

City of Savannah – Stormwater Utility Focus Group

Position Paper Summary (November 6, 2025)

Purpose

Nine residents, each nominated by a City Council member, served on the Stormwater Utility Focus Group to represent community perspectives on the City's proposed Stormwater Utility. The group met twice (August 26 and September 11, 2025) to review public feedback, refine outreach messaging, and develop recommendations for City Council consideration via a Position Paper.

Background

Savannah's stormwater drainage system faces increasing challenges from aging infrastructure, heavier rainfall, and insufficient funding to address the existing and growing demands on the system. Current general fund and SPLOST allocations do not provide sufficient revenue to implement a consistent, proactive maintenance program and capital improvement program. A Stormwater Utility would establish a dedicated, reliable, and equitable funding source, thereby transitioning the stormwater program from reactive to proactive management while enhancing flood mitigation, maintenance, and service delivery across all neighborhoods within the City.

Key Advantages

Stable, Adequate, Dedicated (SAD) Funding: SAD annual revenue for enhanced operations & maintenance as well as to assist with funding over \$450 million in identified capital drainage project needs.

Fair & Equitable Fee Structure: Stormwater user fees are based on impervious area such that customers pay proportional to their runoff contribution and the service delivery demands imposed on the City.

Improved Service Delivery: Enables proactive maintenance, improved customer responsiveness, and equitable investment and utilization of resources citywide.

Transparency & Accountability: Public awareness of revenue collection & allocation, project priority ranking for implementation, and drainage maintenance plans and schedules.

Environmental & Resiliency Benefits: Supports enhanced regulatory compliance, water quality management, and flood-risk reduction especially in light climate change conditions affecting the region.

Focus Group Consensus Themes

- Strong support for Stormwater Utility adoption and a four-tier residential rate structure (median Tier 2 ≈ \$4.75/month).
- Desire for clear, accessible communication of how stormwater user fee revenues will be used and how service delivery levels will improve for customers.
- Emphasis on proactive maintenance, in-house capability expansion, and objective capital project prioritization using defined criteria.
- Support for public education on drainage system operation and ongoing community engagement.

Recommendations

1. Adopt the Stormwater Utility with credits using a four-tier residential rate structure.
2. Enhance transparency through online project maps, activity tracking, and user fee details.
3. Expand in-house maintenance resources and level of service activities by service zone.
4. Accelerate capital projects using SPLOST, grants, bonds, and public-private partnerships.
5. Launch sustained public education plan to message key stormwater and flood prevention issues.
6. Plan for long-term climate resilience and equitable investment in all neighborhoods.

Conclusion

The Focus Group unanimously supports the creation of a Stormwater Utility as a fair, transparent, and sustainable funding model. With dedicated resources, the City can enhance stormwater program service delivery, strengthen community trust, and build a more flood-resilient City through the Stormwater Utility.

READER NOTE: This Position Paper Summary was derived from the more comprehensive 10-page Position Paper.