



Medford City Council
Medford, Massachusetts

MEETING DATE

October 27, 2026

SPONSORED BY

Isaac Bears, Council President

AGENDA ITEM

26-183 - Resolution to Send Comment Letter to MWRA, Cambridge, and Somerville Combined Sewer Overflow Project Team

FULL TEXT AND DESCRIPTION

October 27, 2026

Via email: UpdatedCSOControlPlan@aecom.com

RE: Draft Updated Combined Sewer Overflow Long-Term Control Plan Public Comment

Dear MWRA, Cambridge, and Somerville Combined Sewer Overflow Project Team,
On behalf of the City of Medford City Council, we respectfully request that you reject the Recommended Plan presented in the Draft Updated Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Long-Term Control Plan (LTCP) that would allow sewage to be discharged permanently into the Mystic River, Charles River, and Alewife Brook, a proposal we find unacceptable. We strongly oppose any plan that permits continued pollution of our local waterways and urge you to issue a Final Updated CSO Control Plan that recommends an alternative **resulting in complete or virtual CSO elimination**. Massachusetts can and should do better.

While the Boston Harbor and our waterways have seen a remarkable recovery thanks to decades of public investment, this progress is now at risk. The Draft LTCP would allow raw sewage dumping into our rivers indefinitely, when instead we should be investing in safe, clean, and healthy waterways that residents expect and deserve. Our rivers should not be treated as open sewers, especially when modern infrastructure solutions are feasible and available. The Draft Recommended Plan is inadequate in the following ways:

- It fails to meet federal Clean Water Act requirements;
- It fails to end CSOs despite analysis demonstrating it is both technically feasible and affordable;

- It is backward-looking and proposes investments in infrastructure that will be overwhelmed by current and future climate conditions;
- It fails to acknowledge the public health and economic benefits that would be realized from ending CSOs; and
- It fails to advance state priorities as detailed in the Healey-Driscoll Administration’s Biodiversity Initiative, Environmental Justice Strategy, and ResilientMass Plan.

Medford and neighboring communities along the Mystic River have worked for decades and continue to work to restore these waterways. Our city is required to make considerable investments to address stormwater runoff into the river, and we are working hard on a daily basis to meet those obligations. Allowing some entities to permanently discharge sewage in the Mystic undermines these efforts and is not equitable. Discharges of raw sewage degrade habitat, impair water quality, limit safe recreation, and threaten public health—impacts that fall disproportionately on Environmental Justice communities already burdened by pollution. At a time when climate change is increasing storm intensity and placing greater stress on our infrastructure, we must pursue solutions that meet future conditions rather than waste money on outdated approaches. The Draft Control Plan demonstrates that you have the capacity and expertise to permanently end raw sewage discharges into our rivers; the City of Medford is asking you to make that commitment.

We respectfully request that you recommend and implement a **2050, 25-year storm level of control or full sewer separation for the Mystic River, the Charles River, and the Alewife Brook** under the Final Updated LTCP. A 25-year level of control is analogous to what was done for Boston Harbor beaches, while discharges have been fully eliminated on the Neponset River. We have a unique opportunity to end CSOs in our beloved waterways so we can finally achieve the vision of the federal Clean Water Act for “fishable” and “swimmable” rivers. We urge you to ensure that the MWRA continues its legacy of leadership in CSO reduction by supporting a plan that permanently ends sewage dumping into the Mystic River, Charles River, and Alewife Brook.

Sincerely,
 Isaac B. "Zac" Bears, Council President
 Emily Lazzaro, Council Vice President
 Anna Callahan
 Matt Leming
 Liz Mullane
 George Scarpelli
 Justin Tseng

RECOMMENDATION

FISCAL IMPACT

ATTACHMENTS

None