



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

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Commission Celebrates New Water Workforce Development Program

Mayor Sarno, Springfield Public Schools, Veolia North America, and MA Water Works Association Meet With “Pipeline Program” Interns

The Springfield Water and Sewer Commission (Commission) welcomed leadership from the City of Springfield, Springfield Public Schools, the Massachusetts Water Works Association (MWWA), and Veolia North America on Wednesday to meet with 12 Springfield high school students participating in the first year of the Commission’s “Pipeline Program.”

The Pipeline Program is an 8-week, paid experiential summer learning program for 12 students in grades 10-12 to expose them to the variety of careers in the water sector. Interns were selected among a pool of approximately 45 students following an application and interview process, and represent 5 Springfield high schools. Each week, interns accompany Commission staff in different departments to provide assistance on various activities and projects, including in Engineering, Watershed Protection, Wastewater Operations, Drinking Water Operations/Laboratory, Information Technology, and Field Services (Meters and Water Quality). Interns also take MWWA’s “Introduction to Water Operations” course, which is the first step towards sitting for a drinking water operator licensing exam.

In addition, interns tour other regional water and wastewater plants, visit local colleges and universities with Engineering or Environmental Science programs, and engage in group projects, community service, and trainings on workplace safety and career-readiness. The event on Wednesday was intended to offer the interns an opportunity to interact with community and utility leaders as well as hear words of encouragement as they consider careers in water. Water sector jobs vary widely and require education ranging from high school diplomas to advanced degrees.

Drinking water and wastewater utilities across the Commonwealth are currently experiencing high rates of retirements and a lack of qualified licensed professionals to backfill impending vacancies. The Commission also recognizes its own need for qualified water professionals to operate and maintain a new state-of-the-art drinking water treatment plant as well as other modern infrastructure being built as part of its \$550 million Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Renewal Program. In response, the Commission designed the Pipeline Program in collaboration with Springfield Public Schools’ School-to-Career, Work-Based Learning & Pathways Program and partnered with its contracted wastewater plant operator, Veolia North America, for the implementation of this first-of-its-kind initiative in Massachusetts.



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“Investing in the future of Springfield’s water and wastewater system means more than new pipes and treatment plants,” said **Commission Executive Director Josh Schimmel**. “We are making a generational reinvestment in our water system right now, and that must include investing in people. The Pipeline Program is mutually beneficial – we are proud to invest in our community and provide interns with valuable job experience, while we also can already see how much talent there is in our Springfield high schools. We look forward to cultivating our future water stewards through this program for years to come.”

“We continue to have one of the best water systems in the Nation,” said **Mayor Domenic J. Sarno**. “Our public health, our quality of life, and our economy depend on the hardworking people that keep our taps flowing, our environment clean, and our fire hydrants at the ready. These good-paying and rewarding jobs with the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission not only serve our local community but also offer dependable lifelong career prospects right here at home. I commend the Commission’s Executive Director Josh Schimmel and his dedicated team for creating this opportunity for our local high school youth, who have so much to offer to the future of Springfield.”

“Springfield Public Schools is proud to collaborate with the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission on the Pipeline Program,” said **Superintendent Daniel Warwick**. “Work-based learning opportunities and expanding strategic partnerships are a core component of our Portrait of a Student Initiative, and water careers offer numerous pathways that engage our youth with so many prominent issues facing our communities, such as climate change, water access, engineering and technological advancement, and natural resource protection. Congratulations to the first cohort of Pipeline Program interns for taking this important step towards a promising future.”

“Jobs in wastewater are plentiful, hands-on, and essential, not only in the Springfield region, but all over the world,” said **Kendra Morris, President, Northeast Region of Veolia North America**. “Our public health and natural environment depend on having engaged, curious and conscientious professionals that are committed to serving their community. Veolia is proud to host Pipeline Program interns at the Springfield Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility and looks forward to continuing this productive partnership.”

“Massachusetts needs more water professionals, and today’s high school students have a lot to offer the water sector in return,” said **MWWA Instructor Dan Laprade**. “This generation’s fluency with technology and awareness of environmental quality and public health issues provides us with an opportunity to capture their attention and get them interested in careers within the water profession. MWWA is excited to partner with the Commission on the Pipeline Program and offer its professional educational programs to help interns on the next step of their careers.”

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.

About Springfield Public Schools and School-To-Career Program

The Springfield Public Schools are world class learning environments that produce 21st century leaders. Our students will graduate from high school College and Career ready. The school district attracts knowledgeable,



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highly effective and diverse teachers and principals who want to work in a high performing district. The School-To-Career, Work-Based Learning Program is a statewide network led by DESE and organized through sixteen MassHire Workforce Boards, charged with supporting work-based learning and other career development education activities for students. Through the network, educators can exchange ideas and practices by accessing a wide range of tools, resources, and experiences that support students. Also, employers and community partners can find channels to connect with schools in order to promote career awareness and the career growth of local students.

About Veolia North America

Veolia North America is the contracted operator of the Springfield Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility. A subsidiary of Veolia group, Veolia North America (VNA) offers a full spectrum of water, waste and energy management services, including water and wastewater treatment, commercial and hazardous waste collection and disposal, energy consulting and resource recovery. VNA helps commercial, industrial, healthcare, higher education and municipality customers throughout North America. Headquartered in Boston, Mass., Veolia North America has more than 10,000 employees working at more than 350 locations across the continent. www.veolianorthamerica.com

About Massachusetts Water Works Association

Massachusetts Water Works Association is a non-profit organization of water supply professionals with more than 1,400 members throughout the Commonwealth. MWWA's membership includes public water system operators, managers, consulting engineers and equipment manufacturers and vendors. Through education and advocacy, MWWA works to promote a safe and sufficient supply of drinking water for the Commonwealth's residents and businesses. Contact: Jennifer A. Pederson, Executive Director, jpederson@masswaterworks.org

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