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Our Opinion: March 23, 2010

The Americus Times-Recorder

City of Americus does fair thing with water drainage issue

The City of Americus has considered a number of options for raising money to repair its water drainage system. The Mayor and City Council held a public forum March 15 to discuss the option they believe is the most fair for the city.



The proposal doesn't raise taxes for anyone; Mayor Barry Blount said the Council chose not to raise taxes because schools and churches would be exempt, but they're still a part of the system that creates damage to drainage pipes because they have impervious surfaces.

The average water bill for home owners and renters will increase by \$4 if the Council approves this option, which is, we believe, a drop in the bucket compared to what businesses will be required to pay — and this will be every business, including churches and schools. The bill will be determined by how much impervious surface the building has.

The City has determined there are at least 67 problematic areas that need to be fixed so flooding stops occurring after it rains, and can't afford to do so without raising water rates.

The City found the need for 12 drainage capital improvement projects (CIP,) which will cost around \$1.8 million, 15 water quality CIP, which will cost the City \$1.95 million and 40 drainage system operation and maintenance projects, which will cost Americus half a million dollars, which, when totaled, comes to \$4.2 million.

These projects are focused primarily on government-owned property, but will directly benefit homeowners down-stream from government-owned land, according to Senior Water Quality Program Manager Ronald Feldner with Ecological Solutions Feldner.

In Fiscal Year 2008 (FY08,) Feldner said the cost of service (COS) was \$425,000, but the future COS to repair and maintain everything, would be \$820,000, which is based on a five-year average.

That number was based on a coordination increase of \$76,000, an operation and maintenance increase of \$65,000 and a CIP increase of \$287,000. That's an 82 percent increase in operation and maintenance and CIP. But, most of the money would be used for labor and parts, Feldner said, "not for people pushing paper in an office."

We would like to give kudos to the City of Americus for finding the fairest way of raising this money. By not raising Americus' taxes, thereby charging schools and churches, too, they've done a great job of helping Americus citizens in a time of economic disaster.

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Don't go, Dr. McMahon!

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Shame, shame, shame on County Commissioners!

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