



## SPRINGFIELD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION

POST OFFICE BOX 995  
SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS 01101-0995  
413-452-1300



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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Senator Markey, Congressman Neal, and Mayor Sarno Join Springfield Water and Sewer Commission for Groundbreaking of New Water Treatment Plant**

*\$4.6 Million Federal Earmark Announced for the Project*

The Springfield Water and Sewer Commission (Commission) officially broke ground on the new West Parish Water Treatment Plant on Wednesday, October 16 in Westfield. Commission officials were joined by U.S. Senator Edward J. Markey, U.S. Congressman Richard Neal, and Mayor Domenic J. Sarno, as well as officials from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), to mark the occasion. U.S. Sen. Markey also announced a \$4.6 million earmark he secured for the project in FY24.

The new plant will modernize drinking water operations, improve water quality, enhance climate resiliency, and reliably serve the lower Pioneer Valley region for decades to come. Construction of the state-of-the-art water treatment facility is expected to take four years, with completion scheduled for Fall 2028.

Following the ceremony, the Commission is hosting a [Public Open House](#) from 3-6 PM. Tours of the existing treatment process will be offered as well as information about the construction of the new West Parish Water Treatment Plant.

### **New West Parish Drinking Water Treatment Plant**

Planning for the new plant began almost 10 years ago, when the Commission embarked on a planning process to evaluate current and future needs related to regulatory compliance, plant reliability, and safety. The existing plant was last modernized in 1974 following the passage of the Safe Drinking Water Act, and components from that era as well as from the 1920s are still in operational use today. Water quality standards, technology, and precipitation patterns have changed significantly over 50 years, however, leading to the necessity to build a new water plant that responds to 21<sup>st</sup> century conditions and reduces risk posed by aging infrastructure and climate change.

The new drinking water plant will have a treatment capacity of 65 million gallons/day, and will be located on the site of the 1925 slow sand filters, which will be demolished in the first year of construction. Water treatment will be ongoing throughout the construction process, enabled in part by a new Backwash Facility that was completed in late 2023 and will be integrated into the new plant.

Construction of the \$293 million project will be carried out by the Walsh Group construction firm. Design and engineering was completed by Hazen and Sawyer, which designed the first West Parish Filters Water Treatment Plant on the same site in 1909. The project is expected to generate 300 construction jobs, of which 20% are apprenticeship and 25% are local hiring opportunities.

Project details and progress can be followed at a new project website, [newwestparish.com](http://newwestparish.com).

### **Water Quality and Resiliency**

To resolve ongoing water quality issues with disinfection byproducts (DBPs), the new plant will incorporate a new treatment process called “dissolved air flotation.” DBPs form when natural organics interact with chlorine, which is

used to disinfect the water from pathogens. The new treatment step will remove more natural organics, which have increased in the reservoir in recent years due to extreme precipitation patterns.

The new plant will also resolve risks posed by aging infrastructure and climate change. In recent years components of the plant have begun to fail due to their age and pressures of extreme precipitation patterns, posing risk to service reliability. The new plant will eliminate the use of 100-year-old slow sand filter technology, and rely on dual-media filtration technology. In addition, redundancy, fossil-fuel free HVAC, cutting-edge technology, and safer treatment processes will be included. The design also incorporates the ability to add components to adapt to future regulations and needs as they may arise.

## **Funding and Financing**

U.S. Senator Edward J. Markey announced a \$4.6 million earmark to help fund the major infrastructure project, citing its impact on improving water quality for thousands of people in the Springfield region, many of whom are disadvantaged or reside in Environmental Justice communities.

In addition to the earmark, the project is being financed through low-interest competitive loans from EPA's Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) and the Massachusetts Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF), which is administered by MassDEP.

"Today's groundbreaking is a testament to what can be accomplished when we put real dollars behind our values. Delivering clean drinking water, creating hundreds of jobs, and strengthening environmental resilience in one of the largest public infrastructure projects Greater Springfield has seen this century," said **U.S. Senator Edward J. Markey**, "That's why I was proud to partner with Senator Warren and Congressman Neal to bring \$4.6 million in congressional funding back to Massachusetts to support this project, on top of a \$250 million low-interest federal loan to ensure that every resident in Springfield and surrounding communities can turn on their tap and access clean, safe, fresh drinking water."

"As a former Mayor, I know firsthand the work that goes into maintaining the world-class water we enjoy in the Pioneer Valley. Today, we celebrate yet another water infrastructure project that highlights the commitment of federal, state, and local government to invest in the sustainability and resiliency of our region's infrastructure," said **Congressman Richard Neal**. "This day comes one year after we celebrated another milestone with the completion of the York Street Pump Station. Both projects were great benefactors of the EPA's WIFIA Program, and both are stark reminders of our historic legislative achievement in Congress with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law – legislation that was drafted in the Ways and Means Committee under my chairmanship. I commend the men and women of the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission whose critical work ensures the health and well-being of our communities and our environment."

**Mayor Domenic J. Sarno** remarked, "I commend the Commission for reaching this exciting milestone. This project reflects the pride that Springfield has long held in its world-class water supply for over 100 years, and its constant vision and hard work towards building a better future. Water is essential to everyday life, to our economy, and to public health and safety, and the new West Parish Water Treatment Plant will ensure that our residents can depend on safe drinking water for generations to come."

"The new West Parish Water Treatment Plant represents a decade of foresight, dedication, and hard work to create a water-secure future for the Springfield region," said **Commissioner Vanessa Otero**. "The Commission extends its gratitude to Senator Markey and Senator Warren for securing valuable funding for this project, and to our partners at EPA and MassDEP for helping deliver critical financing to ensure that we can maintain sustainable rates while delivering one of the largest public infrastructure projects to take place in this area for quite some time. I also look forward to the many new career and apprenticeship opportunities that can arise from a project like this, serving as a transformative catalyst for people in our community."

"EPA is proud to support this important step toward securing a resilient and sustainable water future for Springfield and surrounding region," said **Karen McGuire, Deputy Regional Administrator for EPA New England**, "as we face the growing challenges of climate change and aging infrastructure, this project will help deliver reliable, high quality drinking water for families in the Springfield area."

"Ensuring safe drinking water for Massachusetts communities is critical. Today's groundbreaking of the new West Parish Water Treatment Plant is a huge milestone and a testament to the collaboration of federal, state, and local



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partners,” said **MassDEP Commissioner Bonnie Heiple**. “Together, we have secured funding to make this project a reality and meet the highest public health standards to deliver clean, safe water to residents in Springfield and beyond. This is a powerful example of what can be achieved when we work together to address complex environmental challenges.”

Students from Springfield Renaissance School’s Environmental Pathways Program were also in attendance on Wednesday to help celebrate. The Commission is partnering with the program to help educate students about their local water supply, as well as about potential careers in the water sector.

### **Public Open House**

Members of the public are welcome to visit West Parish during the Public Open House from 3-6 PM to learn more about the past, present, and future of their drinking water and help celebrate the groundbreaking milestone. More information is available at <https://waterandsewer.org/open-house/>.

### **About the Commission**

Established in 1996, the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission is an independent, public regional utility. The Commission serves 250,000 customers in the lower Pioneer Valley with safe and reliable drinking water and wastewater service. The Commission provides retail drinking water service to Springfield and Ludlow; regional drinking water service to Agawam, Longmeadow, and East Longmeadow; and emergency/peak service to Westfield, Southwick, West Springfield, Chicopee, and Wilbraham. The Commission provides retail wastewater service to Springfield and regional wastewater service to West Springfield, Agawam, Longmeadow, East Longmeadow, Wilbraham, and Ludlow.

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