



BRAINTREE STORMWATER UTILITY FACT SHEET

Charles C. Kokoros, Mayor

What Is a Stormwater Utility?

Braintree is facing new federal requirements to reduce the amount of polluted stormwater runoff it discharges to waterways. This has required the Town to increase its investment in stormwater infrastructure without any funding by the federal government.

While Braintree is required to incur these increased costs, it does have choices about how to fund work.

The Town currently funds most of its infrastructure through property taxes. Some of the funding is through a **stormwater utility**, which is based on *user fees* for the amount of hardened or **impervious surface**—such as parking lots, driveways and buildings—that cause stormwater runoff on each parcel.

Like water and sewer fees, a stormwater utility allocates costs based on the amount of use, in this case, the amount of stormwater being generated.

Reasons to Increase User Fees Rather Than Continuing to Rely on the Property Tax

Equity: In Braintree, **62%** of property tax revenue comes from residential property, but these properties account for only 46% of the Town's impervious cover. Many of the properties in town with the most impervious cover pay no property tax.

Transparency: Fees added to the stormwater enterprise fund **would be used only for stormwater**, would be consolidated in one account, and would automatically roll over for future use if there was a surplus.

Consistency: Fee-based revenues provide consistent funding for long-term investments and annual maintenance needs, thus **reducing long-term costs**.

Incentives: A stormwater utility encourages property owners to reduce impervious cover. Over time, this **reduces pollution, flooding, and the Town's costs**.

How Much Impervious Cover Does Braintree Have?

Property Type	# of Parcels w/ Imp	Average Imperv (SF)	Total Imperv (acres)	% of total Imperv in Town
Single Family	10182	2760	762	40
Multifamily 4+	116	46710	124	6
Commercial	425	55419	541	28
Industrial	135	76579	237	12
exempt	784	15564	280	14

What is Polluted Stormwater Runoff?

Developed areas like Braintree include many parking lots, buildings, roadways and other hardened "impervious surfaces." When it rains, water runs off impervious surfaces and picks up pet waste, oil, sand, fertilizers, and other pollutants. It then flows into gutters and storm drains, which discharge it directly into the nearest waterway.

Polluted stormwater runoff is the single largest source of pollution to Braintree's ponds and waterways.

Stormwater Runoff is a Major factor in flooding.

Impervious surfaces are also a major factor in flooding problems. Everyone who owns or uses any impervious surfaces contributes to the creation of stormwater runoff. Given everyone depends on Braintree's stormwater system it is critical the impacts be minimized.

What is Stormwater Infrastructure?

Braintree's stormwater infrastructure collects runoff from all over town through a network of 3,887 storm drain inlets, more than 2,135 manholes, more than 98 miles of pipe, and 261 discharge points. The system discharges directly into local waterways, which are themselves a critical part of Braintree's stormwater system.

How is Braintree's Infrastructure Maintained?

Braintree must actively maintain its stormwater system through tasks such as: street sweeping, storm drain inlet cleaning, inspection and repair of pipes, manholes, and storm drain inlets, upgrading treatment facilities, issuing permits for stormwater discharges on private property, and many other activities.

Braintree's Current Stormwater Budget

The costs of stormwater management are spread across many town departments and there is no estimate that covers all these costs. However, many of Braintree's stormwater activities are carried out by the **Department of Public Works (DPW)** which estimates the cost of its current limited program is about **\$600,000 per year** when equipment and capital projects are included.

How is Braintree's Stormwater Regulated?

Since 2003, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has issued Braintree a permit to discharge stormwater. The 2003 permit has not reduced widespread water pollution problems due to stormwater in MA. As a result, EPA issued a new permit with much stricter requirements which are much more expensive for the Town to comply.

Anticipated Cost Increase

The DPW estimates it will **need an additional \$750,000 per year** to comply with the new EPA permit and provide the resources needed as these requirements fully take effect in the next few years.

What Did the Ordinance change Do?

The stormwater Ordinance was amended through Braintree's existing regulations as required by federal law through the EPA. By establishing these required regulations we **established a stormwater enterprise fund to pay for the costs of the program**, and **Town Council has approved the fee structure** over time to collect the amount of funding required.

The DPW is responsible for administering the program, and the stormwater fee is now an additional line item on the quarterly water/sewer bill.

What was the process for Ordinance Adoption?

There was a series of steps to create the utility for the ordinance to be approved:

1. **Public outreach was provided** on the proposed stormwater regulations, rate structure, and regulations governing operation of the stormwater utility. These were submitted prior to the May 2018 Town Council Meeting.
2. The stormwater utility and budget were **approved by Town Council in May 2018** with the budgets for all other Town departments.
3. Finally, Town staff generated the funding approved by Town Council, by adding an additional line item to the quarterly water/sewer bills.

How Much Will Be Raised Via the Fee?

Town Council approved a budget that resulted in **\$600,000** in revenue for the first year. The approved ordinance required **additional funding of \$400,000** after 2 years and full funding after four years. The full costs for compliance are estimated to be **\$1,500,000**. The full costs include **\$600,000** of existing direct costs, **\$750,000** of new direct costs for the new EPA permit requirements and system updates, as well as **\$150,000** of indirect costs (i.e. employee benefits). Excluded are costs in departments other than the DPW.

What Properties Are Covered?

The fee applies to all parcels that have impervious cover except for public roadways. This includes residential and commercial properties as well as nonprofit and tax exempt properties. It also applies to parcels owned by the state government and town.

Has This Been Done in Other Places?

Stormwater utilities are common across the country, with **more than 1,400 in operation**. They are less common in MA but about twenty communities have implemented or authorized a utility already including:

Ashland, Canton, Chelmsford, Chicopee, Dracut, Fall River, Gloucester, Millis, Milton, Reading, Newton, Northampton, Westfield, Westford and Yarmouth.

How is the Fee Calculated?

The basic "rate" for a stormwater fee is calculated by dividing the amount to be raised (\$1,000,000), by the total area of impervious cover in the town excluding public roadways (84,696,462 square feet). **This equals approximately 41 cents per 100 square feet of impervious or \$11.25 a quarter per Equivalent Runoff Unit (ERU)**. The **ERU** was calculated as noted below.

How Will the Increased Fee Be Structured?

The ordinance requires that **commercial, government, nonprofit and multi-family residential parcels**—about 1,460 parcels in all—be charged based on the number of square feet of impervious cover on each parcel using the increased basic rate of \$11.25 per quarter per ERU.

To simplify administration, the ordinance requires that the 10,000+ **single family parcels in town be charged the same rate**. The average square feet of impervious area for single family residential properties were determined to be 2,780. This square footage was set as the Equivalent Runoff Unit (ERU) and is used for the base rate for all properties. Both single residential properties and multifamily properties with up to 3 units will be charged a flat rate of 1 ERU or \$11.25 per quarter. The current rate is \$6.25 just until the end of June. Final full funding would be requested in the future.

What Will the Typical Fee Increase Look Like?

The proposed rate structure approved by ordinance was based on input collected during required public hearings. The total amount of funding to be raised was approved by Town Council in May 2018. See the tables below for sample fees based on the increased proposed fee structure and a budget of \$1,000,000.

Quarterly Fees for Single Family Homes

Property Type	Flat Fee
Single Family	\$11.25
Multifamily (1 to 3)	\$11.25

Quarterly Fees for Other Property Types

Based on measured impervious cover for each lot

Property Type	25% of lots pay less than	50% of lots pay less than	75% of lots pay less than	Fee for largest lot
Multi Family (4+)	\$11.25	\$11.25	\$17.3	\$11/unit
Commercial	\$19.8	\$45	\$140	\$1,312
Industrial	\$12.6	\$133	\$383	\$1,312
Tax Exempt	\$11.25	\$11.25	\$68	\$1,312

There is a graduated cap of \$1,312/Quarter for non-residential properties.