

# Permit applicants will have to plan for runoff control

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Beginning next spring, Montgomery County residents applying for certain building permits will have to provide a plan to control storm-water runoff.

The change, designed to lessen the environmental damage incurred by flooding, was adopted by Council members unanimously during Tuesday's meeting in Rockville.

Council Member and bill author Nancy Floreen said she originally had expected the stricter permitting requirement to pass easily. But it took a year and numerous revisions for the runoff legislation to finally get enough support.

As passed, the bill applies to lots smaller than 15,000 square feet.

Floreen said calculations based on a minimum of 10,000 square feet were that 1,000 permits a year would be affected. But on Tuesday, she opted to take up fellow Council Member Marilyn Praisner's suggestion of 15,000 square feet or less, meaning the number affected will be higher.

In newsletters to her constituents, Floreen has emphasized that water runoff onto adjacent properties is one of the top concerns relayed to her office, hence the need for the proposal.

"I have heard and seen real horror stories. Someone builds a pool and two weeks later the neighbor has a lake in the backyard. After a new rain-storm, a new house causes water in the basement next door," she wrote. "I was surprised to learn the county does not require a grading permit or drainage plans for new construction. The bill will remedy that gap."

During the past year, the proposal also has been supported in its basic form by various city council officers and mayors and citizens; the dividing points, however, were the specific requirements of residents.

Exact fiscal impact amounts for the legislation are unknown, but officials said that permit costs might increase 20 percent, equating to a fee of at least \$150.

At the council's meeting, members also voted in favor of a proposal — that drew the interest of environmental groups — to strengthen the county's laws protecting "champion" trees.

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