



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

250 FRESH POND PKY., CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138 • TEL. 498-9070

OFFICE OF THE WATER BOARD

29 April 1983

Thomas J. Begley
President

Walter Conlon

Ruth C. Birkhoff

Donald Hornig

Timothy F. White

Jon M. Beekman
Clerk of the Board

PRESS RELEASE CAMBRIDGE WATER BOARD

The Cambridge Water Board has been concerned for many years about the elevated levels of salt (sodium chloride) in its drinking water. The Board believes that a major source of the problem is the use of sodium chloride on Rt. 128 and the roadways and parking areas near the Hobbs Brook Reservoir and the past and present maintenance and operation of the salt storage depot by the Massachusetts Department of Public Works.

This problem has come to a head in connection with the State's plans to improve and expand the Route 128/Winter Street interchange in the City of Waltham, which will require using land owned by Cambridge near the Reservoir.

In recognition of Cambridge's drinking water problem, representatives of the Board and M.D.P.W. have been negotiating since last summer to attempt to reach an agreement on action to be taken to correct this problem. The parties have agreed that a study will be conducted by an independent hydro-geological engineering firm to determine the exact sources of the sodium concentrations in the Cambridge water supply and to quantify the contributions from the identified sources. However, a principal difference between the parties has been that the Board considered it important to establish in the agreement a level at which a contribution of sodium is deemed to be significant. If the study shows that the M.D.P.W.'s contribution is in excess of the significance level, remedial measures would be automatically triggered. M.D.P.W., however has refused to agree on a significance level and on the action to be taken if M.D.P.W.'s contribution is above that level. Instead, M.D.P.W. has taken the position that these issues should be resolved after the study is completed.

At the Board's meeting on April 27, a large delegation from the City of Waltham was present, headed by Mayor Clark. Senator Carol Amick was present and supported Waltham's position. The City of Waltham presented many reasons in support of allowing the Winter Street interchange project to go forward prior to resolution of the specific action to be taken by M.D.P.W. with respect to the salt depot. After discussion by the Board members, a motion was made to submit a revised draft agreement to M.D.P.W., which would eliminate all the provisions relating to the significance level and the specific remedial measures to be taken. The agreement would provide for a comprehensive study by an independent firm to determine and define the concentration of sodium concentrations in the Cambridge water supply and to quantify those contributions, with particular reference to the existing conditions at M.D.P.W.'s salt storage depot on Route 128, the continued operation and maintenance of the depot and the salting of Route 128 and related roadways. After the study is completed, the parties will meet

to attempt to reach agreement on an action plan to correct the problem. Upon receipt of certain assurances of support from the City Manager, the Board voted unanimously to adopt the motion. The Board directed special counsel to prepare a revised draft agreement in accordance with the Board's motion and to submit the draft to the M.D.P.W. promptly. It is anticipated that a final agreement between the State and the City will be entered into soon thereafter.

Any questions concerning this matter should be addressed to Jon Beekman, Clerk of the Board (498-9070).

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OFFICE OF THE
CITY MANAGER



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
Tel. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

May 2, 1983

To the Honorable, the City Council:

With respect to Awaiting Report Item No. 23 relative to the sodium content in the Cambridge drinking water supply, enclosed please copy of a press release, dated April 29, 1983, from the Cambridge Water Board.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mbf
Enc.

3-240
Agenda Item Number Twelve

Re: response to Awaiting Report Item No. 23
regarding the sodium content in the Cambridge
drinking water supply.

In City Council,

May 2, 1983

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