



## Charles River Watershed Association

26 April 2006

Robert Rooney  
Commissioner of Public Works  
City of Newton  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton Centre, MA 02459-1449

*Re: City of Newton's Proposed Stormwater User Fee*

Dear Commissioner Rooney:

The Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) is pleased to offer a letter of support to the City of Newton for the Proposed Stormwater User Fee, which is being considered for adoption this spring by the City's Board of Alderman. CRWA, a non-profit environmental organization founded in 1965 to protect, promote and restore the Charles River using science, advocacy and the law, has been working with numerous municipalities, State transportation agencies, industries, and developers to find effective ways to minimize and mitigate the impacts of stormwater runoff, one of the most significant sources of pollution to the Charles River today. While the technology, practices and skills are available to adequately address this issue, the financial resources are lacking across the board. The City of Newton's efforts to develop and establish a stormwater user fee is a step in the right direction that will help to ensure that the City can meet its federal and state regulatory requirements, maintain and operate a well-functioning stormwater infrastructure system, and be environmentally and socially responsible to its citizens by keeping the local river, brooks, ponds and wetlands clean.

The Charles River is a prominent natural feature in the City of Newton flowing 12 miles along the City border and providing the setting for numerous City- and State-managed parks including Nahanton Park, Hemlock Gorge Reservation in Newton Upper Falls, the Newton Lower Falls Park, Norumbega Park Conservation Area, Lyons Park, Auburndale Park and the Upper Charles River Reservation. Also within those 12 miles, the City of Newton owns and maintains almost 100 stormwater outfalls (end-of-pipe) that discharge directly to the Charles River. Tying into those outfalls are hundreds of miles of pipes, catch basins, storm drains, and other drainage conveyance systems. This vast network of the stormwater drainage system (and associated stormwater "best management practices" such as detention basins, grassy swales, etc.) and the operations that prevent pollution in the first place (e.g., street sweeping and catch basin cleaning) place a huge demand upon existing staff, who in many cases serve more than one role within the city.

These operational costs, as well as the significant capital improvement project costs, currently compete with other essential municipal education, health, transportation and social service programs. Developing and implementing a stormwater user fee or utility is an important step for the City of Newton as it moves ahead with stormwater management. The proposed fee is requires any generator of stormwater pollution - from the single-family residence to the commercial property owner - to pay their share of the costs of

stormwater management. It will reduce the competition for limited property tax revenue and will guarantee an adequate, stable, and dedicated source of funds for your program.

With adoption of a local stormwater user fee, the benefits to the public are significant, including reduced flooding, improved water quality, protected fisheries and wildlife habitat, and cleaner, more aesthetically pleasing recreational areas. CRWA hopes that the City of Newton will draw upon a portion of these funds, if adopted, to better educate the public that they are a source of - and the solution to - the stormwater pollution problem. Watershed residents need to be aware that their daily activities from lawn care, pet care, waste disposal and other activities play a significant role in the health of their environment.

In closing, CRWA commends the Newton Department of Public Works for championing this critical financing mechanism and becoming a leader in finding ways to address stormwater issues and pay for it. Your efforts are much needed and timely as we've made much progress to clean up the river yet more is still needed to restore the ecological integrity of the river and its watershed for today's residents and future generations. CRWA looks forward to working with you, Maria Pologruto and other Newton officials on your local stormwater management efforts. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

Anna Eleria  
Project Manager

Cc: David Gray, US EPA  
Maria Pologruto, City of Newton