



NEWS & NOTES

A PUBLICATION OF THE MWRA ADVISORY BOARD
APRIL 2008

\$15 MILLION FOR DSA IN HOUSE BUDGET; AMENDMENTS FILED

The Massachusetts House of Representatives began debate this week on its \$28 billion state budget bill. More than 1,500 amendments were filed in an effort to influence specific line items within the General Appropriations Bill.

The House Budget provides \$15 million in state-wide Debt Service Assistance, otherwise known as Sewer Rate Relief. Chairman of the MWRA Caucus Representative Mariano (Quincy), along with Representative Clark (Melrose), filed an amendment to increase the line item by \$10 million to \$25 million; over 30 co-sponsors have signed onto this amendment. Additionally, Representative Stanley (Waltham) filed an amendment seeking to increase Debt Service Assistance to \$30 million.

Debt Service Assistance provides rate relief for cities and towns across the state. In FY08, the Sewer Rate Relief line item statewide allocation was \$23 million; in FY07, it was \$25 million. Each year, the MWRA Caucus works to maintain adequate funding for this important program.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

At its April 17 meeting, the MWRA Advisory Board approved *Comments and Recommendations on the MWRA's Proposed Capital Improvement Program (CIP) & Budget* for FY09. Highlights of the *Recommendations* include the following:

- In light of cost increases said to be as much as \$80 million, reassess the cost effectiveness of the Cambridge Sewer Separation, Brookline, Bulfinch Triangle and Reserved Channel CSO control projects and report to the Board of Directors regarding options for these projects.
- Establish a "cap within the cap" for CSO Control Program.
- Develop a section on Business and Operations Support for inclusion in the Master Plan, including an updated version of the plan for Management Information Systems and the Energy Management/Alternative Energy program.
- Include in the capital Project Performance Reports an analysis of spending, as compared to the baseline capital spending cap for the active cap period. Also include re-projections of capital spending.

LOCAL OFFICIALS MEET WITH EPA

Earlier this month Advisory Board Executive Director Joseph Favaloro, MWRA Executive Director Fred Laskey, MWRA Chief Operating Officer Mike Hornbrook, and numerous mayors and municipal officials met with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Regional Administrator Robert Varney in Washington DC. The meeting was called by Congressman James McGovern and the Massachusetts Congressional Caucus. The focus of the meeting was conveying concerns and frustrations that unfunded environmental mandates have placed on communities. Participants pressed EPA to consider affordability, greater cost-benefit analysis, and the need for a more collaborative effort between EPA and communities. In his comments at the meeting, Mr. Favaloro urged the EPA to recognize that cities and towns are not the enemy and must be treated as partners.

ADVISORY BOARD SENDS LETTER TO GOV

The Advisory Board reached out to Governor Patrick in response to his recent economic stimulus proposal, urging him to expand his proposal to include funding for water and sewer infrastructure needs. Providing funding for water and sewer projects is a natural parallel to investing in bridges; they both are critical components to ensure Massachusetts has an infrastructure that can support business and job growth. In addition to including water and sewer needs in the economic stimulus bill, the Advisory Board urged Governor Patrick to seize an opportunity to update and expand the Bottle Bill. By including a deposit on bottled water containers, the Commonwealth could actively re-invest in the public water and sewer infrastructure. The additional deposits from an expanded Bottle Bill should go into a dedicated fund to be used by entities that maintain and replace water and sewer infrastructure. This would create a win-win solution for communities, for ratepayers and for the environment.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

MAY 9: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE / 8:30 AM – BOSTON

MAY 14: MWRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS / 10 AM - CHARLESTOWN

MAY 15: ADVISORY BOARD MEETING 11:30 AM - CANTON*

*AT THE MAY MEETING, THE ADVISORY BOARD WILL HOLD AN ELECTION FOR ITS APPOINTEE TO THE MWRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

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