



Mayor's Monthly Newsletter

Written by Mayor Rod Erskine

November 2013

The Biggert-Waters Act And Your Flood Insurance

City residents who purchase flood insurance have had (or will have) an unpleasant surprise in the form of a very hefty premium increase with the next renewal - increases of several thousands of dollars in some cases, with more to come as the previously little known Biggert-Waters Act is phased in for current property owners. This is a national issue that is impacting residents living in coastal areas, river and stream valleys, and other flood prone areas across our nation.

How did this happen? In 2012, the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act was passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 406-22, and later was incorporated into a transportation funding bill that easily passed both the House and the Senate. The intent was to address the debt issue of the National Flood Insurance Program by bringing premiums more in line with actual risk - essentially eliminating subsidies for low lying properties. There was supposed to be a study of the potential financial impact on homeowners prior to implementation, but that study was never initiated. As a result, according to a communication from Congressman John Culberson's office, many homeowners are seeing their flood insurance premiums increase as much as 1,000 percent nationally. There is a lot of information and news available online if you want more information. Congress is now working on legislation to delay implementation of this Act until the economic impact is fully understood. Wouldn't it be nice to stop passing bills that are not understood?

What should you do? You must have a flood insurance policy for protection from damage due to rising water as the standard homeowner policy does not provide that protection - contact your insurance agent if you have questions. If you live within the 100 year flood plain and have a mortgage, flood insurance is not optional. Your lender will purchase coverage for you if you don't acquire it yourself. If you don't have a mortgage, obtaining flood insurance is a personal decision. In either case, you may want to consider obtaining a slab elevation certificate for your home if you don't have one. Your insurance is based on the elevation of your slab rather than the elevation of your lot, and you should ensure your insurance company is using the elevation of your slab, and not your yard for rate calculations.

Write Senators Cornyn and Cruz, and Congressman Culberson and strongly suggest they support the pending legislation to delay Biggert-Waters and that action be taken quickly. Their contact information is available online, or email me and I will supply it to you (rerskine@ci.jersey-village.tx.us).

Good News and Bad News. The good news for Jersey Village residents is that the improvements made by the Flood Control District to the bayou system over the past several years is expected to significantly reduce the area within Jersey Village that is in the 100 year flood plain, and therefore the number of homes required to have flood insurance at the higher rates. The bad news - they are still drawing the updated maps. The city has requested information on the updates, but the maps currently in effect are from 2007.

On a more positive note, I hope you were able to get out to the recent Open House held by our Fire and Police departments. The weather was great and the activities were informative and fun.

Until next month.

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