



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

MASSACHUSETTS

WATER DEPARTMENT

250 FRESH POND PARKWAY

CAMBRIDGE, MASS. 02138

617- 498-9070

To: Robert W. Healy
City Manager

From: Timothy W.D. MacDonald ^{TWDM}
Manager of Water Resources

Date: January 10, 1991

Re: Council Order #38, dated 12/10/90
Impact of the U.S. Post Office facility
in Waltham on the Cambridge Reservoir.

The Cambridge Water Department(CWD) has been actively involved in the review of development proposals for the 200 Smith Street site in Waltham since December of 1987. The projects reviewed have included a office building proposed by the previous owner, Cabot, Cabot and Forbes, and the current proposal for locating a large postal facility at the site.

During the review of the first proposal the impacts of site development on the Cambridge water supply where well developed. The focus was on the control of site runoff, the potential of negative impacts on the site wetlands, wetlands replication, the potential impact of ground water recharge by site development, and the documentation of the 100 year storm flood elevation at the site. Of particular note during this portion of the review was the adoption by the Cambridge Water Board of a policy statement on wetlands replication proposals within the watershed and a review of the development proposal by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency(EPA) that concluded that runoff from the site should be regulated by a National Discharge Elimination System(NPDES) permit.

The first portion of the site review, from December of 1987 to December of 1989, was not productive at resolving the water supply issues at the site. The interactions lead to the appeal of three separate Orders of Conditions issued by the Waltham Conservation Commission. As the process progressed there was increasing scrutiny given to the project. This included active review by the Cambridge Conservation Commission and the use of an outside consultant to provide further detailed review of the initial office building proposal.

The review of the initial proposal ended in September of 1989 after the Department of Environmental Protect(EP) issued a

Superseding Order of Conditions on the project which supported the CWD concern with the inadequacy of protection given to the Cambridge water supply by the proposed development.

In November of 1989 the CWD was contacted by the U.S. Postal Service about their review of several sites within the Cambridge water supply watershed. During 1990 a series of eight meetings were held between the Postal Service and their consultants and the CWD. Water supply issues at the three sites under consideration were well developed. After the Postal Service focused on the 200 Smith Street site the CWD and the Cambridge Water Board have provided specific review and comment on the water supply issues at the Smith Street site.

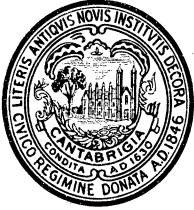
As with the previous proposal the issues have been runoff control and water quality, the protection and maintenance of the site wetlands, site ground water, and the maintenance of adequate flood storage on the site. After ground water contamination was discovered on the site, the cleanup of the ground water was added to the list of concerns and comments.

To date the review and discussions with the Postal Service have resulted in a smaller building foot print than previous proposals at the site. This reduced foot print would result in the preservation of a buffer between proposed construction and the site wetlands. The only other commitments to date are a willingness to preclude the use of sodium based de-icing agents on the site and a commitment to not use the proposed facility as a truck maintenance or service facility.

Still outstanding are a commitment to proceed with an application for an NPDES permit for site runoff. The use of the site as trucking terminal only heightens the need for this control of the discharge to the Cambridge water supply. The reluctance to commit to the permit would appear to be linked to an unwillingness to treat the site runoff through a single discharge system. The CWD is pursuing this issue through the DEP and the EPA.

While the watershed communities, Waltham and Lexington, have supported the water supply protection issues at this site, the major local issue is traffic from the proposed facility. While aware of these issues the CWD may be in conflict with some of the measures suggested by the watershed communities to mitigate traffic. Specifically, the CWD could not support increase intrusion into the wetlands to provide access from Trapello Road or directly from Route 128.

The review of the postal service proposal and the 200 Smith Street site is on going. The issues of prime concern to the CWD and the Cambridge Water Board are those of the control of both runoff quality (NPDES permit) and quantity and the cleanup of the ground water contamination at the site. The CWD will continue to work closely with the Cambridge Conservation Commission during the technical review of development proposals at this site.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139 • TEL. 498-9048

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

January 10, 1991

TO: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

FROM: Elizabeth Epstein, Director, Conservation Commission *Elizabeth Epstein*

RE: City Council Order #38, dated 12/10/90

For several years the Commission has worked closely with the Water Department in review of proposed development at the 200 Smith Street, Waltham parcel. Such review and involvement in the local, state and federal environmental permitting process has focused solely on protection of the city's water supply and compliance with applicable regulatory programs.

The Commission is currently working with the Water Department regarding the proposed U.S. Postal Service facility at the Smith Street site. Both groundwater and surface runoff from this site discharge to an abutting stream, a tributary to the Cambridge Reservoir. The Commission will review the proposed groundwater remediation plan and the plan for drainage and discharge of urban runoff from the site. In order to prevent potential degradation of the city's drinking water as a result of such discharge, the Commission and Water Department continue to work with state and federal environmental regulators toward issuance of a stringent National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. The Commission will also continue to review the Postal Service proposal with regard to compliance with the Wetlands Protection Act and act with the Water Department as a party to proceedings of the Waltham Conservation Commission.

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OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER



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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

January 14, 1991

To The Honorable, The City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report Item No. 41, regarding the impact of the U.S. Post Office facility in Waltham on the Cambridge Reservoir, attached please find a report from Timothy MacDonald, Manager of Water Resources for the Cambridge Water Department, as well as Elizabeth Epstein, Director, Conservation Commission, concerning this matter.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", is written over the typed name and title.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mev
attachments

Agenda # 14 S-132

Awaiting Report Item Number 41 regarding
the impact of the U.S. Post Office facility
in Waltham on the Cambridge Reservoir.

In City Council,

January 14, 1991

Referred to the
Committee on
Environment
Copy sent to Comm on
Environment 1/18/91 @