



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Boston, 02202.

WILLIAM F. WELD
GOVERNOR

ARGEO PAUL CELLUCCI
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

SUSAN F. TIERNEY
SECRETARY

(617) 727-9800

October 28, 1992

Mr. John E. Flynn
Deputy City Clerk
Office of the City Clerk
City of Cambridge
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Mr. Flynn:

Thank you for sending Governor Weld a copy of the resolution on rising water and sewer rates adopted by the City Council on September 14, 1992. The Governor has asked me to respond on his behalf.

The resolution states that water and sewer bills are rising "astronomically" and that MWRA charges represent a significant percentage of these increased costs. (MWRA charges represent, on average, 66% percent of household water and sewer charges.) The resolution further states that "cities and towns closest to the harbor are bearing the whole cost of these rate increases" and calls for a "more equitable distribution of water and sewer rates."

The Governor and I share the City Council's concern about the affordability of water and sewer services, especially with regard to low-income families and persons living on fixed incomes. We are also aware that escalating increases in municipal payments to the MWRA deprive municipalities of funding for local capital and operating programs. We are committed to reducing MWRA expenditures to the minimum necessary to maintain and upgrade the region's water and sewer infrastructure and to control the pollution of Boston Harbor.

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As part of its budget review process, the MWRA, in concert with the MWRA Advisory Board, managed to cut a planned system-wide rate increase of 36 percent to 19 percent. The charges to Cambridge, originally \$14.1 million, an increase of 52% over last year's charges, were reduced to \$12 million, an increase of 29% over last year. We realize that an annual rate increase of 29% is still onerous, and we will work diligently to identify additional ways in which to lessen the burden on the member communities of the MWRA.

While it is true that a clean Boston Harbor will provide benefits throughout the Commonwealth and beyond, Cambridge and the 42 other cities and towns that receive sewer service from the MWRA are funding 90% or more of the cost of the harbor project because they contribute sewage to Boston Harbor through the MWRA's existing sewage treatment plants at Nut Island and Deer Island. Residents of the 43 communities that will use the MWRA's new treatment plant are paying for the cost of constructing the new facilities just as the residents of other sewerage jurisdictions in Massachusetts are paying for the cost of new treatment plants and other improvements for those systems.

The MWRA has received or expects to receive a total of \$280 million in special federal appropriations for the harbor cleanup, but the total in federal aid the Authority expects to receive will probably not total more than 10 percent of the multi-billion cost of the project. We believe more federal aid is warranted.

Thank you for writing to the Governor of your concerns. We will continue to pursue additional federal aid and other means of keeping water and sewer service affordable for the customers of the MWRA.

Sincerely,


Susan F. Tierney

Secretary of Environmental Affairs

ST: tm

Consent Comm. # 8

S-884

Comm. from Susan F. Tierney, Secretary
of Environmental Affaris, acknowledging
receipt of a resolution adopted by the
City Council regarding the rising water
and sewer rates.

11/2/92
Susan F. Tierney

In City Council,

November 2, 1992

Placed on file