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## Stormwater Financing/Utility Starter Kit

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Prepared for:

The 101 Cities and Towns of Greater Boston

DRAFT  
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# Stormwater Financing Module 3: Outreach and Education Program

*Q: Hey man, why should we have to pay a rain tax?*

*A: It's not a rain tax, it's a pollution fee!*

This hypothetical exchange underlines the importance of properly framing the conversation. It is practically impossible to defend a “rain tax” as a worthwhile initiative. A “pollution fee” on the other hand is intuitive and understandable. Pollution after all is a bad thing with real economic, environmental and social costs. Language, message, and education are extremely important components in establishing and implementing a stormwater drainage fee or utility.

## Overview

It is critical to secure both public (residents, property owners) and internal (municipal boards and staff) support for creating a drainage fee. The general public will be directly affected by the implementation of a fee, so they need to fully understand the need for it and accept the concept. In terms of internal support, ultimately a municipality's legislative body will need to approve the utility (via Town Meeting or City Council vote). This means that politics are an essential piece of the puzzle. Municipal boards have stated that in establishing utilities there are “rarely infeasible technical and legal constraints that cannot be overcome.”<sup>4</sup> However, there are numerous political hurdles to jump over.

There are numerous methods for developing an outreach campaign that endorses a drainage fee/stormwater utility. Each method carries with it its own risks and potential liabilities (e.g. lack of support from the Board of Selectmen, persuasive and influential citizen opponents, or unsympathetic newspaper articles). For this reason, a well thought-out and targeted internal and external outreach and education program is critical to ensuring the successful implementation of a drainage fee and stormwater utility.

This module focuses on both internal and external outreach strategies that municipalities can employ, with a major emphasis on effective messaging. This is especially important in these difficult economic times when municipal and household budgets are under significant strain.

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<sup>4</sup> National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies. Guidance for Municipal Stormwater Funding. January 2006.

## Internal Outreach: Building Support

In the early stages of developing a fee system, most of the details are not yet worked out. Therefore, it is critically important to identify municipal stakeholders that will support the concept, and ultimately the final proposal.

In addition to seeking these “concept champions,” all involved officials need to understand the basic principles of pollution generated by stormwater, and the critical need for securing long term funding for stormwater management. In addition, these officials also need to understand the development of, and use of a drainage fee (and utility, if applicable), generally. There are a variety of town boards and departments that should be involved, as they ultimately will have some level of responsibility in implementing the fee, including, but not limited to: Public Works, Planning, Conservation, Open Space, and Health Boards/Commissions. In addition, receiving general support by the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager (or Mayor and City Council) is essential as they ultimately make the final decision regarding the approval of a fee.

The following suggested groups and consultants are often found to be very useful in securing widespread support of a drainage fee or utility. The primary advantage of creating these relationships is that one person or department will not have to bear the entire burden of advocating for this funding source from its concept to full implementation, which can be time consuming. It is important to note, again, that all property owners and residents are responsible for the generation of stormwater, therefore there should be a collective sponsorship established from the start of the process.

## Stormwater Management Committee

The primary function of a committee or task force is to coordinate the establishment of a drainage fee and to become the primary educators regarding the importance of establishing this long-term funding source. A Stormwater Management Task Force or Committee, whether its ad-hoc or formalized, can make great strides on an issue since all perspectives are brought together where collective decisions can be made. In such as group, resources can be shared and the burden of facilitating such a large process by one person or department is lifted. In addition, these types of committees have been proven to be very effective time and again in breaking down silos that are prominent in Massachusetts, based on our “home rule” and structured departmental organization.

Establishing a committee that is composed of local government officials, AND community and watershed-based stakeholders is important to ensure diverse perspectives and knowledge is brought to the process. Influential organizations and individuals will need to be brought into the process early as they generally have established relationships with critical businesses and property owners that need to be in support of stormwater financing. For example, Chambers of Commerce, business organizations, and active environmental organizations are often important allies in this campaign. Community representatives know what has worked, or not worked, in the past and often know how best to best engage potential opponents in conversation.

One external task that the advisory committee can help with is determining how extensive the need for public education is. As discussed below, the public education component can range from narrowly tailored to very extensive depending on need, budget, and other resources available. Some communities begin the education campaign with very broad and general information on stormwater; in some ways an extension of the public outreach required under the NPDES permit. Other

communities condense the outreach into a focused phase during the development of the stormwater fund concept. With this approach, details of how the stormwater utility could be structured and how the rate structure could work, are added to the more general topics, particularly the benefits of a sustainable and long term funding source for stormwater problems.

Often times a Town Manager, or other municipal official, makes a formal request for staff to establish an advisory or steering committee to develop options for financing. This entity should be called upon to help establish, and participate in, both the internal and external outreach processes. It is recommended that a work plan is established for the committee, to help guide its work in establishing stormwater financing. In addition, committee leader(s) or executors should be selected in order to most effectively manage and coordinate the group.

There are a number of successful examples of Stormwater groups and committees across the Commonwealth whom have come together for the purpose of working collectively on stormwater management issues, as follows:

- ◆ Town of Ipswich, MA Stormwater Advisory Committee: Is one of the first stormwater management committees within the MAPC Region. Formed prior to the first NPDES Massachusetts General Permit, the Committee developed their own [Coastal Stormwater Remediation Plan](#) to proactively address water quality and quantity issues adversely affecting the Ipswich River. Their current mission is to develop a comprehensive approach to the implementation of the Town’s Stormwater Management Bylaw.
- ◆ Watertown, MA Stormwater Advisory Committee: This seven Member committee comprised of four citizens at large, three Town Manager appointees one Town Council President appointee, meets regularly – similar to other town boards – to perform the following duties:
  - Identify and advocate for stormwater funding through grants and other sources.
  - Develop educational programs to increase public awareness of stormwater management.
  - Perform tasks relevant to assisting the Superintendent of Public Works with the implementation of best practices for stormwater management.
- ◆ City Of Northampton Storm Water Ad-Hoc Advisory Taskforce: this ad-hoc taskforce was formed in 2013 with a specific focus: to recommend “a fair and equitable method to fund stormwater and flood control mandates.” Members were appointed by the Joint Committee of the Department of Public Works and the City Council. Once their recommendations for stormwater funding were accepted by the Council, they did not continue meeting.
- ◆ Town of Orleans, MA Stormwater Task Force: This group came together in 2013 following a Preliminary Town-wide Stormwater Assessment project to identify and rank outfalls with the highest potential pollutant discharges. The Task Force consists of the Highway Manager, Town Planner, Health Agent, Conservation Officer and the Chairperson of the Marine and Freshwater Quality Task Force. It appears that this ad-hoc group will continue to meet to collaborate on stormwater management programs and projects.

## Soliciting Expertise

A content specialist could be solicited to assist in the development of an outreach message or campaign for a fee and/or utility. The content specialist could be a consultant or a municipal staff member to support the local official who is responsible for the overall leadership of program development.

Outside experts can be effective in helping to frame outreach messages and critical discussions. There are quite a few issues that need to be explored, and ultimately understood, by municipal officials such as identifying local nonpoint source issues, stormwater management issues and solutions, and the function and structure of a drainage fee and/or utility. In order to plan effectively for the implementation of a fee structure, it is during this stage that key issues must be surfaced, and critical education regarding stormwater and the importance of a drainage fee be provided. An outside party can ensure equitable group discussions and provide a neutral perspective on contentious issues that may arise between represented departments.

Another form of consultation that may be required is with respect to addressing local politics. A political leader could provide liaison services between those developing the fee system and those whom are to approve it. It is likely that personalities and approaches of people that take on each of these roles will vary due to the difference in mission and perspective. The political liaison could be someone within the municipality (e.g. Town Manager or a Select Board member), a community leader, a political consultant (e.g. from a nonprofit advocacy organization) or even a state Representative or Senator that is involved in local initiatives. This consultant would be brought into the conversation early to understand the pros and cons of adopting a drainage fee and/or utility, in order to best equip them to think strategically about local politics and how to generate support for a stormwater financing system.

## External Outreach: Selling the Concept

Once the stormwater committee/task force is assembled and internal support has been established, the development of an external public education campaign can begin. When designing an external or public outreach campaign, it is important to determine precisely what extent of outreach and level of education that is needed within a community.

Just as the makeup of key stakeholders will vary from town to town, the reasons for establishing a drainage fee or utility will likewise vary. In some communities, flooding and transportation impacts may be the most important problem to address with collected fees. In others, degraded water quality or quantity issues may be the primary motivation for addressing stormwater. Often it will be a combination of factors, but there is generally one or two critical issues that will particularly resonate within a community. The advisory committee can help hone in on the most critical issues and goals for a financing system for a particular municipality. Once goals and objectives have been identified, the committee can begin identifying the primary outreach and education audience, and crafting a message that is tailored towards addressing these particular community needs.

Messaging is one of the most important factors when developing a drainage fee or utility. A helpful public outreach and marketing concept to keep in mind is the “social diffusion theory,” which states that once 15% of a community has adopted a new idea or product, it has the critical mass to spread by its own momentum. This theory reiterates the concept that outreach strategies shouldn’t be aimed at too broad of an audience, but rather carefully targeted to audiences that would then perpetuate outreach and education messages.

In terms of crafting an effective message, it is important to keep in mind that, generally, stormwater is poorly understood or not often thought about by the general public due to its “covert” nature. Water quality issues are not typically visible to the naked, untrained eye (e.g., you can’t normally tell a river is polluted by looking at it). In addition, stormwater runoff itself is typically not visible, particularly after it enters an underground system of engineered pipes. Therefore, the stormwater discussions

typically occur after a significant, and often catastrophic, precipitation event in which there were human impacts such as beach or shellfish closures from polluted runoff or flooding events due to inadequate stormwater management and lack of green infrastructure. Adding to this, asking the public to pay for something that hasn't been paid for in the past – and taken for granted - is a steep task. For these reasons, a well planned education program with the right message is a necessary precondition for public acceptance of a fee.

Self-interest and its antagonist altruism are each strong motivators in society. Two of the most effective approaches are heralding the economic and health benefits of fixing stormwater problems. Shaping the message with an eye towards these motivators by explaining issues of importance to the municipality is critical. For example, if your community is currently motivated by economic development and flooding is a persistent problem, the real costs of property destruction and values lost are effective messages. Finding data that shows costs associated with property loss from flooding can make a compelling case for a stormwater fund or utility to solve these flooding problems. Health and safety for families and children are also hard to argue against. For example, the [Erase the Waste](#) campaign (see Appendices for templates) focuses on the health problems of stormwater pollution as the primary message in a very successful national campaign. The long-standing pollution issues within our watersheds (Merrimack, Ipswich, Sudbury/Concord, Charles, Saugus, Boston Harbor, and Neponset) are finally understood to be direct contributors to adverse health problems of local residents such as increased molds and particulates causing lung diseases, skin rashes and diseases from contact with polluted water, and flood waters causing public safety concerns.

## Three Critical Tasks

There are three broad tasks that need to be completed early on in any public outreach campaign:

1. Identify the make-up of audience and general behaviors,
2. Craft an appropriate message that will resonate with that audience, and
3. Determine the most effective media for communication and interacting with that audience.

Each of these critical steps are outlined in the following sections.

### 1. Identify the Make-up and Behaviors of Your Audience

Communities are made up of a variety of diverse constituencies with varying and often conflicting interests. Any successful public outreach campaign will need to acknowledge this gradation and work to identify the most significant impacts that will resonate with different stakeholders. This type of analytical work early on in the campaign will allow a municipality to customize the public education and outreach activities as needed, to meet situation-specific needs.

Community groups and demographics will vary from town to town, but will generally include several types of groups that include students, business owners, young families, church groups, single adults, elderly and retired individuals. Each of these groups is characterized by different lifestyles, income and education levels, and different ideas and expectations about what their most desired home life and community character should be. Being able to speak cogently and respectfully to each of these



groups without marginalizing the positions of others is a delicate and important skill that can determine the ultimate success of the campaign.

Once your target audiences and their potential roles have been identified, outreach programs should be expanded to utilize social diffusion principles described previously. Perhaps once 15% or more of a community has accepted a specific message, enough interest may have been generated for the message to become self-perpetuating. This is a critical point in time to include these community leaders in education and outreach programs and solicit their assistance in spreading the word through other avenues. For example, it is possible that these champions may be willing to host a community meeting or dinner at the community or senior center, resulting in additional stewardship.

## 2. Craft a Message that will Resonate with the Audience

By understanding what issues are most important to these groups and what information they respond to will help you develop a program that maximizes effectiveness while minimizing unnecessary efforts and costs. The following list provides some example questions to ask when developing your public education program:

- ◆ What different age groups are prominent in the community that should be identified as target audiences (e.g., schoolchildren, high school students or elderly)?
- ◆ Where does most of the community's runoff come from and what are the primary pollutants? For Example: 1) Are dog parks and walks not cleaned appropriately causing high bacteria levels in surface waters? 2) Are residents using inappropriate or excessive amounts of lawn care products creating excess nutrients in waterways? Identifying these issues and causes will help identify the types of community behaviors that must be addressed.
- ◆ What associated environmental issues are stakeholder groups most concerned about? (E.g. surface or groundwater pollution, green/open space conservation, water recycling and reuse, etc.).
- ◆ To what extent are community members already familiar with stormwater runoff and problems associated with it?
- ◆ What types of media are utilized by different groups in the community? (I.e., Elderly residents might get their news from local papers while young adults and students prefer the internet and mobile devices.)
- ◆ Are community members interested and typically motivated to participate in informational events such as workshops, community dinners and other events?
- ◆ Are there groups within the community that are interested in actively participating in public education efforts? For example, would high school teachers and students be willing to develop a project or public presentation about stormwater runoff?

In addition to addressing important, resonating community issues, it is important to keep in mind there are three basic messages that must be conveyed in order to build support for a drainage fee/utility:

1. ***Stormwater is a problem that all property owners contribute to.*** This is a crucial introductory message that can help identify consensus across constituencies and build solidarity around a common problem. It is important in any public outreach campaign to identify common interests and shared problems that presuppose any demographic or socio-economic differences. In this regard, it will be incumbent upon campaign leads not to single out any one particular group or



marginalize any of its audiences, but rather make it clear that all groups are responsible for producing runoff and consequently share the responsibility for fixing the problems. It is important to understand and to demonstrate this concept for residents in a tangible and credible way with hard data and relatable anecdotal evidence to help residents understand that this “shared burden” is not merely rhetoric in the service of a marketing gimmick. Common and effective strategies for building this type of consensus can be seen in other public health and environmental campaigns that focus on the cumulative costs of the ongoing problems to tax payers and the comparative ease with which it can be mitigated.

2. ***Efficient and successful stormwater management is critical to the community.*** Building off of the solidarity established in the first step, painting a detailed picture of the risks and dangers associated with the status quo is a crucial next step (e.g. increased flooding, river/stream bank and coastal erosion, polluted surface and groundwater). The use of photographs of deteriorating conditions within the community, and the detailed explanations of the causes and processes responsible, is a very powerful starting point. Successful public health campaigns like anti-smoking efforts and energy conservation campaigns that illustrate the dangerous impact on our health and environments if nothing is done to curb the detrimental behavior responsible for it are helpful precedents to look to for guidance.
3. ***Existing funding and management are not remedying these issues or meeting permit requirements.*** Often, convincing people that there is an imminent problem can be a formidable task, however many times people can be surprisingly receptive to the agenda. Convincing people that a problem exists is only half of the battle, however; convincing people that they will need to make sacrifices and actively contribute to a solution is an entirely different problem. It will be crucial to carefully and clearly explain how much a proposed stormwater utility will cost and where the costs come from. Additionally, explaining where the money will go and allowing residents to easily see the impact of their contributions will be vital. For this phase it is recommended that residents see clear and simple data on the existing expenses for stormwater programs and the existing shortcomings is an important starting point. Properly walking residents through the subsequent needs and costs of the new program is the most immediate and helpful way to conclude any outreach initiative.

### 3. Determine the Most Effective Methods of Communication

There are many outreach techniques ranging from formal public hearings or workshops to television ads and articles in community newspapers. Different populations get their information in different ways. Therefore, it is important to learn about what the most effective and impactful media is for communicating with a town’s different audiences.

For some populations, the only way to include them in the process is by going to them directly. Whether it’s at a church, temple, or community center, getting out into the community is likely to reach a different group of constituents than those that typically attends local government hearings and meetings. For example, building support by holding general information meetings and personal meetings with key business and the Chamber of Commerce organizations is helpful in gaining critical business-sector support for a fee.

According to a recent study conducted by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., video and television ads, as well as local newspaper and community letter ads, are the most helpful and preferred media by the general public. Therefore, three primary templates have been provided, as well as other varying templates for municipal use (see Appendices). There are additional education and outreach

templates developed by both the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#), as well as the [Water Environment Federation](#) that have proven to be quite effective.

A series of proposed general communications steps are provided below. These steps are offered in an order in which would provide the most effective and least controversial approach to engaging the general public.

#### a. Workshops

First providing the general public with an outline of the issues and critical need for a long-term fund, generally, is an important step in getting community attention for the issue, and gaining support. It is up to community leaders and/or the stormwater committee whether a large workshop or symposium or smaller, targeted workshops is most effective in their community. Leaders can judge this on past attendance and participation levels in local campaigns or planning efforts, as well as Town Meetings. Regardless of the meeting approach, it is important that each of the above steps have been taken to determine community behaviors about, and perspectives on, the issue to best create effective materials with clear messages to be presented at the workshops. Also, workshops should be planned with an eye towards allowing attendees to interact and provide feedback – in charette format – in order to best create stewardship regarding the importance of funding stormwater management. Again, at this early stage, it is not necessary to have determined and convey the full details of the fee, rather to start out slowly to gain support of stormwater management, generally, and introduce the need and concept of a fee or utility.

Preparation:

- ✓ Advance and Equitable Notification. It is critical to notify community members using various media types (web postings, email notifications via Board/Department lists, mailing, flyers hung at community centers and shopping areas, local paper announcement, etc.), in a manner compliant with [Massachusetts Open Meeting Law](#) (if applicable), and accounting for minority languages used in the community (e.g. translated flyers and/or web postings).
- ✓ Americans with Disabilities Act Requirements. Event planners should check with their legal councils or other advisors to ensure they are complying with ADA meeting requirements (e.g. handicapped accessible meeting location, voice-activated online materials for sight-impaired citizens, sign-language and/or translation services at meetings, if needed). Data available within a municipality's Council on Aging, Town Clerk, or sometimes the Planning Department would inform event planners about these needs. The [ADA Title II Technical Assistance Manual](#) provides guidance to local officials regarding requirements, including communications and accessibility.
- ✓ Prepared Agenda. It is often advisable to distribute or at least post and advertize an agenda prior to the meeting, if possible so that attendees are prepared for what's to come.
- ✓ Refreshments! If budget allows, it is always important to provide attendees with some refreshments. Sharing food or a meal typically breaks down social barriers and lightens inhibitions people may have come with.
- ✓ Workshop Ground Rules. Reminding attendees to be respectful of others opinions and ideas, to allow others to talk, and to not behave insolently, to name a few, will be important too ensuring effective communication occurs.
- ✓ Limited "Lecturing" / More Participation. As mentioned, in order to ensure public support and interest, it will be important for audience members to not feel "lectured." Providing community members with the space to air concerns and make their voices heard regarding the issue at hand is just as important as providing education on the subject. [MAPC's Civic Engagement Guide](#) provide further explanation of this critical concept of *cultivating*

stakeholders and provides guidance about determining what level of engagement to include in your workshop and outreach program.

#### **b. Press Articles**

Assistance from the press can be a critical factor in building support for a stormwater drainage fee/utility. A strong, singular voice is important in ensuring the success of any campaign and a skilled spokesperson should be identified to be the primary point person to the media. Typically a town employee plays this role. Favorable editorials and even letters to the editor from well respected community leaders can play a big role in publicizing the issue of stormwater and building support for addressing it. It should be noted that, on the other hand, negative stories and headlines can greatly undermine an initiative like this. The spokesperson's job is to provide factual and timely information. Therefore, it is important for the municipal stormwater lead or committee to take a proactive role with the press in the very early stages of the development of a fee or utility. A series of articles or editorials outlining the issue, prior to providing any details regarding what is proposed for the fund, will go a long way in both building a rapport with the reporter and publication, as well as "prime" readers about the issue.

#### **c. Follow-up Events**

It will be important to schedule events or hold standard meetings (possibly during a scheduled planning or conservation meeting) to follow-up on the initial outreach provided, as described in subsection a. It is important for the coordinator of these events to seek assistance from the Planning department to determine the most effective meeting strategies. For example, the Planning Department can offer guidance regarding what times of the month and day work best for varying audiences. They may also have an example to offer regarding the set-up of one of their most successful or widely attended meeting or event. In the absence of planning assistance, MAPC staff is available to help in planning an event and often times could include a presentation on the subject within a Subregional or Regional event already planned. A city or town's recreation or conservation committee members should be consulted to see if there may be opportunities to piggy-back on an upcoming event. It is important to think strategically regarding what type of meeting or event would motivate the public to attend. Again, refreshments always help!

In terms of focusing the information presented in this follow-up event, it will be important to provide a refresher regarding the need (water quality/quantity issues and how they are related to stormwater), the lack of long-term funding and management available to address these issues, brief background on the town's efforts in establishing a drainage fee and the rationale, a concise explanation of the proposed approach in laymen's terms, and then time for discussion or a group consultation on particular items. Attendees will want to feel empowered that they are being asked for their feedback rather than preached to about the problems at hand and their responsibility to fixing them. Again, creating ownership of the issue is nearly as critical an outcome as receiving support for the fee.

#### **d. Final Messages**

After some consensus has been reached regarding the establishment of a fee, it is important to provide the public with final information regarding proposed rates and administrative structure. It is critical to provide clear information regarding what has been decided and who to contact with questions. Materials developed for public consumption should provide a positive spin on the issue; explaining how the proposed drainage fee will finally provide the town with the funds required to make water quality improvements (thereby ensuring beaches are not closed and rivers are clean for

recreation and fishing), implement recharge systems that replenish stream flow and – in some cases – drinking water sources, and reduce flooding. As noted above, the most effective community media include video and local newspaper articles (web and print). Therefore, these final messages should utilize these media types. Local cable stations can be helpful in providing a media outlet for cable television announcements. This information should occur far in advance of a council/board hearing or town meeting vote on the proposal. Once the City Council, Board of Selectmen or Town Meeting hearing is scheduled, it should be widely publicized, with outreach targeted towards supporting entities. Soliciting supporting testimony from individuals or organizations that may be willing to speak at a hearing, would be highly advantageous.

#### **e. Fee / Utility Notification**

Once the drainage fee and/or utility has been approved, the general public should be notified in advance of implementation. Notification within local newspapers and inserted flyers into town/city-wide bills or other mailings (e.g. water bill). There should also information uploaded to the city/town's website regarding the passage of a drainage fee.

#### **f. Fee “Test Run”**

Once the details of the drainage fee or utility have been approved and the billing system is ready to be implemented, it's advisable to conduct a test run. Approximately 6 months before the first bills is issued, it is suggested that a new utility or stormwater department issue sample bills comprised of addresses from the advisory committee. This way any glitches can be uncovered internally, prior to public receipt, preventing surprise. The utility's staff will need to be trained in how to answer questions and complaints about the new fee prior to the first real bills being issued. On the day the first bills are mailed, a well-publicized ground-breaking should be considered to explain the issues and need for the fee. It's this type of action that helps people connect the fee to what it will accomplish in the real world such as a capital construction project to reduce flooding.

#### **g. Ongoing Education and Reporting**

After the fee has been implemented successfully (typically after the first billing cycle) and/or the utility is up and running, there is still a need for ongoing education and transparent reporting on the program's activities. Ongoing education is needed to maintain support for the utility and there will always be a need to remind people about the connections between their yards and streets and their lakes, rivers, and ocean. It is helpful and encouraging to update residents on the success and impact the new utility has had and is having throughout the year as well. Reminders on best practices for pet waste disposal, impervious surfaces, car washing, and the proper disposal of litter and hazardous waste will be needed over the long term. Bill inserts, school curricula, and newsletters are some techniques that can help get the word out. Additionally, many towns around the country have recently begun creating pages on their websites that have regularly updated information and data on the performance and progress of certain programs and services. This information is often linked to and syndicated through towns' social media presence as well to broaden its reach and impact. Many towns have always published information online and in papers on the performance of schools and state of the municipality's budget, but the increased reliance on internet services has induced a demand by residents and managers to have access to “real-time” and instant information that is easily accessible. Regular updates on the status of utility program and notable projects should be routinely published on a diverse range of digital media for residents to easily find and comment on.

Publicizing successful projects and making sure rate-payers understand what their fees are being used for will reduce the prospect of attempts at pulling the plug on the utility. This communication

can occur in a variety of ways, such as through regular updates to the Town website, through newsletters, bill inserts, or newspaper articles.

## Key Examples to Consider

The examples provided illustrate two successful education campaigns that are offered as models to emulate. Both examples highlight key points of success for their campaigns. Their successful outreach templates have been included in the Appendices to be altered (if needed) and utilized in Massachusetts campaigns to support a drainage fee and utility.

Templates from other broad, mass media campaigns regarding stormwater pollution that will be useful in designing a public education campaign have also been provided in the Appendices, as follows:

- ◆ [“Think Again, Think Blue”](#): a campaign that the Massachusetts Bays National Estuary Program created, borrowing from San Diego’s Think Blue mass media campaign, which is now managed by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.
- ◆ [EPA’s Public Education and Outreach Toolbox](#).
- ◆ Massachusetts [Stormwater Matters](#) campaign: provides various outreach products for members, managed by the SuAsCo Watershed Community Council.

## Newton, MA

During the development of Newton’s stormwater fund, the City took proactive steps to educate the public on stormwater, and the concept of a fund to address water quality issues and properly manage stormwater on impervious surfaces. This greatly helped to facilitate public acceptance of the utility. First, their outreach program began with the publicizing of informative articles in their local newspaper, *Newton Tab* (see Appendices).

In addition, a local college student prepared a five-minute video segment, which aired on the City’s local cable television program, about local stormwater issues in relation to the proposed fee (Newton News). Last, prior to the first stormwater bill, the City sent out an insert in water bills announcing the fund, outlining costs and providing an explanation of the funds need and use.

A critical “selling” point was the support shown by the local watershed association: Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) and EPA Region 1. These organizations undertook the following important efforts to show their support for Newton’s fund, which truly assisted in its City-wide acceptance:

- ◆ EPA and CRWA sent letters to Newton’s DPW director in support of the stormwater fee; describing critical water quality issues within the Charles River and the significant mitigation measures that the fee would finance.
- ◆ CRWA sent out an action alert to Newton resident members, which included basic information about the proposed stormwater fee including rates and billing structure. It also encouraged residents to support the fee, as they did, by contacting their board of aldermen, and offered talking points that described how the proposed fee was fair.

## Charlottesville, VA

Although Charlottesville, Virginia is not a New England case study, we have found it to be a very successful model of a larger campaign; inclusive of robust partnerships, varying media messages, and a transparent process. Similar to Newton, MA, Charlottesville also engaged their local clean water NGO partnership; Choose Clean Water Coalition, to help define the issue's, program goals, and identify opposition and supporters. The Coalition understood that the message needed to appeal to the City Council's primary concerns, as well as to generate visible support for the fee/utility from their constituents. Therefore, partners worked with a communications firm to identify the issues that the Council cared about: public health, flooding, aging infrastructure and civic pride. The primary campaign message was:

*“Stormwater management is a must for Charlottesville citizens because continuing to ignore the problem will put property values and public health at risk. It's a straightforward issue with a simple solution.”*

This message was boiled-down to the following campaign slogan and logo: *“What Happens Below Matters Above: Keep Charlottesville Clean.”* This slogan was applied to all campaign outreach materials, including:

- ◆ Two-full page ads placed in local papers, co-signed by a coalition of diverse local and regional supporters.
- ◆ A concise one-page fact sheet distributed to coalition members' networks, at meetings and outreach events, and shared with the City for its official outreach.
- ◆ Campaign stickers worn by supporters attending the public comment meetings. This is an important and easy way to show broad support for your issue. Despite a few opponents who spoke out against the proposal, council members were able to discern that the vast majority present were there to support the utility proposal.