

**Boston Water and
Sewer Commission**



425 Summer Street
Boston, MA 02210-1700
617-330-9400
Fax 617-330-5167

March 26, 1993

Cambridge City Council
City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear City Council:

I am writing to you to express my concern over the comments of several local officials within the MWRA district to the effect that the current sewer rate methodology is unfair to them and overly generous to us. The political pressure they are bringing to bear upon the MWRA has already resulted in (a) the MWRA agreeing to hire a rate consultant to study and potentially revise the methodology and (b) the creation of a working group at the MWRA Advisory Board to review, comment upon or propose ideas with respect to a new methodology. We need to act quickly if our communities are not to be on the losing end of this issue.

The bottom line to your community in terms of dollars follows. The preliminary FY94 sewer assessment increase for Cambridge is 19.2%. Assuming that the MWRA capitulates on the issue of methodology, your sewer rate increase for FY94 will be an additional 23.3% on top of the "normal" increases. See attached chart.

Such a situation is unacceptable to me, especially given the fact that the current methodology has been deemed to be legal by the Environmental Protection Agency. In addition, while their appears to be surface logic to the other communities arguments, in reality the logic turns out to be bad law, bad science and bad policy. Under any circumstances, there is no reality in which simply measuring the flow of sewage equals the cost of treatment. Since it saves those cities and towns an amount of money equivalent to our increases it is, however, good local politics.

By the way, it is ironic that the MWRA data being touted as definitive proof of the alleged overcharging is clearly footnoted as being accurate to $\pm 15\%$! As the data becomes more refined it will be interesting to observe how many advocates for change switch their arguments, as their community turns from being a "net winner" to "net loser".



A number of communities are actively discussing a lawsuit against the MWRA. I would propose that the twelve "losing" communities pool their resources and retain the services of one law firm and one set of technical consultants in order to counter such an eventuality. While I regret spending the money, and even more regret wasting our energy fighting ourselves when we should all be fighting for more aid, I see no other recourse.

If you are interested in sharing this cost, please give me a call at 330-5166. I would also suggest we contact our elected officials in Washington and on Beacon Hill to apprise them of this unfortunate situation.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Ciolek
Executive Director

CAMBRIDGE

The following data was used to calculate your potential sewer assessment increase, should we be unsuccessful in preventing changes to the current system of apportioning sewer costs.

(A)	Current, FY93 Sewer Assessment	\$11,997,580	
(B)	Proposed Increase	\$2,308,762	
(C)	Preliminary, FY94 Sewer Assessment	\$14,306,342	(A + B)
(D)	Percent Change	19.2%	

(C)	Preliminary, FY94 Sewer Assessment	\$14,306,342	
(E)	Flow based, preliminary Sewer increase	23.3%	
(F)	Additional dollar increase	\$3,334,508	(C * E)

(G)	Est. total FY94 Sewer Assessment	\$17,640,850	(C + F)
(H)	Est. total dollar change	\$5,643,270	(B + F)
(I)	Est. total percent change	47.0%	(H/A)

Notes:

1. Preliminary MWRA Sewer Assessment from the MWRA, in letter to municipal officials, dated February 23, 1993.
2. Calculations on increases due to methodology changes are derived from MWRA preliminary sewer flow report, dated October, 1992. Percent increases are based upon 1991 annual averages for flow.

Consent Comm. # 4
~~-Consent Comm. # 17-~~ C-76

Comm. from Robert J. Ciolek, Executive
Director, Boston Water and Sewer
Commission, regarding the current
sewer rate.

RECEIVED BY
OFFICE OF CITY CLERK
1993 MAR 30 AM 9:57
CAMBRIDGE MA.

In City Council,

~~April 12, 1993~~

April 26, 1993

No action taken
Resubmitted 4/26/93
4/26/93 Referred to the
City Manager for a
report on motion of
Councillor Walsh
4/27/93 copy sent to City Mgr [initials]