2016 was another productive year for our department as we continued to make steady, consistent improvements to our system. Tata & Howard, our engineering consultant, completed a Water System Asset Management Plan on our behalf. The plan was funded by a Water Infrastructure Planning and Technical Assistance Grant from the MassDEP for the total amount of $25,200. The plan will assist the department in determining and prioritizing needed improvements to ensure dependable operation and management of the system into the future. The Ely Road water storage tanks both underwent their DEP mandated 5 year inspections in the spring and were found to be in excellent condition with only minor preventative maintenance recommended for the steel to concrete seal on Tank #1. These inspections are extremely thorough and include a detailed look at not only the exterior but also the interior using a submersible robotic camera. The hydrant flushing program which ensures our water quality is at its best, took place in September with no major troubles. We reached another milestone in our quest to convert our maps and service records into a digital format and incorporate them into a geographical information system (GIS) as the water and sewer system piping maps were finally completed.

In additional water operations activities, we repaired nine water service leaks and two water main breaks, updated / replaced nineteen water services from the main to the curb stop, assisted in the replacement of five services from the curb stop to the house, replaced two hydrants, capped two abandoned services at the main and added one new connection to the water system. A 121 year old valve at the corner of Lower Hampden and Highland was repacked and six street valve boxes were replaced throughout the system. We pumped 145,263,000 gallons of drinking water from the town wells at an average rate of 396,893 gallons per day. Our peak day was September 10, 2016 when we pumped 918,000 gallons. We recorded 32.76” of precipitation at our Palmer Road Station and responded to 305 Dig-Safe requests throughout our area of responsibility.

Major wastewater news for 2016 included the completion of the Hospital Road Pump Station Rehabilitation Project. Barbato Construction of Middleborough, MA was chosen as the General Contractor and work began in March. The project consisted of replacing all internal wastewater piping, valves, pumps, motors, electrical control panels, variable frequency drives, wiring, flowmeter and pH probe for a total cost of $800,000. This was quite a daunting task as the pump station had to be taken out of service to facilitate the replacement of all those components and the wastewater flow could not stop. Barbato installed a temporary electrical service and brought in a self-contained portable sewage pumping system so our existing building could be bypassed. The flow continued without interruption through the temporary system allowing the contractor to essentially gut our building and install the new equipment. Work proceeded at a brisk pace and by mid-July the building was back in service with all the new equipment on-line. We are extremely pleased with the outcome of this project and look forward to many more years of service from this well constructed pump station. Funding for our project was provided by USDA consisting of $200,000 in grant funds and a low interest loan (2.75%) for the remaining $600,000. We pumped a total of 128,586,000 gallons of wastewater to the Palmer Water Pollution Control Facility for treatment at an average rate of 351,327 gallons per day. One new connection was added to the sewer system, one sewer service was replaced from the property line to the house and we assisted in the repair of one connection on private property.

The Commission and staff of the Water and Sewer Department would like to thank all of the Town Departments and officials for their continued support. Special thanks go to Dorothy P. Jenkins and Kathy Carr at the Collector’s Office for their superior collection efforts throughout the year. We are also especially grateful to the Highway, Cemetery, Police and Fire Departments for providing their assistance during the year. In closing, we most of all wish to thank our water and sewer customers for their patience and support as we strive to maintain and improve the water and sewer systems to provide you the best service possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Marshall L. Harris, Chairman
Joseph M. Prior, Vice Chairman
Paul C. DeMaio, Clerk

BOARD OF WATER AND SEWER COMMISSIONERS