



Advocacy & Accountability

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Thursday, June 12, 2025

Hybrid Meeting

10:00 AM

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

A. Roll Call Attendance

A commencing roll call voted as follows:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Here (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Here (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Here (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Here (remote)
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Here
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Here
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	Here
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Here (remote)

Also in attendance:

Christine Bennett, Nathan Coté, Matthew Romero, Keira Kishnani, Lou Taverna, Joe Foti, Colleen Rizzi, Matthew Horan, Melissa Murphy, Michael Smith, Chris Haley, Christopher Cole, Karen Rose-Gillis, Carolyn Francisco Murphy, Bradley Jones, Paul Silva, Matt Kraunelis, Jane Wellman, Sharon Angstrom

B. Reading entrance fee request- review of MWRA analysis

The Town of Reading formally requested reimbursement for a portion of the entrance fee it paid when joining the MWRA system. This request stems from Reading's belief that it paid for a higher volume of water than it has actually used. Reading's original entrance fee was based on a projection of 766 million gallons per year, but their actual average water usage has been about 608 million gallons per year. This discrepancy resulted in what Reading characterized as an overpayment of approximately \$2.2 million, and the Town is seeking a refund for this difference. Chris Haley, Chair of the Reading Select Board, presented the case, emphasizing that Reading's water rates are significantly higher than those of other MWRA member communities. He pointed out that Reading's entrance fee was much higher than that of communities such as Burlington, whose fee was \$4.4 million for a smaller projection of 324 million gallons. Mr. Haley framed this as a fairness issue, arguing that Reading's current high rates are a direct result of the entrance fee burden. He asserted that Reading's payment represented about 44% of all entrance fees collected from member communities, making their residents bear a disproportionate share of the system's costs. MWRA staff later clarified that Reading's share was closer to 35% of total fees, which was consistent with Reading's proportion of system flow, but Mr. Haley maintained that the Town was unfairly burdened and reiterated



2 Griffin Way, Suite A, Chelsea, MA 02150



(617) 788-2050



mwra.ab@mwraadvisoryboard.com

mwraadvisoryboard.com

Matthew A. Romero
Executive Director



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that adjusting for the \$2.2 million overpayment would reduce their rates and create a more equitable situation.

Matthew Romero, Executive Director of the Advisory Board, introduced a financial analysis from MWRA staff, highlighting the potential consequences of reimbursing Reading—or any community—for an entrance fee overpayment. Matthew Horan, MWRA Deputy Director, Finance/Treasurer, explained that MWRA has collected approximately \$25.9 million in entrance fees through FY25. Refunding that amount in a single year would add about 8.3% to the projected FY26 water rate increase, which currently stands at 3.9%, pushing the total increase to more than 12%. Even if reimbursements were spread out over several years, they would still add roughly 1% annually to rates. Mr. Horan also noted that about \$5.2 million in entrance fees remain to be collected, and forgiving those assessments would add an additional 0.1% to future rate increases. Mr. Romero emphasized that these figures underscore the significant financial burden such reimbursements could place on MWRA ratepayers and that any decision would require careful consideration.

Colleen Rizzi, Environmental and Regulatory Affairs Director at MWRA, explained that entrance fees are based on the water flow volume each community requests when applying to join the system. These projections are first approved through the state's MEPA process and the Inter-Basin Transfer Act, which regulate the transfer of water across basins. Ms. Rizzi stressed that entrance fees are directly tied to these projected flows and serve as a way for new communities to “buy in” to existing infrastructure that was originally funded by MWRA's founding members, ensuring costs are shared fairly across the system.

The committee also discussed the potential for other communities to seek reimbursement or partial refunds if Reading's request were granted. Mr. Romero noted that while Reading's concerns were taken seriously, any decision in their favor would set a precedent that could have significant financial implications across the MWRA system. MWRA staff emphasized that entrance fees are not designed to be recalculated based on actual usage; rather, they are determined by a community's projected demand at the time of admission. Entrance fees secure the right to draw up to a certain volume of water, regardless of whether that full amount is ultimately used. Staff further noted that the only known precedent for a similar request came from Stoughton in 2017, which was denied on the grounds that entrance fees represent a one-time cost of admission to the system, not an adjustable charge tied to actual consumption.

The Executive Committee generally agreed that reimbursing Reading the full amount of their entrance fee overpayment would be too disruptive and would set a problematic precedent for other communities that have also paid entrance fees. However, there was a willingness to explore partial adjustments, specifically looking at the \$2.2 million difference between the water volume Reading paid for and their actual use. Committee members expressed concerns over the financial impacts on MWRA ratepayers if any changes were made, but also indicated a potential path forward if the request could be structured in a way that minimized financial disruption.

Mr. Romero suggested that the Reading team should return with a more detailed proposal specifying how they envision the partial reimbursement working. This proposal would need to be reviewed by MWRA staff to understand the full financial and regulatory impacts. The committee decided to keep the discussion open, with the understanding that further analysis would be needed, particularly to understand how any adjustment would affect other communities that have paid entrance fees, and how it might trigger similar claims from other communities in the future.



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C. Executive Director's report

Matthew Romero, Executive Director of the Advisory Board, provided a brief update on various ongoing matters. He reported that the MWRA's Fiscal Year 2026 budget is on track, with an anticipated combined assessment increase of 2.7%. Mr. Romero emphasized that the water portion of the budget is expected to increase more than the sewer portion, with the latter showing a slight decrease. He mentioned that while these figures are still provisional, the final budget will be confirmed after the MWRA Board of Directors votes in the coming week, at which point the final assessments will be issued to all member communities.

Mr. Romero also took the opportunity to highlight the upcoming 40th anniversary of the MWRA, which will be commemorated on July 1. He proposed several initiatives to celebrate this milestone, including the creation of a podcast series featuring key figures who helped establish the MWRA Advisory Board, as well as oral histories from long-serving staff. Mr. Romero suggested that Mr. Favaloro, a former key figure, could provide insight into the early days of the Advisory Board, and that Mr. Coppes could speak on the evolution of the water system. These oral histories could serve as a valuable resource to document the MWRA's history and achievements. He also mentioned the possibility of inviting former MWRA Executive Directors for a panel to discuss their biggest challenges during their tenure, with Mr. Laskey moderating the discussion. Additionally, Mr. Romero proposed collaborating with the MWRA to produce a polished video that could serve as both a celebratory piece and a recruitment tool, drawing attention to the MWRA's accomplishments over the past 40 years.

Mr. Romero also discussed staffing updates, acknowledging the hard work of Nathan Coté, who managed to bring the 2023 rate survey back on track despite a delayed start. Nathan's efforts allowed the Advisory Board to maintain its regular schedule and finalize the survey in a timely manner. In addition, Mr. Romero mentioned the arrival of a new part-time administrative assistant in July, who would provide additional support and allow Nathan to focus on new projects outside of routine office tasks. Mr. Romero also expressed excitement about the new co-op joining the team, as the position would help address internal administrative needs and support the Advisory Board's ongoing work.

D. Legislative Update

Matthew Romero provided an update on the ongoing legislative matters affecting the MWRA. He reported that the Commonwealth's Fiscal Year 2026 budget is still in progress, with the Senate having released its version. The next step will involve a reconciliation process between the two chambers, where they will negotiate the final details behind closed doors. Mr. Romero emphasized that the Speaker's Office is a strong ally of the MWRA, which has been instrumental in securing critical funding, including the \$500,000 for Clinton and Debt Service Assistance. However, negotiations are still underway, and updates will follow once the process concludes.

In addition to the state budget, Mr. Romero discussed the progress of the Quabbin legislation, which continues to gain momentum. Following the Advisory Board's strong position against the legislation, several legislators have responded with their own letters of support, and the legislative campaign has intensified. Although the Advisory Board has not yet submitted its official testimony on the matter, Mr. Romero noted that various versions of the Advisory Board's position have already been issued. These documents, ranging from blog posts to formal letters, will be incorporated into a formal testimony letter and submitted before





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the deadline in the coming week. To further engage communities, Mr. Romero announced that a template letter would be distributed to all member communities, allowing them to express their opposition to the legislation and highlight the potential financial impact on their budgets, should the bill pass.

Another legislative issue Mr. Romero touched on was the water bond bill, which continues to be a topic of discussion. The Massachusetts Water Works Association (MWWA), with which the Advisory Board has been coordinating, presented testimony at the hearing for the omnibus water bond bill. The MWWA Executive Director, Jen Peterson, led the coalition at the hearing and reported that the committee members were particularly focused on the Commonwealth's water, sewer, and stormwater needs. While the discussions did not immediately lead to the allocation of significant new funds, the hearing provided an important opportunity to raise awareness among legislators regarding the critical infrastructure challenges faced by communities, including the MWRA service area.

E. Advisory Board FY26 meeting schedule

Matthew Romero briefly reviewed the Advisory Board's Fiscal Year 2026 meeting schedule. He noted that the full Advisory Board would not meet on Thursday, June 19, due to the federal holiday recognizing Juneteenth. As a result, the Advisory Board's next meeting would take place the following Thursday, June 26, 2025. Mr. Romero also pointed out that the dates for the upcoming meetings were aligned with the MWRA's meeting schedule to ensure better coordination between the two organizations. He mentioned that members should review the meeting schedule and notify him of any potential conflicts, especially with regard to major conferences or other events that could affect member attendance. This would help avoid any last-minute scheduling changes.

Mr. Romero acknowledged a minor error in the schedule, where the field trip date was listed incorrectly. He clarified that the correct date for the Advisory Board's summer field trip would be Thursday, August 21, 2025, and assured the committee that the schedule would be updated accordingly.

F. Advisory Board Summer Field Trip

Matthew Romero provided an update on the Advisory Board's summer field trip, which is scheduled for Thursday, August 21, 2025. He confirmed that the field trip would be held at the MWRA's Prison Point Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) facility, with a boat tour along the Charles River. The trip will offer an opportunity to learn more about the MWRA's efforts related to CSOs and the impact on system planning and ratepayer rates. The group will board the boat at the back of the CambridgeSide Mall, with the first tour running from 9:00 AM to 10:10 AM, and the second from 10:30 AM to 11:40 AM. Mr. Romero explained that the boat and land tours will alternate if attendance was high enough to require two separate boat trips, with one group visiting the Prison Point CSO facility while the other is on the boat. There will be a half-mile walk from Prison Point to the CambridgeSide Mall for those needing to board the boat, and participants are encouraged to notify the team if they need assistance with the walk. Lunch will be provided at the Prison Point CSO Facility at North Point Park, starting at noon, with the aim of allowing both groups to eat together.

Mr. Romero reminded members that the event would require a 50% deposit and a signed contract to confirm the reservation, and final guest counts and payments would be due 10 business days before the event. Although Advisory Board members would receive priority for attendance, space





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is limited. He mentioned that participants would need to arrange their own transportation, but public transit options would be available. The meeting point for the field trip is still to be determined, as they are finalizing logistics for parking at the CambridgeSide Galleria and ensuring the boat's capacity meets the needs of attendees.

G. Approval of the June 26, 2025 Advisory Board meeting agenda

A motion was made to approve the Advisory Board meeting agenda for June 26, 2025. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded David Manugian, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

H. Approval of the Executive Committee meeting minutes from May 8, 2025

A motion was made to approve the Executive Committee meeting minutes from May 8, 2025. It was moved by John DeAmicis, seconded by Maurice Handel, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

I. New Business

None.

J. Executive Director annual evaluation

Matthew Romero, Executive Director of the Advisory Board, presented his annual self-evaluation for the Executive Committee's consideration. He provided a summary of his accomplishments over the past year, highlighting key initiatives and projects. Mr. Romero emphasized the Advisory Board's significant achievements in the areas of outreach, legislative engagement, and internal process improvements. He also sought feedback from the committee on areas where he could improve or focus more attention in the coming year. While there was no formal vote taken during the meeting, Mr. Romero invited the Executive Committee to provide any additional comments or suggestions. The committee expressed their appreciation for his leadership and the continued efforts of the Advisory Board staff.

A motion was made to increase the salary of the Advisory Board Executive Director by 4% to take effect July 1, 2025. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded by John DeAmicis, and placed on the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

K. Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded by Sam Stivers, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

L. Omnibus Roll Call Vote

A motion to take an omnibus roll call vote was put forth. It was moved by Sam Stivers and seconded by John DeAmicis.

An omnibus vote took place on the following items:





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- Approval of the June 26, 2025 Advisory Board meeting agenda
- Approval of the May 8, 2025 Executive Committee meeting minutes
- A 4% salary increase for the MWRA Advisory Board Executive Director
- Adjournment of the meeting

The roll call vote was as follows:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Yes
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Yes
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	Yes
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Yes (remote)

Respectfully submitted,

David Manugian, Advisory Board Secretary

These minutes reflect the discussion of the meeting. The Advisory Board maintains audio recordings of Executive Committee meetings that are available upon request.



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Matthew A. Romero
Executive Director