



NEWS & NOTES

A PUBLICATION OF THE MWRA ADVISORY BOARD
JULY | AUGUST 2007

THE GREAT DEBATE: BOTTLED WATER VS. THE TAP

This summer, several opinion pieces in *The Boston Globe* have sung the praises of drinking clean municipal water over pricier bottled water. The cities and towns in the MWRA service area enjoy some of the cleanest water in the country. MWRA is one of five systems nation-wide that exceed federal standards; because of this high rating, MWRA is granted a waiver of filtration from the Environmental Protection Agency. In response to the recent discussion of bottled water versus tap water, the Advisory Board submitted a Letter to the Editor of *The Boston Globe* commending the use of clean MWRA water.

Government agencies should promote public water usage versus bottled water. Rather than spending up to \$10 per gallon on bottled water, why not utilize clean public water that is funded by ratepayer money? The MWRA charges communities \$2,408 for every million gallons it sells; that is .002 dollars (or 0.2 cents) per gallon! Drinking clean public water is a win-win situation: it is cheap, it is clean, and it doesn't contribute excess waste to overflowing landfills.

The MWRA Advisory Board has contacted the Department of Conservation & Recreation and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and asked them to stop the purchase and use of bottled water in their offices. Government agencies have the opportunity to be proactive in this public debate. By removing bottled water from state offices, public agencies can set a positive example.

ADVISORY BOARD AND A&F TO MEET

In a recent communication, Governor Patrick's chief budget director has agreed to meet with the Advisory Board to discuss strategies for managing the Sewer Rate Relief Fund. Leslie Kirwan, Secretary of Administration & Finance, indicated her willingness to sit down with the Advisory Board to discuss the future of the Debt Service Assistance program while balancing the many demands on the state budget. She acknowledged that the Administration was pleased to assist in helping manage water and sewer rates in the midst of a difficult fiscal climate and she would be happy to discuss the Advisory Board's concerns, although the budget challenges for FY09 promise to be a major concern for the Patrick Administration.

DEBT SERVICE ASSISTANCE IN REVIEW

In a recent *City & Town* publication, the Division of Local Services (within the State's Department of Revenue) provides an excellent overview of the Sewer Rate Relief Program from FY1994-FY2007. According to the article, the Sewer Rate Relief Fund has distributed \$472.6 million to 124 cities, towns and sewer districts (including the MWRA) across the Commonwealth in its 17 years of existence. Funding for Sewer Rate Relief increased over the years, providing \$21.5 million in the first year with a peak distribution amount of \$61.8 million in FY01. However, the state fiscal crisis in FY03 forced the elimination of funding for the program. Since then the Advisory Board has advocated for increased funding levels each year; this summer, the Legislature and the Governor approved \$23 million in the FY08 budget.

To read the entire article on the Sewer Rate Relief program, written by Lisa Juszkiewicz, visit the DLS website at:

<http://www.mass.gov/Ador/docs/dls/publ/ct/2007/june.pdf>

DCR & BOARD OF SELECTMAN AT ODDS OVER NEW SEWER CONNECTIONS

The Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) ordered a halt to all new connections into the Rutland-Holden Trunk Sewer Line. The order comes in the midst of a series of meetings of a working committee to discuss options regarding the future care and custody of the sewer lines. Despite the order from DCR, the Rutland Board of Selectman recently approved several sewer permit applications to extend sewers for five duplexes and to approve a new sewer connection for a single-family home. The Town of Rutland currently exceeds its daily flow limit of 45,000 gallons per day. The Rutland-Holden Trunk Sewers Working Committee will meet again in the fall.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

SEPTEMBER 12: MWRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS / 10 AM – CHARLESTOWN

SEPTEMBER 14: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE / 8:30 AM - BOSTON

SEPTEMBER 20: MWRA ADVISORY BOARD / 11:30 AM – LEXINGTON

SAVE THE DATE!

OCTOBER 18: MWRA ADVISORY BOARD TRIP TO THE QUABBIN

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