

Offered by Councilor Kenzie Bok



## CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

### ORDER FOR A HEARING ON INCREASING GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY AT BOSTON WATER & SEWER AND THE CITY OF BOSTON

- WHEREAS:* In 2019, the City of Boston proposed a Climate Action Plan that places climate change preparedness and carbon neutrality at the forefront of said plan; *and*
- WHEREAS:* The appointment of Kate England as the new Director of Green Infrastructure demonstrates the city's commitment to increase Green Stormwater Infrastructure in the City of Boston; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Boston is lagging significantly in comparison to other cities by continuing to rely on traditional grey stormwater infrastructure and must greatly accelerate our use of Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) in order to meet our climate resilience goals; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Boston maintains one of the oldest and largest traditional gray stormwater systems, with half of the stormwater pipes predating the 1930s, but only 80% of of stormwater is able to be collected by these storm drains, signaling that our current system lacks capacity; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Combined sewer overflows (CSOs), which are a significant pollution concern, can be reduced by utilizing GSI to remove stormwater from combined storm/sewer systems in Boston; *and*
- WHEREAS:* The Boston Water and Sewer Commission (BWSC) has expressed that the current gray stormwater infrastructure, which includes catch basins and an underground pipes system, are not equipped to deal with the largest storms, often resulting in several feet of flooding, and can only deal with several inches of rain in a 24 hour period; *and*
- WHEREAS:* By 2050, about 7% of the city could experience stormwater flooding on a regular basis, which our current gray stormwater system is not prepared to handle; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Investing in, installing, and maintaining soil-water-plant based features that store and treat stormwater runoff, known as GSI, will help prepare Boston for increased frequency and intensity of storms, as well as rising sea levels due to climate change and will increase our current stormwater infrastructure capacity; *and*

- WHEREAS:* GSI can contribute to our economy through the creation of new jobs, is less costly than the gray stormwater infrastructure alternative, and can save hundreds of millions of dollars by preventing stormwater damage; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Philadelphia’s new GSI plan will cost \$1.2 billion over 25 years, compared with the \$6 billion a gray infrastructure would have cost; *and*
- WHEREAS:* GSI decreases demand on our municipal storm/sewer systems, reduces the urban heat island effect, can sequester carbon, and can eliminate the need for salt and other ice melt substances that harm our roads during the winter season; *and*
- WHEREAS:* There are an abundance of locations where GSI should be prioritized, including existing construction and retrofit projects, curb bump-outs, street re-designs, and parks capital projects; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Requiring private developers to install GSI, while a positive step, is insufficient and will not result in the added stormwater capacity our city needs; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Municipalities that have implemented GSI programs have had significant successes in creating this infrastructure by adopting siting assessment plans, such as Montreal, where 35,000 plants and 38 vegetated basins have been integrated into streetscapes to help with stormwater runoff, and Philadelphia that successfully installed GSI at 800 sites around the city that keep 2.7 billion gallons of polluted water out of rivers; *and*
- WHEREAS:* GSI can be maintained by city departments by training current employees, hiring qualified new employees, including graduates of the Boston PowerCorps program, and implementing maintenance checklists; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Our communities can also play a large role in these developments since schools, churches, and local organizations can develop their own small scale GSI projects, that will foster a connection to the environment; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Boston has great potential to become a model city for GSI implementation, but must act now to meet the climate resilience and stormwater management goals set forward by the city and prepare the city for the intensifying impacts of climate change; *NOW THEREFORE BE IT*
- ORDERED:* That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss the options for Green Stormwater Infrastructure in the city of Boston, including representatives and experts from the Boston Water and Sewer Commission, the Environment Department, the Public Works Department, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Boston Transportation Department, local environmental advocates, and the public be invited to testify.

Filed on: August 4, 2022