



**Next Great City**  
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May 30, 2008

Commissioner Bernard Brunwasser  
Philadelphia Water Department  
Aramark Tower, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
1101 Market St  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Commissioner Brunwasser,

The Next Great City coalition would like to formally request an opportunity to testify in support of Philadelphia Water Department's proposed changes to the stormwater fee collection.

Next Great City is composed of almost 100 civic, health, faith, labor, environmental and social service organizations within Philadelphia, all supporting a common-sense, cost-effective agenda to improve the neighborhood environment and to truly make Philadelphia the "Next Great City".

One of the ten policy recommendations advanced by Next Great City is to stop sewer backups and flooding, identified by our polling as a top issue for both Philadelphia's businesses and residents. In that polling, 21 percent of residents had a basement flood after a rainstorm and 31 percent of businesses suffered property damage from flooding in the previous year. Residents and business owners alike also ranked these as two of the top five changes needed to improve the livability of the city: "Reduce the amount of sewage and other pollution entering our rivers" and "fix the city's water and sewer system to stop leaks and water main breaks".

In looking at how other cities had addressed their own stormwater problems, we found that over 400 cities and towns, such as Austin, Texas, Cincinnati, Ohio, Los Angeles, California and Miami, Florida, charge a user fee for stormwater management that is based wholly or in part on impervious area. Philadelphia currently collects fees for stormwater services based on water usage, which is unfair and inaccurate. Commercial, industrial and institutional customers should pay for their fair share of sewer services based on their use of the system.

If 20,000 gallons of water fall on a one-acre paved parking lot without landscaping or water service, over 19,000 gallons will have to be treated by the sewer system because the lot has no ability to absorb rainwater. Yet the owner of the parking lot doesn't pay a stormwater fee. As a result, those with water service end up paying to treat this owner's stormwater runoff. That's not fair.

Charging a fair fee for stormwater treatment will also give property owners an incentive to take effective actions to minimize their property's contribution to our stormwater problem- such as using porous pavement, installing vegetative swales or planting trees. These incentives will help to retrofit existing properties and reduce the burden placed on our sewer system.

For these reasons and more, we support the proposed changes in collection of the stormwater fee and would be glad to testify at any public hearings on the matter.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Christine Knapp  
PennFuture

Attached: List of Next Great City coalition members