



NEWS & NOTES

A PUBLICATION OF THE MWRA ADVISORY BOARD
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LEGISLATIVE UPDATES: NEWLY ELECTED SENATE PRESIDENT MURRAY; HOUSE BUDGET TO BE RELEASED

A major shift of power occurred in the Massachusetts State House this month. Senate President Robert Travaglini stepped down after four years in the top leadership post and Senator Therese Murray was unanimously elected to succeed him. Murray, an eight-term Plymouth Democrat, is the first woman to lead either the House or the Senate. Murray, who previously chaired the Senate Committee on Ways & Means, has yet to announce any committee reorganization plans in the Senate. Senator Steven Panagiotakos (D-Lowell) is currently serving as interim Chair of Ways & Means. The Advisory Board looks forward to working with President Murray and her staff.

In other legislative news, the House Committee on Ways & Means is expected to release its proposed budget on April 11. Debates are scheduled to begin the last week of the month. The Advisory Board is currently collecting Resolutions from MWRA communities in support of restoring the 40% cut in Debt Service Assistance that was proposed in House 1. For more information, or to receive a copy of the resolution, contact Christine Hevelone-Byler at the Advisory Board.

RUTLAND-HOLDEN COMMITTEE MEETS

The Rutland-Holden Trunk Sewers Working Committee met for the first time this month to discuss options regarding future care and custody of the lines. The Committee is comprised of representatives from the user communities of Rutland, Holden and West Boylston, the Legislative delegations from these communities, the MWRA, DCR, and the Advisory Board. The agenda included a background history of the Rutland-Holden sewer lines, an update on current conditions and capacity of the lines, as well as a discussion of potential future alternatives. Currently, the ownership and care of the lines comes under the responsibility of multiple parties. DCR owns the sewer lines while MWRA performs Operations and Maintenance and bills the communities for the costs. Communities have expressed concern about their ability to grow when their current flow is at capacity.

WACHUSETT DAM CLOSED DUE TO TOXINS FOUND ON WALKWAY

Wachusett Dam was closed to the public this month after PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) were found in the caulking in the walkway of the dam. Testing has revealed that no PCBs were found in the water and the water supply remains safe. Detectable levels of PCBs were found in the soil on the north side of the dam. According to DEP, the soil showed PCB levels of 10 to 50 parts per million; the acceptable level is less than 10 parts per million.

PCBs are oil-based liquids or solids that were often used in construction projects until they were banned in 1977 out of concerns for related health risks, including cancer. The caulking at the Wachusett Dam was used only on the walkway on top of the dam and not on the dam structure itself. It was installed in the 1950s in order to seal joints in the concrete slabs across the top of the dam.

The Authority pledged to move quickly to assess and correct the situation and preserve consumer confidence in the drinking water. Removal of the PCBs will be costly. Because of the Commonwealth's ownership of the project at the time of construction, the Advisory Board strongly believes that the Commonwealth has a responsibility to contribute to the cost of remediation. The Authority will make a full presentation on the situation to the Advisory Board at the April 19th meeting.

MWRA BUDGET HEARINGS

The Advisory Board and the MWRA will hold public hearings next month on the proposed Current Expense Budget. The hearings are held on an annual basis, as set forth in the MWRA's enabling legislation. The Advisory Board will hold its hearing in conjunction with the full Advisory Board meeting on April 19th in the State House, Room 350. The MWRA will hold its hearing on April 10th at 6:30 pm in the Piedmonte Room in Boston City Hall. The proposed budget document can be accessed on the Authority's website at www.mwra.com.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

APRIL 10: MWRA CEB HEARING / 6:30 PM - CITY HALL, BOSTON
APRIL 11: MWRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS / 10 AM - CHARLESTOWN
APRIL 13: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING / 8:30 AM - BOSTON
APRIL 19: MWRA ADVISORY BOARD MEETING & CEB HEARING / 11:30 AM - STATE HOUSE, ROOM 350

If you have any questions regarding topics raised in this newsletter or any other MWRA issue, please contact:
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