

DRAFT

September 5, 2024

The Honorable Maura Healey, Esq.
Massachusetts State House
Office of the Governor
24 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Healey,

The Town of Arlington Select Board, in conjunction with the Town Manager, respectfully sends this letter regarding the MBTA's proposed redevelopment of the Alewife Station. The Town recognizes the state's opportunity to transform and reinvigorate the Alewife area, as well as address longstanding impacts of the station's current design and landscape on Arlington. However, at this initial stage of the project, Arlington must take the opportunity to express its grave concerns about the harmful potential impact that the project may have on our community by exacerbating the long standing issue with combined sewer overflows ("CSOs") that have plagued our community.

Arlington requests that the power of the Governor's office is harnessed to coordinate efforts by the MBTA, MWRA DCR and the Massachusetts DEP so that the detrimental impact of CSOs upon the Arlington community is considered as part of any proposed development plan at the site. If considered at this early stage, environmentally friendly methods of CSO mitigation can be planned and implemented so that there are no new outflows that create increased raw sewage flowing into Arlington's waterways and neighborhoods.

For decades, the discharge and flooding of sewage from CSOs has had a serious impact upon Arlington. According to the MWRA, a staggering 200 million or more gallons of combined sewage was discharged into the Mystic River and Alewife Brook in 2023 during nearly 100 distinct CSO discharges. When the Alewife Brook overflows, untreated CSO sewer discharges floods parks, yards and houses of residents in the surrounding area. The sewage discharge has also flooded area streets, leaving pedestrians to traverse hazardous, put more bluntly, gross conditions.

The Alewife redevelopment project has the potential to worsen the impacts of the most damaging CSO in Cambridge – Outfall Number CAM401A. Last year, this one CSO outfall, situated in very close proximity to the proposed project, discharged over 20 million gallons of untreated sewage pollution. The 2023 discharge from CAM401A significantly exceeded the

permitted annual total for the entirety of all Alewife Brook CSOs. Any redevelopment project at the Alewife Station site, especially one that includes a significant increase in housing, will only increase this problem if mitigation efforts are not considered now, before planning begins in earnest. Solutions like sewage storage under the Alewife site, the inclusion of an adjacent storm water wetland, more separated sewers and most importantly, no new connections to the combined sewers, must be considered now, before the opportunity to implement them is lost.

Given the proximity of Arlington and its residents to untreated sewage discharge from CSO flooding, including from Somerville and Cambridge, the Alewife Station redevelopment is a critical project that will impact Arlington for decades. As a result, the Town respectfully requests that your Honor convene relevant state agencies to consider how the proposed redevelopment can best serve the health, safety and environmental needs of Arlington and surrounding communities.

The Town of Arlington is grateful for the MBTA's commitment to redeveloping a critical transportation, commercial and residential hub in the Alewife area. However, we must ask that that this redevelopment consider and plan for the potentially disastrous impact that its sewage will have on Arlington. We look forward to learning more about this proposed redevelopment and how it can improve the surrounding areas, including Arlington.

Sincerely,

Stephen W. DeCoursey
Chair, Arlington Select Board

cc: The Honorable Kim Driscoll
The Honorable Cindy F. Friedman
The Honorable Sean Garballey
The Honorable David M. Rogers
Town of Arlington Select Board
James Feeney, Town Manager
Michael Cunningham, Town Counsel
Jaclyn Munson, Deputy Town Counsel