Pinellas County

Staff Report

File #: 25-1045A, **Version:** 1

Subject:
Resolution for the Surface Water Assessment within the unincorporated areas of Pinellas County.

Recommended Action:
Following a public hearing, adopt the resolution for the Surface Water Assessment within the unincorporated areas of Pinellas County.

- Resolution overrides previous Rate Resolution No. 17-63 which set a maximum annual increase of 3% for Surface Water Assessment not to exceed $128.66 per Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU).
- Resolution proposes a 7% rate increase in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 and up to 5% annually thereafter, not to exceed $179.11 (projected rate FY32).
- Annual Surface Water Service Assessment rate would be $133.65 per ERU in FY26. County would receive $22,900,000.00 from the Surface Water Assessment in FY26.
- The Surface Water Rate Study was presented to the Board of County Commissioners in February 2024 and again in April 2025 in anticipation of planned assessment increases.
- Notice by mail to assessed property owners, public hearing and notice of public hearing required.
- Companion item Legistar 25-010C for Surface Water Roll Certification for FY26 (Attachment C).
- Funding for this resolution is included in the FY26 budget of the Public Works Surface Water Utility Fund.

Strategic Priorities:
Resilient Infrastructure and Environment
1.4 Improve environmental quality
1.5 Strengthen resilience and adaptation

Healthy and Safe Communities
2.1 Improve public health
2.2 Enhance community safety

Smart Service Delivery
4.2 Achieve and maintain a high level of customer satisfaction

Summary:
This Resolution overrides previous Resolution No. 17-63 which set a maximum annual increase of 3% for Surface Water Assessment not to exceed $128.66 per Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU). The new Resolution proposes a 7% rate increase in FY 2026, and up to 5% annually thereafter, not to exceed $179.11 through FY 2032.

Chapter 58 of the County Code authorizes the Board to impose assessments and fees to offset the County's surface water service costs. These assessments and fees have been collected since FY 2014. The FY 2024 rate per ERU was $121.27 and the FY 2025 rate was $124.91, with budgeted revenues of $21,300,000.00 (budgeted at 95%). Resolution No. 17-63 authorizes annual 3% rate increases up to $128.66.

The County's surface water service costs have risen such that a 7% rate increase is warranted in FY 2026. Staff projects that rate increases up to 5% may be warranted in fiscal years after FY 2026. A new rate schedule for surface water service assessments and surface water fees is necessary in accordance with the projections including a not-to-exceed cap of $179.11 per ERU (projected rate in FY 2032).

County Code Chapter 58, Article XVII Surface Water Management - Section 58-701 (b) states in part, "[w]here required by the Uniform Assessment Collection Act or otherwise by law, a surface water rate resolution shall be adopted by the board at a public hearing. Notice of such public hearing shall be provided by publication and first-class mail to the accessed property owners as provided by law and substantially conform with the notice requirements set forth in Sections 58-703 and 58-704 hereof."

Background Information:
The Surface Water Assessment is a dedicated funding source established for stormwater services in Unincorporated County to address flooding, water quality and the operation of County-owned stormwater systems. The Assessment is based on each property's impervious area, including all hard surfaces that don't absorb water, such as parking lots and buildings. Impervious areas increase the amount of stormwater runoff, which is the cause of much of our flooding and pollution problems. Unincorporated County faces many challenges in maintaining a large, aging stormwater system. Failing pipes, flooding, and poor water quality are just a few of the issues that the funding from the Surface Water Assessment is helping to resolve.

A typical single-family home is assessed as one (1) ERU, which is based on the median impervious area for an unincorporated, single-family detached home is (2,339 square feet). Extra-large properties (greater than 10,000 square feet), condominiums, multi-family homes and commercial properties, which include businesses and churches, are calculated based on the total impervious area of the property. Mitigation credits may be offered for properties that reduce the burden to the County system, including redevelopment proposals that reduce impervious services. The County system may include ponds, other stormwater, or unique property features.

Fiscal Impact:
By approval of this Resolution, the Surface Water Service Assessment rate increases to $133.65 per ERU in FY 2026. It is estimated that the County would collect $22,900,000.00 from the Surface Water Assessment in FY 2026.

Funding for this resolution is included in the FY 2026 budget of the Public Works Surface Water Utility Fund.

Staff Member Responsible:
Kelli Hammer Levy, Director, Public Works

Partners:
N/A

Attachments:
Resolution
Appendix A - Proof of Publication of Public Hearing
Appendix B - Affidavit of Mailing - to be added 8/18
Appendix C - Surface Water Roll Certification (Blank - to be added from Legistar item 25-010C)
Appendix D - Format Required for Surface Water Roll
Resolution No. 17-63