



## THE CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

MAYOR DOMENIC J. SARNO

*HOME OF THE BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME*

### **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Tuesday, May 10, 2016**

**Contact:** Marian Sullivan, Communications Director  
(413) 886-5166, [msullivan@springfieldcityhall.com](mailto:msullivan@springfieldcityhall.com)

#### **“Gateway Cities” Such as Springfield Need and Seek Infrastructure Investments**

Springfield, MA - Water main breaks like the one on Main Street last week bring to light the critical importance of our infrastructure. Many of us take for granted the high quality public works and water and sewer services provided by both the City of Springfield and the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission. Inevitably, all infrastructure has a useful life and must be replaced. Both the City of Springfield and the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission have dedicated professionals that plan for the strategic reinvestment in roadways and water and sewer infrastructure that are the foundation of public health and economic growth.

The City and the Water and Sewer Commission both are committed to insuring that our critical infrastructure is properly maintained and replaced when necessary. This is achieved through various systematic and comprehensive assessments utilizing the latest technologies available along with a “boots on the ground” approach. Over the last ten years, the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission has invested approximately \$231 million on capital projects to renew and replace water and sewer infrastructure within a system containing over 1,000 miles of pipeline. These projects have been financed through a combination of revenue, low interest state loans, public financing, and grants.

As was the case on the recent water main break, underground utilities are often extensive, complicated, and old. Each time any work is done in a public street it requires extensive coordination between the City of Springfield Department of Public Works, the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission, Columbia Gas, Verizon, Comcast, Eversource, and other utilities. A tremendous level of coordination and cooperation between agencies and utilities is required in order to keep pace with economic

development, to meet and exceed public health and safety needs, and to properly reinvest in all of our infrastructure. This is further complicated by unfunded federal mandates such as the recent stormwater regulations imposed on the City and the long standing Combined Sewer Overflow program for the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission. The City and the Water and Sewer Commission pursue every available dollar from state and federal agencies to support this work as is evidenced in the \$17 million resiliency grant recently awarded to the City. The Water and Sewer Commission fully accesses the Massachusetts State Revolving Fund (SRF) for low interest loans for water and sewer utility work and has obtained approximately \$116 million in SRF loans and over \$7 million in grants over the last 15 years. Utilization of these grants and programs helps to offset costs to our residents and customers.

The involvement of the Department of Public Works and the Water and Sewer Commission with the MGM development is a good example of how this coordination results in effective utility management. As partners in the development planning stages all utilities performed investigations of their existing infrastructure, what the future demands would be, and what actions would need to be undertaken to reduce the risk of failures once the project was complete. The Water and Sewer Commission alone identified in excess of \$5 million worth of improvements that have already been initiated by MGM, and has undertaken an additional \$2 million worth of work on its own. Other utilities have undertaken repair and replacement projects as well. Through investigation, assessment, prioritization, and risk reduction, each utility has addressed the project area.

Although much of the work performed by Department of Public Works and Water and Sewer Commission employees is “out of site and out of mind” until something goes wrong, there is a tremendous amount of work taking place behind the scenes to plan for the maintenance, renewal, and replacement of all of our critical infrastructure, and to do it responsibly, proactively, and in a sustainable and affordable manner. Will water main breaks and other infrastructure failures continue? Yes they will, that is an inevitable reality across the country. It is our job to see that we prevent as many of these incidents as possible through proper planning, investment, and coordination, which we will continue to do.

Being respectful and mindful of our rate payers, we would welcome federal and/or state funding initiatives to address the aging infrastructure needs of Springfield and other “Gateway Cities” in Massachusetts and in our nation.

Domenic J. Sarno  
Mayor, City of Springfield

Joshua D. Schimmel  
Executive Director, Springfield Water and Sewer  
Commission