

City and County of Honolulu
Storm Water of O'ahu Stakeholder Hui (SWOOSH)

April 11, 2023, 4:15-6:45 pm
Hybrid Meeting
via Zoom & Mayor's Conference Room

ATTENDEES

AARP (Keali'i Lopez)
American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) (June Nakamura)
Building Owner and Managers Association (BOMA) (Melissa Pavlicek)
Hawai'i Community Foundation (Dana Okano)
Ko'olau Mountains Watershed Partnership (JC Watson)
KUA (Malia Heimuli and Wally Ito)
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Mark Fox)
NAIOP | Commercial Real Estate Development Organization (Darian Chun)
Neighborhood Board #4, Kaimuki (Lori Yamada)
Neighborhood Board 18, Aliamanu-Salt Lake (Chace Shigemasa)
Neighborhood Board #31, Kailua (Levani Lipton)
Sustainable Coastlines Hawaii (Rafael Bergstrom)
Waipahu High School (Dalen Calistro)
Wai'anae Mountains Watershed Partnership (Yumi Miyata)

Public Agency Staff

Randall Wakumoto (Program Administrator, Storm Water Quality Division, City and County of Honolulu
Department of Facility Maintenance (DFM))
Dawn Szewczyk (Director and Chief Engineer, City and County of Honolulu DFM)
Delia Benitez (City and County of Honolulu DFM)

Consultant Team

Joan Isaacson (Kearns & West)
Juli Beth (JB) Hinds (Birchline Planning, LLC)
Laurens van der Tak (Jacobs)
Ming Ding (AECOM)
Cami Kloster (G70)
Janice Jensen (G70)

Members of the Public

Sherry Tenn (Waipahu High School Academy of
Natural Resources)

1. Welcome, Agenda Overview, and New Member Introductions

Joan Isaacson (Kearns & West) welcomed everyone and reviewed the meeting agenda and guides for productive meetings.

See slides 1 to 5 of the presentation materials provided at StormWaterUtilityOahu.org.

2. Public Comment

There were no public comments. See slides 6 and 7 of the presentation materials.

3. New Member Introductions | Roundtable Alohas

New SWOOSH member Malia Heimuli of KUA and student representative Dalen Calistro of Waipahu High School Natural Resources Academy introduced themselves. Roundtable alohas were included as part of the Jeopardy quiz review (see below). See slide 8 of the presentation materials.

4. Update on Storm Water Fee and Funding Options

a. Jeopardy! Quiz for Refresher on Storm Water Fee Fundamentals

Juli Beth (JB) Hinds (Birchline Planning) served as host for the Jeopardy game show quiz. SWOOSH members introduced themselves before selecting a category and question to answer. See slide 9 of the presentation materials.

b. Strategies for Fee Structure Timing and Phasing

Randall Wakumoto (City and County DFM) provided a legislative update on Hawai'i Legislature House Bill 1101 and Senate Bill 1399. The original bill would have exempted all state agencies from storm water utility fees. The bill was amended to place a cap on fees that may be collected from the Hawai'i State Department of Transportation (DOT) at \$1.5 million per year statewide. The revisions resulted from DFM discussions with DOT and SWOOSH member testimony.

Randall also provided updates on the storm water utility fee and timing. City leadership remains committed to a storm water utility. Timing for introducing the bill to City Council is being considered due to economic challenges of inflation, COVID recovery, property taxes, and compounded by rising costs of oil, gas, and electricity. The hope is to introduce a bill this year, but the timing is uncertain. DFM Director Dawn Szewczyk met with City councilmembers earlier this year to explain the storm water utility fee and hear their thoughts and concerns.

In addition to the previously discussed impervious cover-based storm water fee, potential synergies with the Department of Environmental Services (ENV) for a combined sewer/storm water fee are being investigated. Currently ENV is conducting a sewer rate study.

The direction from City leadership has been to reduce the impacts to the customer base, specifically residents and businesses. Strategies explored by the project team include using funding from other sources to reduce the total storm water utility fee. For example, DFM would continue to use the Highway Fund to support roadway-related stormwater operations. Randall explained that the purpose of exploring strategies is to see if impacts to customers could be reduced and to address some of the City Council concerns as well.

In thinking about new strategies, the question was asked: What services and investments are most important to put onto a stable SWU fee? This approach would provide consistent funding for important services. Roadway-related DFM functions could continue to be funded by the Highway Fund, and property tax funds could continue to fund services by allied departments. This approach can reduce the storm water fee by reducing the number of services it is funding and leaving others on general fund or Highway Fund support.

The fee options being considered at this time include:

- #1 – Tiered Impervious Cover Fee
 - Phased-in over 4 years
- #2 – Sewer/Storm Water Integrated Flat Fee
 - Charge funds into an enterprise fund
 - Reduces the equitability, incentive/credit opportunities

If the fee were phased in, it would still be in the range of the fees that have been discussed at about \$252 annually or about \$21 monthly at end of year 4 at 100%. Year 1 average single-family charge would be \$9/month. This would be sufficient for the City to be able to issue bonds for storm water projects, potentially starting in 2026 with a second round in 2027. If the fee is linked with the sewer fund, the timing for issuing bonds might differ.

How the bill will be sent to customers is also being explored. It could be sent out by the Board of Water Supply (BWS) or included on the City's real property tax bill. The team has had multiple conversations with these entities. However, these departments are not eager to send the bills because of the associated issues, including responding to customer phone calls. ENV does send bills to around 1,000 customers, but its system is not capable of handling the large customer base of the storm water fee. The storm water fee could be on its own separate bill; however, this is not recommended because of the low payment rate that typically occurs with stand-alone billing. Any proposal for the storm water fee for consideration by the City Council will need to include a plan for who will send the bills.

See slides 10 to 18 of the presentation materials.

Please note: For all Q&A / Discussion sections, the notes with dashes (-) represent comments and questions from the Stakeholder Advisory Group and the notes with open points (o) represent the project team's responses.

- I like having phasing for people to adjust to the fee.
- It will be difficult to launch a fee all at once at this time. We heard repeatedly during the storm water utility outreach process the request for a corresponding decrease in property taxes.
 - o Randall responded that phasing would provide time for the reorganization plan for SWQ to be developed which is the prerequisite for new positions to be developed.
 - o Each stakeholder can consider reaching out to elected officials regarding your entity's position on the storm water utility fee. Councilmembers would be interested in hearing this.
- I like the phasing and if the fee were with the sewer bill it would keep things more connected and understand that starting a whole new bill is challenging. Is there a reason it cannot be added as a line item to the sewer bill?
 - o JB responded that national practices are that storm water bills are added to property tax bills or water/sewer bills. This requires reformatting existing bills, and it can be difficult

for the department responsible for bill preparation/distribution to field additional calls. These challenges would need to be overcome regardless of the ultimate billing solution for the storm water fee.

- What about properties on the east side of island that have private sewer system?
 - o This is an issue if billing is done with the water and sewer bill instead of real property billing and would have to be worked out. Laurens noted that this is a common issue for storm water utilities across the continent. Whether the stormwater fee is added to one bill or to another, there will be new storm water accounts that must be added. Parking lots are an example of storm water only accounts.
- Is there a way to show storm water utility capital improvement projects earlier once fees are assessed?
 - o Yes, some projects could be funded earlier and could also help to meet Storm Water Strategic Plan goals and strategies.

5. SWOOSH Member Presentation: Sustainable Coastlines' SustainEvents

Rafael Bergstrom, Executive Directors of Sustainable Coastlines, gave a presentation on their SustainEvents program that provides events with recycling and composting services. He began by noting that everyone has a coastline and what happens mauka affects makai areas. Instead of referring to education, Sustainable Coastlines calls it re-education as it is about connecting people with what they once knew.

The SustainEvents program not only provides recycling and trash containers but also staffs the event to help attendees connect with what happens to our waste. The program also does pre-event consulting to identify ways to meet the ultimate goal of having empty trash cans at the events.

Composting of food waste is performed in a modified shipping container with an auger that keeps the aerobic processes going and mitigates issues and concerns identified by the State Department of Health. The level of heat that is maintained during the composting process is sufficient to kill weeds and seeds, which prevents the introduction of invasive species. RevoluSun donated the solar system that is used to power the composting system so the system is free of all emissions.

This program has resulted in significant reductions in waste. All groups receive a report about their sustainability data. What does this have to do with storm water? Soil health and waste generation are directly connected to the storm water and water resources. Trash can clog the drains or brings plastics to the ocean. Creating healthy soils is critical to increasing soil water retention and can help remediate soil pollution issues. Does anyone know how much water can a cubic foot of soil amended with compost hold? One gallon!

An upcoming expansion of the project is working with film production on O'ahu. A large-scale expansion is pending a US Department of Agriculture (DOA) grant.

Rafael invited everyone to a big Earth Day event in Waimanalo on April 23rd.

See slide 19 and slides at end of the presentation materials.

Please note: For this Q&A / Discussion section, the notes with dashes (-) represent comments and questions from the Stakeholder Advisory Group and the notes with open points (o) represent the Raphael's responses.

- Can I buy the compost?
 - o It is now for sale at the Kailua Farmer's market.
 - o JB noted that in San Diego there is a subscription system where you can drop off food scraps and then get free compost.
 - o SustainEvents might expand to more areas on O'ahu and on other islands. Doing so would reduce food waste transport costs. And the more localized composting does not have the plastic that large-scale composting can have that results in compost that farmers do not want.
- How many more units might be purchased with the US DOA grant?
 - o Eight more units. A fabricator might be able to make them on island. This is being looked into.
- How much does one unit cost?
 - o \$90-140K per unit. In addition, there needs to be a flat surface prepped to put them on, and they would ideally run on solar. The costs to create the flat surface and install solar are also reflected in the grant.
- Randall asked if the compost has been tested to provide specifications. In order to use the compost in green storm water infrastructure projects, it would need to have testing specifications.
 - o Rafael responded that the compost has been tested as required by DOH.
- Does the compost need to rest before it can be applied?
 - o It is better if it ages for a year, but it is okay to use right away!
 - o The invasive coconut rhinoceros beetle larvae that is known to infest piles of green waste cannot survive the machine temperatures. However, fire ants can, and Sustainable Coastlines is testing for them frequently as they do not want to spread invasive species.
 - o The temperature of this composting process renders seeds unable to germinate. Seeds have been issues in other island composting processes.

6. Additional Updates

a. Public Engagement and Outreach Update

Tonya Ketz, Public Education and Outreach lead for DFM, provided an update on City storm water public engagement and outreach. In March the City SWQ Division held the Good Neighbor Awards event to honor the service of volunteers and partnerships and the Environmental Hero Awards to honor Adopt-a-Block, Adopt-a-Stream and other storm drain program volunteers. April is Earth Month, and the City is helping to sponsor and participate in the Mauka to Makai Environmental Expo as well as many clean-ups. A Storm Water Management for Homeowners workshop will be held on April 29th. This workshop evolved out of the rain barrel workshops and includes many more things that homeowners can do. Past attendees already are installing different best management practices or BMPs at their homes. August 10th and 11th will be the City's annual Storm Water Quality workshops with options to participate online and in person.

In May Tonya will be asking SWOOSH members for input on campaign slogans regarding healthy yard care. Input will be solicited via email.

Randall thanked Tonya and her staff for their work on these events. He noted that other City agency staff also work on clean-ups together.

See slides 20 to 25 of the presentation materials.

b. City Job Openings in Storm Water Quality Work

Randall provided an update on the filling of vacancies. A total of 133 positions have been filled or in the process of being filled in roughly the last year in the Department of Facility Maintenance. They are looking to bring on a permanent position for lead planner and have a temporary person currently. Randall also reported that DFM Director and Chief Engineer, Dawn Szewczyk, is leaving. The City will be working to fill her position. Tyler Sugihara will be filling her position temporarily.

See slides 26 to 27 of the presentation materials.

Q&A

- How many vacancies are there in the Storm Water Quality Division?
 - o There are 36 positions and 22 positions are being filled which equates to a 38% vacancy rate. The Storm Water Quality Division lost 3 technicians in the last month, positions which they are hoping to fill soon.
- Are there options for citizens to assist?
 - o Randall responded that there is a need to do observations for a restrictive parking ban (for the street sweeping program) in the Kailua area. Community members might be able to help with observations to support the proposal for parking bans. Unfortunately, the City cannot have people helping on enforcement or inspections. Non-profits and educational entities could assist on other storm water related efforts.
- What can be done to make these positions more lucrative and competitive in the current landscape – or in other words, what is within our control to keep and maintain staff?
 - o Randall responded that these issues have been brought up to HR and they are looking at many options. The biggest challenge is staying within the collective bargaining agreement as well as budgets. Incentives and signing bonuses are being looked into and could be spread out during their initial employment period. The City is mostly looking at how to bring in new employees, and it also needs to look at retention as well.

7. Wrap Up and Next Meeting

Next Meeting: August 8th Hybrid Meeting

See slides 28 to 30 of the presentation materials.