

Statement of Jack Brown before City Council on January 22, 2013

Mr. Mayor and Council Members,

My name is Jack Brown, I have lived in the City of Charlottesville for more than 20 years and I am here today speaking as a City resident and as the Board Chair of the Rivanna Conservation Society (RCS). Founded two decades ago, RCS is a non-profit dedicated to preserving the health of the Rivanna River. We have over 900 members.

RCS has been involved in the issue of storm water control for more than two decades and in 2008 RCS (with the Southern Environmental Law Center and the UVA Conservation and Environmental Law Clinic) presented the City of Charlottesville with specific recommendations on how to improve the City's stormwater codes and ordinances. We are delighted to see that the City has taken our recommendations seriously and we have been pleased to have our executive director serve on the Advisory Committee – helping to build consensus around the Water Resources Protection Plan and the proposal for the stormwater utility.

Simply put – The Water Resources Protection Program is a simple, fair, and well-reasoned solution to the problem beneath our streets and we support it.

- As council members you are all well aware of your responsibility to care for the health and welfare of those of us who live here in Charlottesville. Yet for decades now our elected leaders have known about our crumbling infrastructure and have not exhibited the political will or the fiscal commitment to address the problem.
 - If the city council ignores stormwater runoff pollution, we'll have increased in the pollution in our rivers and lakes, contaminated drinking water, flooding, and sewage overflows — all of which have costly consequences to our health and homes. Charlottesville's citizens are counting on the council to act. This is especially true now because the decisions to solve this problem have been ignored in the past and to use the cliché of our time – “kicking this can down the road – or in this case, the storm sewer.

- As one who lives in Charlottesville, I rely on the city council to protect our environment, our health and safety, and to assure that our underground environment is as well cared for as our above ground locations. As our elected leaders it is your job to resolve the problems that are causing stormwater pollution runoff that threatens our citizens, and we at RCS appreciate you taking up the issue.
- At the last City Council meeting Councilman Norris asked if this issue should be a priority when there are so many other problems facing the community and our response is a resounding YES!
- Clean water (or increasingly, dirty water) affects each and every person in this community. Pollution impacts the young and the old, the sick and the well – it has no regard for race, ethnicity, or economic status.
And, while it may not be as dramatic or heart wrenching as some issues that has come before you, it is insidious and just gets worse over time.
- While the consequences of stormwater runoff pollution are often hidden from sight, we do know that the deterioration of 100+ year-old pipes and infrastructure threaten the health and safety of Charlottesville.
- Timeliness –
 - We simply cannot continue to “kick the can down the road” because there are federal and state mandates requiring local governments to address stormwater runoff pollution now and we are counting on the City Council to do just that.
- Mutual Responsibility –
 - We all have a responsibility to be stewards of our environment and each have a duty to care for the natural gifts that are so bountiful in this region. We can no longer turn our backs on the underground pollution that threatens our community...
 - Charlottesville needs a stormwater utility (water resources

protection program) to provide a dedicated source of funding to address today's problems and to provide the funds to continue to maintain our infrastructure into the future.

- Fairness of the utility proposed
 - o What your City staff has put together in its water resources protection program is fair and equitable to the citizens of Charlottesville. This is true because the proposed utility plan and fees are customized based on the property owner's parcel size and property use. The plan is equitable and fair is above and beyond what other municipalities in Virginia and throughout the country are doing, and I for one appreciate the staff's efforts and transparency and the web tool that was created that allows each property owner to calculate what their end of year utility fee will be. And, because of the concerns expressed by council member Szakos, I understand that the staff is developing some options that could accommodate the needs of low or fixed income property owners who may struggle to pay even the minimal fee outlined in the proposal.

In summary, I commend this proposal to you with our strong support and on behalf of the Rivanna Conservation Society and those of us who live in the City of Charlottesville I thank you and the staff for your willingness to deal with what is a complex issue.