



SPRINGFIELD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION
P.O. BOX 995, SPRINGFIELD, MA 01101

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Contact: Jaimye Bartak, Communications Manager
Springfield Water and Sewer Commission
413-452-1302
jaimye.bartak@waterandsewer.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Springfield Water and Sewer Commission Hosts
Regional Water Roundtable with Congressman Richard Neal**
Congressman Neal Visits Construction at West Parish Filters Water Treatment Plant

The Springfield Water and Sewer Commission (Commission) was pleased to host Congressman Richard Neal (MA-1) for a Regional Water Roundtable today at West Parish Filters Water Treatment Plant in Westfield, MA to tour construction progress of the West Parish Filters Facility upgrades and discuss issues affecting the water sector.

As part of the tour, the Commissioners Vanessa Otero and William Leonard as well as Executive Director Josh Schimmel highlighted ongoing construction of the New Clearwell and Backwash Pump Station project, and important Phase 1 project of new West Parish Filters Water Treatment Plant. These upgrades are part of the Commission's \$550 million Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Renewal Program – a capital project portfolio of more than 20 projects that will improve water and sewer service for the Commission's 250,000 customers in the Lower Pioneer Valley. The portfolio is advancing on an accelerated schedule due to the Commission securing a \$250 million highly competitive low-interest loan from EPA's Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act ([WIFIA](#)) program as well as through financing from the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust State Revolving Fund (SRF).

Following the facilities tour, Congressman Neal participated in a Regional Water Roundtable to discuss current issues facing the water sector. The roundtable included Commission officials, Jennifer Pederson, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Water Works Association, and representatives from local water departments including Agawam, Longmeadow, and Westfield.



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Congressman Richard Neal remarked, “As a former Mayor of Springfield, I know firsthand what goes into getting our world class water from Cobble Mountain Reservoir into our city,” said Congressman Richard E. Neal. “Today’s tour of the West Parish Filters Water Treatment Plant and its recent upgrades for sustainability and reliability prove that the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission is committed to protecting our most critical piece of infrastructure – our drinking water. Thanks to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act Program, the Commission will be able to fund critical upgrades while maintaining long-term affordability.”

Commission Chairwoman Vanessa Otero thanked Congressman Neal for participating in the discussion and added: “We were pleased to be joined by Congressman Neal today at West Parish Filters to tour our facility and learn more about our ongoing infrastructure projects as part of a generational reinvestment to ensure water quality and reliability for decades to come. This is all made possible by the WIFIA and SRF programs, which provide an unprecedented opportunity to advance more than \$550 million in critical water infrastructure projects on an accelerated schedule while saving our ratepayers more than \$80 million in borrowing costs.”

Executive Director Josh Schimmel stated, “We welcomed this opportunity to highlight how all the strategic project and financial planning that the Commission has undertaken in recent years is coming together in actual construction. With much of Springfield’s water infrastructure located 15 miles away at West Parish Filters, or buried underground, it is easy to take for granted how critical water services are to daily life and public health. The Commission is proud of the more than 100-year history of West Parish Filters, and continues to advance necessary infrastructure projects at the drinking water treatment plant to ensure system reliability for many more years to come. The Commission will continue to work in collaboration with our elected officials at the local, state, and federal level to advocate for more funding for water infrastructure projects, as well as for collaboration in building the next generation of water professionals.”

Massachusetts Water Works Association Executive Director Jennifer Pederson remarked, “Water utilities across Massachusetts work hard day in and day out to provide safe, reliable drinking water to the public. We welcome this opportunity to highlight the work of our water professionals, and also the many challenges they face due to aging infrastructure, evolving regulations, and the need for more federal and state reinvestment in our water systems as well as in our workforce for the future.”



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New West Parish Filters Water Treatment Plant

Currently under construction as part of Phase 1 of the new West Parish Filters Water Treatment Plant is the new Clearwell and Backwash Pump Station project, which will replace an existing 1920s clearwell and 1970s backwash (filter cleaning) pumps. As part of the facilities tour during the Regional Water Roundtable, Congressman Neal was able to see firsthand the Phase 1 construction progress, which began in December 2021.

The Commission is also advancing the design of a new \$238 million drinking water treatment plant to help address regulatory compliance, improve overall water quality, and service reliability. The new plant will feature an added step – Dissolved Air Flotation (DAF) – to remove more natural organic matter (NOM) from the raw water and help reduce the formation of disinfection by products (DBP) within the distribution system. Construction is expected to begin in 2024 and be complete in 2027.

More information on the West Parish Filters Facility Upgrades is available on the Commission's website: <https://waterandsewer.org/projects/drinking-water-projects-2/west-parish-filters-facilities-plan/>.

Regional Water Roundtable Topics

The roundtable discussion focused on the water infrastructure investments needs that the Commission and other water utilities around the region and state are facing. To deliver essential water and sewer services utilities are often required to rely on early 1900s infrastructure to meet evolving regulations. Furthermore, extreme weather patterns require infrastructure that is more resilient. The roundtable discussed the positive impacts of the recently passed Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), but also noted the gap in available funding compared to the scale of infrastructure renewal needed.

In addition to the infrastructure needs, in Massachusetts more than half of licensed water operators in Massachusetts are over the age of 50 years old. Utilities like the Commission are seeking state and federal partnerships and support to build the water workforce of the future. Since 2019 the Commission has partnered with the Massachusetts Water Works Association (MWWA) and Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) on a Basic Drinking Water Treatment Training Course. The course prepares students for a career in the water sector and to sit for water operator licensing exams. The Commission also launched a scholarship program to help support students in covering the cost of tuition for the course and taking the first step towards a new lifelong career.



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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; wholesale 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 wholesale wastewater service to West Springfield, Agawam, Longmeadow, East Longmeadow, Wilbraham, and Ludlow.

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