



NEWS & NOTES

A PUBLICATION OF THE MWRA ADVISORY BOARD
MARCH 2009

FEDERAL ECONOMIC STIMULUS FUNDING IN MASSACHUSETTS

Since the passage of the \$787 billion American Re-Investment and Recovery Act on February 17, 2009, local and state officials have been eager to determine the amount of money the federal stimulus bill would provide for the Commonwealth. Although the amount is not yet finalized (information on federal regulations on the use of the money is still pending), officials believe Massachusetts' share will be approximately \$8.7 billion, \$1-2 billion of which is anticipated for infrastructure projects. That amount is expected to include \$52 million for drinking water projects and \$134 million for clean water projects through the State Revolving Funds (SRF), which are low-interest loan programs for cities and towns. Massachusetts stands to receive funding in many sectors including: clean energy (\$482 million); transportation (\$809 million); safety net programs (\$3.572 billion); and technology and research (\$1.295 billion), among other areas. The MWRA submitted 27 water and wastewater projects, totaling \$318 million, to the state for consideration for funding through the economic stimulus package. In addition, the MWRA submitted 11 energy projects totaling \$31 million.

Legislative activity continues on the federal level as a bill that will address water infrastructure needs has been approved by the House and is headed to the Senate. The Water Quality Investment Act of 2009 authorizes \$19.8 billion over the next five years for wastewater infrastructure projects; this amount includes \$13.8 billion over five years for the Clean Water SRFs. This funding would be a reversal in trends as funding for the SRFs has been dramatically cut in recent years.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- APRIL 7:** MWRA CEB PUBLIC HEARING / 6:30 PM – CITY HALL, BOSTON
APRIL 9 OR 10: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE / 8:30 AM – BOSTON
APRIL 15: MWRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS / 10 AM – CHARLESTOWN
APRIL 16: OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING / 10 AM – CANTON
MWRA ADVISORY BOARD / 11:30AM – CANTON

MWRA ODOR CONTROL FACILITY HEADED UNDERGROUND

At the March meeting, the MWRA Board of Directors voted seven to three to move forward with design of an underground Odor Control Facility as part of the North Dorchester Bay CSO Facilities project. The three dissenting votes were cast by MWRA Advisory Board appointees to the Board of Directors. This marks a shift for the Authority, which was planning to proceed with the approved above ground design for the facility. The Advisory Board has long been opposed to using ratepayer funds to move the facility underground. The project has already been fully vetted and fully permitted over a multi-year process. The difference in cost for ratepayers will approximately be an additional \$3 million. In an Op-Ed piece published in October, Advisory Board Executive Director Joseph Favaloro articulated the Advisory Board's position, arguing that the ratepayers should not pay for the increased costs of moving the facility underground in order to suit the preferences of a single abutter. The full Op-Ed piece can be found here:

http://www.mwraadvisoryboard.com/Publications/News_Notes/2008_10_NN.pdf

METER MODERNIZATION GRANT PROGRAM IN THE WORKS

The Operations Committee of the MWRA Advisory Board will meet on April 16, 2009 (prior to the full Advisory Board meeting) to discuss the development of a potential meter modernization grant program through the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). MWRA staff and DEP staff have been in discussions regarding the possible use of a \$10 million grant from the green infrastructure portion of the federal stimulus bill. The program is still in the discussion and development phase. Early discussions indicate that the program could be administered through the Drinking Water SRF and could fund local water meter projects for MWRA water communities. The Advisory Board is seeking input from communities as this program takes shape in order to achieve an equitable distribution of any grant monies in the event the program is approved and launched.

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