



**NATICK BOARD OF HEALTH**  
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TO: Karen Adelman-Foster, Chair  
Natick Select Board

FROM: James M. White, Jr.  
Director of Public Health

RE: PFAS

DATE: April 20, 2021

As Director of the Natick Health Department and representative of the Natick Board of Health, I appreciate this opportunity to offer my support for the capital request to fund a granular activated carbon filtration system for the Springvale Wells.

Studies have shown that the man-made chemicals per and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) may pose potentially toxic effects on humans, including possible links to cancer, immune disorders, in the development of fetuses and young children. PFAS are also, what has been determined to be a “forever substance” that does not break down in the environment. Over time, PFAS has found its way through the environment and is now present in groundwater. Recent testing has detected PFAS in the Town of Natick’s drinking water wells.

The state of Massachusetts Safe Drinking Water Act, under the guidance of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), has historically taken a more conservative approach by setting standards for substances at a more stringent level than federal standards. PFAS are no exception as the EPA set the PFAS “advisory” Maximum Contamination Level (MCL) at no greater than 70 parts per trillion (ppt), whereas Massachusetts has set the state’s standard at the more conservative MCL of 20 ppt.

The Board of Health’s preventive approach has always been to take the best course that would protect the community as a whole. Therefore, the best method to address this issue is by removing the PFAS to safe or, if possible, a non-detectable level. The most widely used and cost effective method to do so is through granular activated carbon filtration. The level of PFAS detected in the Natick water to date is slightly above the state standard and is relatively low (24 ppt). The granular activated carbon method has proven to be an effective treatment of reducing the levels of PFAS as found in the Natick water supply.

Natick should be commended for adopting early proactive testing for PFAS and as such is one of the first communities in the Commonwealth to be put on notice by DEP to bring the drinking water into compliance with the state standards. It is likely many more may soon follow once testing becomes widespread. Now is the time to take action to not only protect the public as soon as possible, but also to avoid potentially higher demand for treatment supplies. The activated carbon filtration system is known to be a cost-effective method for removing PFAS from water supplies compared to other methods.

Your support in this matter is greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

Cc: Linda Wollschlager, Chair, Natick Finance Committee  
Robert Rooney, Interim Town Administrator  
Donald J. Breda, Chair, Natick Board of Health