

1996 - 2000 Cutting Back

The Advisory Board Combats Rising Water and Sewer Rate Assessments

Not all major costs of the Authority were court-ordered, many projects were done to improve the system and ensure quality water and wastewater services could be provided with no interruptions in service. An example is the MetroWest Tunnel, which provides redundant water supply transmission to MWRA customers. Construction began in June of 1996 but because it was not considered to be court mandated it was not eligible for Debt Service Assistance. By December 1996 the Advisory Board had successfully petitioned to make the project eligible, gaining vital funding to offset the cost to ratepayers.

Also, in 1996 the Advisory Board finished the drawn out battle over the costs of the Clinton Wastewater Treatment Plant by securing \$4 million from the Legislature as part of a settlement agreement of the lawsuit against the Town of Clinton. While this was a great victory at the time for the Advisory Board, continued attempts by the state to push off expenses of this facility onto the MWRA have led to various battles.

While major accomplishments were reached during this period – namely, transferring South System flows from Nut Island to Deer Island – the impacts of rising costs on communities and ratepayers reached almost extreme levels and the Advisory Board was once again forced to take the role of “fiscal watchdog.” In 1999, the Advisory Board recommended cutting \$10.8 million from the MWRA’s budget and \$91.9 million from the MWRA’s capital plan to combat rising rate assessments. These cuts led to conversations about how to reduce spending through personnel costs (personnel study) and capital projects (5-year CIP spending cap). *(see next period)*

