



MASSACHUSETTS WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Press Release - Legislative Event 2013

Boston- The Massachusetts Water Pollution Control Association (MWPCA) Government Affairs Committee, in conjunction with the New England Water Environment Association (NEWEA) and New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC), held its 3rd annual Legislative Event at the Omni Parker House in Boston on March 13, 2013. Over 75 people attended the event, including Massachusetts State Senators and Representatives; representatives from MassDEP and the State Revolving Fund (SRF) Program; mayors and local officials from various cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth; environmental advocates; and water quality professionals.

The Event's keynote speaker was Representative Carolyn Dykema, from the 8th Middlesex District. Representative Dykema is a member of both the Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture and the joint Committee on Ways and Means. Representative Dykema's discussions focused on her experience as Co-Chair of the Massachusetts Water Infrastructure Finance Commission, a recent trip to Israel to observe their innovative approaches to water and wastewater treatment, and the recent House legislation filed that is consistent with the recommendations of the Commission. Representative Dykema shared the alarming prediction that "Massachusetts will face a 20 billion dollar gap in water infrastructure funding over the next 20 years".

Representative Dykema emphasized the need for associations such as MWPCA to engage their members, and in turn to have the membership reach out to others among their networks of family and friends, to educate people regarding the water and sewer issues facing this region, and to urge them to request their legislators' support for legislation aimed at improving these valuable water systems in order to avoid the potential long term economic and health problems associated with ignoring the need. As stated by Representative Dykema, "We need to help communities understand the consequences of not investing in water infrastructure."

Representative Dykema's Co-Chair of the Water Infrastructure Finance Commission, Senator Jamie Eldridge commented during the event that, "Restoring our water infrastructure is a need that has gone unattended to for too long, largely because our water pipes are underground and not in plain sight. Water pipes don't become a problem until they spring a leak, underscoring the need to invest in the future of our water infrastructure to promote clean drinking water. I applaud the great efforts the Massachusetts Water Pollution Control Association has taken to highlight the need for high quality, updated and reliable water infrastructure and look forward to working on this issue in the legislature."

Massachusetts DEP Commissioner Kenneth Kimmell congratulated communities and wastewater facilities on being prepared for recent noteworthy storm events, with the result being very limited environmental incidents. The Commissioner highlighted new initiatives at MASSDEP including: a legislative directive to research the prudence of adopting NPDES Delegation Authority; the Phosphorus in Fertilizer regulation; and the Cape Cod Nitrogen Regional Plan that is being undertaken with the cooperation of the Cape Cod Commission.

Offering a perspective from the local level, discussions by Mayor Daniel Rizzo from the City of Revere, Mayor Carolyn Kirk from the City of Gloucester, and Mayor Mark Hawke from the City of Gardner all had a common theme. Their cities are struggling with the need to fix

aging water and sewer systems while also responding to mandates from the national level to comply with evolving and more stringent discharge regulations, often times requiring unfunded, costly large-scale upgrades to collection and treatment works. Consistently, the mayors described their difficulties in trying to achieve a balance between the need on the one hand to repair antiquated systems in order to provide a safe and reliable system for their residents and to allow for community economic growth, while on the other hand simultaneously attempting to comply with unfunded regulatory mandates, all while minimizing the financial impacts of both on the ratepayers.

Mayor Rizzo spoke to the group regarding the situation the City of Revere is facing regarding a consent decree from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Based on the decree, Revere must make extensive and costly improvements to its increasingly inadequate sewer and storm water systems; currently, there are a number of House Bills being debated in the Legislature that would help to reduce the weight of the burden on ratepayers in Revere.

Mayor Kirk provided a portion of a presentation given annually to Gloucester residents that visually demonstrates the age of the city's infrastructure (dating back to the early 1900s) and highlights the decaying condition of these aging systems. Mayor Kirk explained, "When I took office, I inherited a 20-day boil water order and 20 years of overdue sewer and water work." Mayor Kirk went on to describe how addressing long overdue sewer and water projects while complying with mandates from the state and federal governments creates a massive burden that falls squarely on the shoulders of the water and sewer rate payers of the city. She provided data that showed that adequately addressing these concerns according to the EPA Guidelines would result in rates that would cause a "high financial impact" to the average Gloucester homeowner.

During his presentation, Mayor Hawke expressed Gardner's frustration at the need to comply with new storm water and wastewater regulatory requirements that appear to offer minimal benefit. "Everybody wants clean water and clean air. However, when we try to achieve it through miniscule environmental advancements at a cost of millions of dollars in upgrades, the only thing we achieve is 'compliance pollution.'"

"The consistent issue we heard today from our cities and towns in Massachusetts is their struggle to balance the need to comply with mandated federal requirements for wastewater and storm water discharges while also addressing the need to repair or replace aging infrastructure while limiting the financial impacts to their residents," said Ray Willis, MWPCA President.

The MWPCA legislative event was effective in emphasizing community concerns and in raising the profile of the troublesome state of water industry infrastructure throughout the commonwealth. If you would like to learn more about the topics discussed or to stay informed of our future legislative and government affairs committee events, please contact the MWPCA by calling (774) 289-3405, visit our web site at www.mwpc.org, or follow us on Facebook ([facebook.com/mwpc](https://www.facebook.com/mwpc)) and/or Twitter (@MWPCA).

The MWPCA is a non-profit organization that is focused on water quality issues in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Founded in 1965, the Association is made up of over 800 water quality professionals and its office is centrally located at the Richard Alden Training Center within the confines of the Upper Blackstone Water Abatement Pollution Control Facility in Millbury, Massachusetts.