



City of Cambridge

Θ-4
Calendar Item # 4
FIRST IN COUNCIL
~~June 9, 2025~~
June 16, 2025

COUNCILLOR ZUSY
COUNCILLOR SIDDIQUI
VICE MAYOR MCGOVERN
COUNCILLOR WILSON

- WHEREAS: Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) occur when wet weather overwhelms sewer and stormwater systems, causing untreated wastewater — including raw human waste and harmful pathogens such as E. coli — to be discharged into local waterways; and
- WHEREAS: Each year, tens of millions of gallons of untreated sewage is discharged into the Alewife Brook, a tributary of the Mystic River, which flows into Boston Harbor, impacting surrounding densely-populated neighborhoods including environmental justice communities. In 2023 alone, 26 million gallons were discharged into Alewife Brook, making it “the site of the highest concentration of untreated sewage pollution in Greater Boston; and
- WHEREAS: The City of Cambridge is currently working in coordination with the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) and the City of Somerville to draft a new CSO Long-Term Control Plan (LTCP), with draft recommendations due by the end of 2025 and final recommendations by January 2027; and
- WHEREAS: The City of Cambridge has been working diligently and investing significant finds to address this issue and
- WHEREAS: The planned demolition of the Alewife Garage and redevelopment of the MBTA Alewife Complex presents an extraordinary opportunity for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to improve current deplorable conditions in Alewife Brook and to take a significant step towards helping to fulfill its Boston Harbor cleanup commitments; and
- WHEREAS: The 10-13-acre site of the garage and surrounding property includes MWRA’s MWR003 CSO regulator and outfall and Cambridge’s CAM401A outfall — both outfalls together accounting for the area’s highest volume discharges of untreated sewage which courses through MBTA-owned land into Alewife Brook — thus the project site is ideally located to support green and gray infrastructure that could greatly reduce future sewage overflows; and
- WHEREAS: Green stormwater infrastructure on this site would not only help capture and filter stormwater — improving water quality and reducing the frequency and volume of CSO sewage discharges — but also reduce urban heat, absorb carbon, and improve air quality; and
- WHEREAS: These improvements would also expand public access to open space, improve neighborhood livability, and boost public health in the Alewife area — especially important as new housing is anticipated in the redevelopment of this site; and

WHEREAS: The current [MBTA Alewife T Complex RFP](#) merely states that the City's request for on-site storage will be "evaluated," rather than treated as a core requirement:

"In connection with its long-term planning for the CSO [CAM401A], the City has requested that the MBTA accommodate storage on the site of the Garage. That request will be evaluated as a part of the Project."; now therefore be it

ORDERED: The Cambridge City Council go on record urging Governor Maura Healey, the MBTA Board of Directors and General Manager Phillip Eng to:

1. Immediately amend the MBTA's Alewife T Complex RFP and rewrite it in collaboration with the MWRA, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Department of Public Health (DPH), the City of Cambridge, Green Cambridge, local residents and other stakeholders, to ensure that this project plays a central role in significantly decreasing raw sewage discharges into Alewife Brook;
2. Recommend the redevelopment to include as much green stormwater infrastructure as possible, as well as a major underground storage tank to help control CSO discharge; and
3. Convene all relevant parties to ensure that the Commonwealth, the City of Cambridge, the MWRA, the MBTA, and the selected developer are able not only to deliver transportation and housing improvements, but also leverage this state-owned land to make meaningful progress in addressing this public health threat; and be it further

ORDERED: The Council request that the CM work with relevant departments regarding future zoning relief on this development project to include city and council goals of addressing the CSOs, providing housing and prioritizing a commuter rail stop.

ORDERED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to Governor Maura Healey, the DCR, the MBTA, the MWRA, the DPH and to Cambridge's State House delegation.

In City Council June 16, 2025.

Adopted by a ye and nay vote:-

Yeas 6; Nays 3; Absent 0

Attest:- Paula M. Crane, Interim City Clerk

A true copy;

ATTEST:-



Paula M. Crane, Interim City Clerk

History:
06/09/25

City Council

CHARTER RIGHT

Next: 06/16/25