

From: Melissa Braga <MBraga@tewksbury-ma.gov>

Sent: Friday, February 28, 2025 11:41 AM

To: Kevin Hardiman <khardiman@tewksbury-ma.gov>

Cc: Mark Kratman <MKratman@tewksbury-ma.gov>; Steven Sadwick <ssadwick@tewksbury-ma.gov>; John Curran <jcurran@tewksbury-ma.gov>

Subject: Request for Information on Tewksbury's Water Fluoridation

Importance: High

Hi Kevin,

I hope this email finds you well. I am seeking detailed information regarding the fluoridation of Tewksbury's public water supply, both from a health and cost perspective, as well as the processes involved.

This information is being gathered for our upcoming Board of Health public forum, and I would like to have as much relevant information as possible to ensure a well-informed discussion. Specifically, I would appreciate details on the following:

1. Implementation & History

- When was fluoridation first approved in Tewksbury? The information I have shows that fluoridation of the water supply was approved by a ballot vote on 11-6-1984. Yes – 6,196; No – 3,994
- Were there any public votes or referendums regarding its implementation or continuation? See answer to previous question.
- Have there been any discussions or reconsiderations in recent years? The DPW has not had any discussions regarding changes to the fluoridation.

2. Fluoride Levels & Testing

- What is the current fluoride level in our water supply? We target for the recommended 0.6-0.8 ppm range, but ideally we are shooting for 0.7 ppm.
- How often is fluoride tested? We have a third party perform a monthly test comparison and we sample the distribution system weekly which are outlined on the monthly report submitted to the DEP. Our SCADA online monitoring system and operator conducted laboratory tests collect and report fluoride data daily as well. We have to submit a monthly report to the DEP for all sampling periods (monthly, weekly, daily).
- What methods are used to test fluoride levels, and are those methods considered the most accurate and up-to-date? We use Standard Methods 4500-F-C: Ion-Selective Electrode Method. This method is still widely used in the industry and is the common choice for water quality testing.
- Have there been any instances of fluoride levels exceeding recommended limits? There have been no exceedance of that I am aware. We've actually been on the lower end of the above-mentioned range. Recently the DEP reached out requesting us to increase our levels to get closer to 0.7 ppm because we were closer to 0.5 ppm. We've been slowly increasing the dosage out of an abundance of caution to not overdose.

3. **Cost & Procurement**

- What is the annual cost to the town for purchasing and adding fluoride to the water? The cost for purchasing fluoride in FY24 was \$13,147.90, which is 2.1% of the WTP chemical budget. The budget amount in FY25 is \$15,876. The cost for adding the fluoride is difficult to enumerate since it is just a small part of the larger treatment train at the WTP.
- Where does the town source its fluoride from, and what is the chemical composition of the fluoride used? The Town sources fluoride from Harcros Chemicals, Inc. The procurement of chemicals at the WTP are done through the Northeast/Merrimack Valley Chemical Consortium. The chemical name is hydrofluorosilicic acid, 23% strength.
- Are there any associated costs with maintenance, monitoring, or adjustments to fluoride levels? Yes, but similar to what was stated above, it is a small part of the much larger operation and maintenance program at the WTP.

4. **Health & Safety Considerations**

- Has the town conducted or reviewed any recent health impact studies related to fluoridation? Some information was collected in 2013 (see attached).
- Have there been any local concerns or documented health effects related to fluoride exposure? Not of which I am aware.
- What precautions are taken to prevent over-fluoridation? Precautions taken to prevent over-fluoridation include having the SCADA system programmed with high and low alarm settings for monitoring daily measurements, our operators measure the fluoride dosage daily, and our weekly and monthly testing of the distribution system, and the DEP review of our monthly report.

5. **Alternative Options & Policy Considerations**

- What would be the projected cost and feasibility of offering fluoride separately to residents who wish to receive it (e.g., fluoride drops, dispensers, or specific distribution points)? I do not know what this cost would be. This is not something we have looked into previously.
- Have there been discussions about offering an opt-out solution for those who prefer non-fluoridated water? As far as I know this discussion has not occurred.
- What would be the process for Tewksbury to reconsider or remove fluoride from its water supply, should the community express interest? I am not certain what would be required. I recommend discussing that with the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager.

6. **Other Municipal and Statewide Trends**

- Have any nearby towns or Massachusetts communities recently removed fluoride from their water? I am not aware of any nearby towns recently removing fluoride from their treated water supply.
- What process did they follow, and what were the key factors in their decision? N/A

I would greatly appreciate any documents, reports, or resources available on these topics. If there is a specific department or individual better suited to address these questions, I would appreciate being directed accordingly. You can find our Consumer Confidence reports [here](#), which discusses fluoride in the Town's drinking water.

Thank you for your time and assistance. I look forward to your response.

In health,

Melissa Braga, BSN, RN

Tewksbury Board of Health, Chair

Phone: 978-973-0093