants in the water and reduces peak flows. Stormwater from your property that doesn't flow into the Town's storm drains means that your stormwater runoff is not controlled by any stormwater infrastructure which can contribute to flooding and contaminants in our waterways.

12. Is there a credit program for residents?

Unfortunately, there is no credit program available for residents at this time. The Town is looking at different opportunities to provide incentives to residents. More information will be available in 2017.

13. Is there a credit program for commercial and industrial property owners?

Yes, there is a credit program for commercial and industrial property owners. Commercial and industrial property owners could be faced with a substantially larger stormwater charge than the average resident in Newmarket. As a result, a credit program will encourage commercial and industrial property owners to make environmentally friendly changes to help reduce their stormwater runoff and charge. More information on the credit program will be available on our website in 2017.

14. Can I appeal my stormwater charge?

If you feel there are inaccuracies during the process of calculating your stormwater charge, you may contact the Town of Newmarket by calling 905-895-5193.

15. Is Newmarket the only municipality that has a stormwater charge?

Other municipalities such as the Town of Aurora, Town of Richmond Hill, City of Mississauga, City of Ottawa and the City of Waterloo are just a few examples of municipalities who have a stormwater management fee/charge.