



NEWS & NOTES

A PUBLICATION OF THE MWRA ADVISORY BOARD

JANUARY 2012

Governor Patrick's House 2 Budget Recommendations: FY13 Budget Process Begins

On Wednesday, January 18th, Governor Patrick released a budget proposal for \$32.3 billion, which calls for \$730 million in new savings from government-funded health care programs and would eliminate 300 jobs, close a Norfolk prison, generate \$260 million in new revenues by raising the cigarette tax along with taxing candy and soda, and expanding the bottle bill.

The Governor's proposal did not include a reimbursement of \$500,000 to the Authority for the operation of the Clinton Wastewater Treatment Plant. In addition, the Governor also did not include a line item that would be appropriated for Debt Service Assistance. Despite this, the Advisory Board, along with the Authority, will continue to advocate the Legislature throughout the remainder of the budget process with the anticipation of securing these necessary funds.

Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District Battle with EPA goes to Mediation

The First Circuit US Court of Appeals has moved the battle over Blackstone out of court and into the hands of a mediator regarding limits on phosphorus and nitrogen levels in the river.

The battle began in 1998 and the EPA issued a permit to the district plant that imposed new limits on the discharge of phosphorous and nitrogen. In 2001, the district embarked on a \$180 million upgrade to the plan so it could meet new discharge limits. However, before that work could be completed, the EPA issued a new permit for the plant in 2008 that imposed even further, more stringent limits on nutrients. Upper Blackstone officials have pegged the cost of compliance with the latest permit at an additional \$200 million. In addition, the annual operating costs of the plant would increase by \$5 million. District officials believe that certain conditions in the draft discharge permit are not supported by current science, and are not justified for several reasons. The District appealed the 2008 permit, and after review by the EPA Environmental Appeals Board, one of the

issues was remanded while the remaining issues were denied. In April 2011, following a modification to the permit and additional appeals, the EPA stated that the permit condition would take effect on May 1, 2011. The District appealed that decision to the U.S. First Circuit Court in April 2011, requesting a stay of the permit conditions for the duration of the appeal. The decision means that Worcester will get what they have sought all along; the opportunity to sit down with EPA and work out a deal grounded in common sense. The Advisory Board is closely reviewing this case and is reviewing its implications as it relates to the Clinton Wastewater Plant.

The Advisory Board Wishes MWRA Public Affairs Director Mike Morris Farewell

The Advisory Board wants to wish Mike Morris a farewell as he recently departed from the MWRA as the Public Affairs Director to open an independent consulting firm in Boston. The MWRA Advisory Board has enjoyed working with him over the last three years and wishes him much success on his new venture.

Water Infrastructure Finance Commission Report Update

The Water Infrastructure Finance Commission (WIFC) will be finalizing its report on Tuesday, February 7th. The task of the Commission was to address the urgent need of critical investments in our existing drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems, as well as to address new infrastructure investments to support economic development and growth and meet new regulatory requirements aimed at protecting public health and water quality.

If you are interested in the details of the WIFC Report, please click [here](#) to view it in its entirety.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

February 10: Advisory Board Exec. Comm. Mtg. in Charlestown
February 15: MWRA Board of Directors Mtg. in Charlestown
February 16: Full Advisory Board Mtg. in Lexington
February 20: President's Day-Office Closed

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

Maggie Atanasov, Government & Media Coordinator • Phone: 617.788.2055 • Fax: 617.788.2059

Email: maggie.atanasov@mwra.state.ma.us Web Site: www.mwraadvisoryboard.com