

What can I do?

◆ Learn about the issue.

The official municipality page has helpful information: <http://www.monroeville.pa.us/stormwater.htm>

The Environmental Protection Agency has an informative document discussing stormwater funding at https://www3.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/region3_factsheet_funding.pdf

StormwaterPA is another good source of information: <http://www.stormwaterpa.org>

You can learn about the experiences of others around the nation who have experienced stormwater management programs. Just fire up Google and try a few searches. In particular, notice the articles about how houses of worship and other non-profits have been impacted by these plans.

◆ Team up!

Monroeville's houses of worship have not always cooperated well. This issue affects all our ministries. If we are to be successful in finding a solution that works for us and our community, it will take real partnership. We need to present a unified voice.

◆ Speak up!

Contact your local council member. Contact the mayor's office. Attend the hearing on September 6 at 7:00 and the council meeting on September 11 at 7:00. Let them know where you stand.

◆ Use the talking points.

Having a clear, shared message helps us cut through the noise and anxiety and shows the strength of unity.

◆ Speak from your heart.

Beyond the talking points, share the unique ministries your house of worship brings to our community that are at risk if no accommodation is made in this fee.

◆ Educate your fellow citizens.

Share this information online and in person. Do what it takes to get the word out, since there is very little time.

FACT SHEET AND TALKING POINTS

Monroeville's proposed stormwater sewage management plan will cost houses of worship MORE THAN \$1 MILLION by 2023. What can you do?

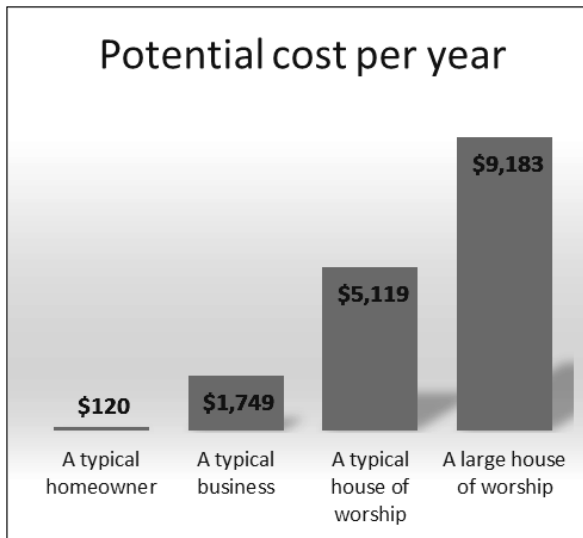
Prepared by Pastor Bob Schaefer on behalf of
The Monroeville Interfaith Ministerium

Summary

On September 11, 2018 the Monroeville Council will vote on a proposed ordinance intended to fund Monroeville's stormwater management plan. The stormwater management plan itself is good and required by law—houses of worship should support it.

We are very concerned about the fee that will fund the plan, however. The Monroeville houses of worship collectively will be charged perhaps \$200,000-250,000 each year beginning January 1, 2018—about the same as the Monroeville Mall. Although the amount will vary by the property, even small houses of worship can expect to pay \$1000-5000 annually. (See below and inside for estimates.)

Houses of worship depend on donations for the good work we do. Monroeville's policy must not place an unreasonable financial burden on the organizations least able to bear it. We are asking for fair accommodations for houses of worship.



v.1.1, revised August 29, 2018

Frequently Asked Questions

◆ What is stormwater management?

When it rains, the water has to go somewhere. Most natural surfaces are pervious – the rainwater soaks into the ground and is absorbed.

Developed properties also have impervious surfaces – when rain hits roofs or parking lots, it runs and flows, eventually ending up in Monroeville's extensive system of storm sewer pipes, sometimes called the "MS4." These pipes in turn lead to overflow storage areas and eventually our local waterways, where the rainwater is dispersed. Along the way, the water picks up all kinds of chemicals and sediment, which wind up polluting the rivers and streams.

Monroeville is required by law to develop and implement a plan to address this real concern. It will mean significant, expensive, necessary and ongoing updates to our infrastructure.

◆ How will the improvements be paid for?

The proposed ordinance establishes an annual fee to be paid by all property owners. The fee is based on the number of Equivalent Residential Units a property contains.

◆ What's an ERU?

Essentially, the ordinance establishes the number of square feet of impermeable surface contained in an average single-family home. This becomes a unit of measurement – an ERU. Every property owner in Monroeville will be assessed at least one ERU, and possibly more if they have a larger or more developed property.

In Monroeville one ERU will be defined as 2,385 square feet of impermeable surface. The monthly fee will be set at \$10.00 per ERU, rounded down to the nearest ERU.

◆ How will this impact local businesses and houses of worship?

An average business can expect a fee of about \$1750, while a typical house of worship's charge will be three times as much. See the table inside for estimated fees for representative properties.

◆ Wait – why are houses of worship paying way more than for-profit businesses?

It's simple math: Houses of worship usually have large structures and parking lots. Businesses that have similar sized or larger structures and lots also tend to share that capacity with many other tenants, whereas houses of worship stand alone and bear the full cost of their impervious surfaces.

◆ Aren't houses of worship tax-exempt?

They are, if they have filed the correct paperwork. This proposal is for a fee and not a tax, however. That makes all the difference. Houses of worship can appropriately be charged fees for services they receive, such as utilities, waste management and sewage fees. The proposal is intentionally structured as a fee system so that non-profits can be called upon to do our part.

◆ How long will this fee be in effect?

Forever. The dollar amount may go up or down based on the actual expense of implementing the stormwater management plan, particularly after the first five years. But council members have said that businesses should plan on this being a perpetual budget item.

◆ What accommodations are we asking for?

Houses of worship that depend on donations should not shoulder more of the financial burden than commercial businesses. At the same time, we want to do our part. A fair solution seems to be policy changes that reduce the burden for houses of worship by perhaps 70%. This amount will still be a challenge for many, but it is a realistic number to meet, and in line with what commercial businesses will pay.

◆ How can this be done?

There are many possibilities. A few ideas:

- The fee could be capped for donation-dependent non-profit organizations, perhaps as a percent of revenue.
- Credit could be offered for education and activism in line with the environmental goals of the MS4 plan.
- Different ERU rates could be established for different categories of property owner.

Houses of worship can support any solution or combination of solutions that brings our share to manageable levels.

Talking Points

In order to communicate our message clearly and consistently, the following talking points are suggested:

- ◆ **People of faith support the stormwater management plan.**

This needs to be front and center. We understand both the legal and moral obligation our Municipality has to enact this plan for the good of our community and its environment. We support this good work.

- ◆ **People of faith wish to do our fair share.**

Our religious traditions call us to be strong partners in this work. We are not opposed to paying an annual fee alongside all our neighbors for the sake improving our community. We wish to share the burden.

- ◆ **A flat ERU fee seems fair but it is not.**

The appeal of a flat fee per ERU is that it seems absolutely fair: A square foot of runoff has the same impact on the environment and the storm sewer system no matter whose property it comes from. On the face of it, the simplest and fairest solution for a community appears to be charging property owners the same ERU fee regardless of who they are or what their property is used for.

The numbers tell a different story. Houses of worship which depend entirely on donations would pay many times more than for-profit businesses which can pass the cost along to their customers.

The impact of a flat ERU fee will be much heavier on houses of worship than on businesses. It is not fair for a Subway location to pay \$266 while North American Martyrs must pay \$9183 – almost 35 times as much!

- ◆ **Houses of worship must maintain substantial parking capacity, even though it may be used infrequently.**

Most houses of worship have relatively modest parking needs the vast majority of the time. But the nature of our work means that a few times a year we may require 5-10x as much parking as normal. These events are ones that the Monroeville community highly values:

Commercial Property Comparison

Location	Square Feet	Number of Tenants	Cost Per Tenant
Subway/Fox's plaza	37,000	7	\$ 266
Jonnet Plaza	396,627	14	\$ 1,425
Monroeville Mall	4,429,222	120	\$ 1,857
Miracle Mile	1,081,685	30	\$ 1,814
Average Cost Per Tenant			\$ 1,749

Houses of Worship Estimated Fees

House of Worship	Square Feet	URL for Area Estimate	Annual Cost
St. Martin's Anglican	28,007	https://is.gd/xgqHZO	\$ 1,409
Trinity Lutheran	28,984	https://is.gd/B0AGuL	\$ 1,458
Lord's Church of Pittsburgh	30,820	https://is.gd/2rartc	\$ 1,551
Temple David	66,891	https://is.gd/laEhYA	\$ 3,366
Church of the Resurrection Byzantine	80,853	https://is.gd/UcZcrm	\$ 4,068
Harvest Bible Chapel	86,033	https://is.gd/eOp9Nh	\$ 4,329
Grace Life	88,733	https://is.gd/SSnoyw	\$ 4,465
New Covenant Presbyterian	92,462	https://is.gd/ahqJzc	\$ 4,652
The Good Shepherd Lutheran	92,819	see above	\$ 4,670
Monroeville United Methodist	97,625	https://is.gd/CcSOXC	\$ 4,912
Hindu Jain Temple	109,285	https://is.gd/ufekfp	\$ 5,499
Grace Baptist	160,456	https://is.gd/41wtmW	\$ 8,073
Monroeville Assembly of God	171,281	https://is.gd/V0bi4v	\$ 8,618
St. Bernadette Catholic	209,425	https://is.gd/fiD4Os	\$ 10,537
North American Martyrs Catholic	182,508	https://is.gd/SyhMra	\$ 9,183
Average			\$ 5,119

- Religious holidays.
- Weddings.
- Funerals.
- Community festivals and events.

In addition, houses of worship are almost always standalone properties. They are not able to share their large parking lots with other businesses as a strip mall or multi-tenant business property would do.

- ◆ **Businesses and government bodies will pass along the fee. Houses of worship must simply absorb it somehow.**

How will property owners deal with the new fees? Probably like this:

- **Homeowners** will just have to pay it.
- **Landlords** will pass the cost on to their tenants if it is permitted by their lease. If it is not, landlords will be required to pay the full fee themselves until they renegotiate their lease.
- **Businesses** will pass the cost on to their customers through small increases in price.

- **The municipality and school district** will pass the cost on to the taxpayers through increased millage.
- **Non-profits** will plead with their members to increase their voluntary giving. But the homeowners will already be paying their own fees, along with higher taxes and increased costs whenever they do business in Monroeville. It will be very difficult for non-profits to raise the necessary funds. Some won't be able to do it, and will either cut their services to our community or close their doors.

- ◆ **Struggling houses of worship will be hit the hardest – some may close.**

Houses of worship are currently struggling against major adverse demographic trends. By some accounts 80-90% of American houses of worship have plateaued or are in decline. Many face chronic deficit budgets. Yet these houses of worship may have vast unused parking lots and large buildings as a legacy from their earlier days of prosperity. A flat ERU fee adds insult to injury by attaching a high annual fee to capacity that is no longer required.

It seems likely that some houses of worship will not be able to absorb \$10,000 - 90,000 in fees over the next decade. A direct result of a flat ERU fee is that there will likely be fewer houses of worship in Monroeville ten years from now than would be the case under a fairer proposition.

◆ **Download this brochure** at <http://www.mimcares.org>
 ◆ **Request additional copies of this brochure** from The Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 4503 Old William Penn Highway, 412-372-2934