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Thursday, September 11, 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)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Here
Dave Pavlik	Lexington	Here (remote)
Yem Lip	Malden	Here (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Here (remote)
Nicholas Rystrom	Revere	Here (remote)
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Here
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Here
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	Here
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Here (remote)

Board of Directors members:

Lou Taverna, Joe Foti

Advisory Board and MWRA staff:

Christine Bennett, Nathan Coté, Matthew Romero, Bernadette Russo

Also in attendance:

Binglei Gong

B. Executive Director's report

Matthew Romero, Executive Director of the Advisory Board, opened his report by acknowledging that the meeting took place on September 11, noting the significance of the date as the twenty-fourth anniversary of the tragedy. He encouraged members to pause and reflect on how far the nation has come since that day.

Mr. Romero then welcomed Bernadette Russo, the Advisory Board's new co-op, and recognized her early contributions. Nathan Coté was noted as having praised her assistance on the retail rate survey and other projects, and Mr. Romero expressed his appreciation for her work as the Board enters its busy fall season.

He next provided a recap of the recent field trip focused on Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs). He thanked



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MWRA staff, Advisory Board staff, and Richard Raiche, Chair of the Advisory Board, for their efforts, noting that the boat tour and visit to the Prison Point CSO facility gave members valuable context for the upcoming discussions on the updated Long-Term Control Plan. He emphasized the importance of seeing these facilities firsthand, remarking that the experience of witnessing the scale of operations adds perspective to what otherwise appear as “dollars on a page.”

Turning to the FY26 Retail Rate Survey, Mr. Romero reported that data collection was largely complete with only a few stragglers. He explained that an additional-questions survey had been streamlined and reformatted following suggestions from John DeAmicis, with improvements to allow users to save and return to the form. Mr. Coté added that he was finalizing a technical issue, and the survey should be ready for distribution by the end of the following week. Mr. Romero noted that preliminary numbers would be available soon.

Mr. Romero then provided a verbal update on the Town of Reading’s updated request regarding entrance fee relief for the difference between its approved water capacity and actual usage over the years. After reviewing the matter with MWRA staff, they concluded that no viable mechanism existed to provide reimbursement. He compared Reading’s situation to that of the Town of Stoughton, which had previously sought similar relief. In Stoughton’s case, limited adjustments were possible only because the MWRA had financed its entrance fee, allowing for interest recalculations. Since Reading financed its fee independently, such remedies were unavailable. Mr. Romero requested the Committee’s guidance on how to proceed given this new information.

Committee members discussed the matter extensively. Sam Stivers emphasized that the Board should avoid setting a precedent and noted the lack of a clear path forward. Jay Hersey agreed, suggesting that Reading could present any new ideas not yet considered, but that all reasonable options had already been explored. Mr. Raiche observed that placing a general discussion item on a future Advisory Board agenda without a concrete ask would be unproductive, especially given that MWRA had already determined no relief was possible. David Pavlik raised a broader point about community engagement, noting that Advisory Board members who participate consistently gain a better understanding of their responsibilities and options. He remarked that while Reading had been reasonably active, including regular attendance by Mr. Cole, stronger involvement in Advisory Board activities could benefit their position. Mr. DeAmicis posed questions about capacity policy and clarified the differences between communities seeking new connections and those already admitted.

Following this discussion, Mr. Romero summarized that the consensus was to ask MWRA staff to prepare a formal written response to Reading, clearly stating that no mechanism exists to provide the relief requested. He cautioned that Reading may still ask to appear at a future Advisory Board meeting, but agreed with members that absent a specific new proposal, there was little value in further discussion. He concluded that staff would carry forward the direction provided and request that the MWRA communicate the decision formally.



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C. Advisory Board FY26 goals and objectives

Matthew Romero, Executive Director of the Advisory Board, explained that the Committee would receive a high-level overview at this meeting, with a more robust presentation planned for the following week. Mr. Romero began outlining the Board's priorities for the coming year.

Mr. Romero identified Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) as the foremost issue, given that the updated Long-Term Control Plan is due in December, with a public comment period to follow. He also highlighted the need to re-engage on 8(m) permitting now that the summer has concluded. A working group is being formed to address this issue, with volunteers including Sam Stivers and Jay Hersey, and potential additional participants such as Tim McGivern of Medford. Mr. Romero also noted that Bernadette Russo had already begun research to support the group's kickoff.

Discussion followed on the objectives of the permitting work. Mr. Romero explained that the effort would examine how communities can better prevent damage to MWRA infrastructure caused by private property projects, such as geothermal drilling. He described how different levels of oversight—community, MWRA, and state—each play a role, and emphasized the need for stronger coordination and awareness among permit applicants and regulators.

Maurice Handel asked how the permitting effort relates to the DigSafe system. Mr. Hersey responded that in a perfect world, DigSafe participation would cover these situations, but not all entities are members. He explained that in Brookline's recent experience, even though DigSafe was called, the depth and type of drilling involved went beyond what was anticipated. Mr. Romero added that the Dorchester Tunnel, which was struck in that case, was not typically considered at risk due to its depth, underscoring the need for updated practices. Mr. Stivers noted that drilling quality issues, such as drifting off course, exacerbated the problem. Committee members discussed how licensed well drillers at the state level might be required to incorporate MWRA sign-offs as part of their due diligence. Mr. Hersey suggested that a simple requirement for sign-off from both municipalities and MWRA would go a long way toward preventing similar incidents.

Mr. Romero also addressed other ongoing areas of focus. On the regulatory side, he noted continued monitoring of the federal lead and copper rule and mentioned that questions on this topic had been included in the rate survey to gather additional community feedback. The NPDES permit process remains delayed, and Mr. Raiche observed that staffing shortages at the Environmental Protection Agency would likely prolong issuance of the revised draft. Mr. Stivers expressed concern that reduced or less-qualified staffing could lead to lower-quality outcomes.

On watershed management, Mr. Romero reported that the Water Supply Protection Trust would be meeting the following week. Ongoing issues include forestry management and the authority of MWRA rangers to issue citations, which has been curtailed by the state Police Reform Act. Mr. DeAmicis questioned whether legislative action would be required to restore these powers, and Mr. Romero replied that the matter stemmed from an internal legal interpretation at Energy and Environmental Affairs, one that has never been formally documented in writing.



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Mr. Romero emphasized that system expansion continues to be an important background priority, with several communities expressing interest. On financial matters, he explained that the Board is establishing a working group on long-term rates management to allow for more nimble, detailed discussions before recommendations are brought to the Finance Committee. He pointed to major cost drivers ahead, including the CSO Long-Term Control Plan and the Metro Tunnel Redundancy Project, both of which will significantly impact future rates. He also noted ongoing concerns about the pension fund's performance and the potential burden on ratepayers if large payments come due without relief.

On the administrative side, Mr. Romero announced that the Advisory Board is on track to reach full staffing for the first time since 2020, which he described as a major milestone. He underscored the importance of strengthening community contacts, both to fill vacancies in representation and to ensure smooth communication on technical issues such as 8(m) permitting. He mentioned that Lexi Dewey, former director of WSCAC, is expected to be appointed to a gubernatorial seat that has long been vacant, and that the Town of Wilbraham will soon be naming representatives.

Finally, Mr. Romero stressed the importance of documenting standard operating procedures and cross-training staff. He reflected on past challenges when staffing was limited and procedures were not well recorded, and emphasized that creating clear SOPs is a key focus this year to ensure continuity and resiliency.

D. Legislative Update

Matthew Romero provided a legislative update, noting that testimony had recently been submitted on the Mass Ready Act, which he described as the rebranded environmental bond bill. He explained that the bill, if passed in its current form, would explicitly define MWRA rangers as subject to the Police Reform Act, thereby confirming that they are not authorized to issue citations. Mr. Romero stated that while this clarification eliminates prior ambiguity, it represents a negative outcome for the Advisory Board, as the only recourse now is to pursue a legislative solution carving out an exemption for the rangers—an effort that will be difficult to achieve. He emphasized, however, that at least the Board now has clear direction after years of conflicting interpretations.

Mr. Romero also pointed to provisions in the Mass Ready Act that authorize temporary payments to the Quabbin communities. He reported that the Advisory Board, along with allies such as Mass Water Works and the Water Infrastructure Alliance, submitted testimony opposing this measure, arguing that it was premature to provide additional funds before the governor's ordered evaluation of all Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) programs statewide is completed. He suggested that such an evaluation is likely to show that MWRA is among the most generous PILOT providers in Massachusetts. John DeAmicis concurred, remarking that MWRA's contributions to these programs are significant, even if not always recognized.

Mr. Romero continued by highlighting the CSO bill, which remains active in the legislature. He acknowledged that while the measure is well-intentioned, the Advisory Board opposes it in its current form, as it does not



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represent an effective way to address Combined Sewer Overflow issues. He noted that opposing the bill can be politically challenging, since it risks being mischaracterized as supporting sewage discharges, but emphasized that the Advisory Board's testimony made clear the need for a more constructive approach.

Mr. Romero further reported that a wave of PFAS-related legislation has been filed, and the Advisory Board is preparing testimony. He explained that the primary concern is the impact on MWRA's biosolids program, noting that a requirement to landfill sludge could impose a \$13 million annual cost. He warned that landfill space in Massachusetts is already limited, and once regulations are finalized, costs will rise further as available capacity is consumed. He cautioned that communities hosting landfills may eventually resist accepting out-of-district waste, creating even greater challenges. Due to the difficulties in international waste markets, a member added that this could be a boon to local waste markets.

Mr. Romero also reminded the Committee of prior testimony the Advisory Board has submitted on other bills, including legislation addressing so-called "flushable" wipes, a long-discussed Quabbin measure, and a water bond bill designed to highlight major challenges in statewide water and sewer infrastructure. He concluded by reporting that debt service assistance had once again been line-item vetoed by the governor, as has frequently been the case. It remains uncertain whether the legislature will seek to override the veto this year.

Mr. DeAmicis asked how the Advisory Board might pursue legislation that would proactively benefit the MWRA and its member communities. Mr. Romero responded that this has long been the "magic" question. Despite the best efforts of Advisory Board staff and allies, including persistent lobbying by Joe, meaningful legislative victories providing new funding or relief have remained elusive. He remarked that, all too often, the result of state legislation has the unintended effect of making the work of the MWRA and its member communities more complex or costly, a concern also reflected in the earlier discussion of the CSO and PFAS legislation.

E. CSO Updated Long-term Control Plan Schedule

Matthew Romero explained that the draft updated long-term control plan is due in December, and that the Advisory Board is now working backward from that deadline. He noted that at the September meeting of the MWRA Board of Directors, members are expected to receive a presentation on the scoring criteria for the plan. He explained that MWRA, Cambridge, and Somerville have been collaborating to establish a consistent framework for grading possible projects, ranging from the "do nothing" option, which is not feasible, to a \$4.6 billion comprehensive construction program. While consensus has not yet been finalized, Mr. Romero said the three entities are close to agreement on the scoring system. Mr. Raiche added that full agreement is expected by the end of the month, noting the unusual arrangement whereby MWRA is responsible for outfalls located in Boston.

Mr. Romero outlined the timeline for the next steps. In October, the Advisory Board's Executive Committee will hold a special meeting devoted exclusively to the CSO plan where the cost tag of various alternatives will be revealed (*note, this meeting was cancelled in light of the fact that the MWRA Board of Directors moved



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their meeting back). At that meeting, MWRA will present the mix of projects under consideration, with the expectation that Cambridge and Somerville will also be presenting in parallel to their respective city councils. Mr. Romero emphasized that while the October session is an open meeting that anyone may attend, participation is intended for Advisory Board members only, not for outside groups or parallel advisory committees, and that its purpose is to ensure members can ask questions and provide feedback before the plan advances further. He explained that in November, the MWRA Board of Directors will likely vote on the draft plan, with the Advisory Board to receive the same presentation immediately afterward. The draft plan will then be formally submitted in December, at which point the broader public comment process will begin.

Discussion followed on the Advisory Board's role. Jay Hersey asked whether the Advisory Board should expect to vote on the plan. Mr. Romero clarified that the Advisory Board does not formally approve the plan but plays an advisory role by providing feedback during its development. John DeAmicis agreed, noting that the Advisory Board's influence lies in being consulted before the draft is filed. Mr. Romero credited MWRA Executive Director Fred Laskey for ensuring that the Advisory Board would be looped in early to shape the plan before it entered the public comment stage.

Mr. DeAmicis also asked about the submission process, and Mr. Raiche confirmed that the plan will be filed with the Mass Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, both of which will hold public hearings and accept testimony. It was noted that additional community feedback may also be solicited through those forums.

Further discussion touched on coordination between MWRA, Cambridge, and Somerville. Mr. Romero clarified that the October presentation to the Advisory Board will be MWRA's version, though he acknowledged that representatives from Cambridge and Somerville are welcome to be present if they wish to be present to answer questions. Mr. Raiche explained that each entity has engaged consultants on different portions of the plan, which will ultimately be combined into one recommended suite of projects.

Mr. DeAmicis raised the question about how costs will be shared among the three entities, observing that cost allocation is a critical issue alongside the selection of projects. Mr. Romero acknowledged that cost-sharing discussions are ongoing and have not yet been resolved but said that agreement on the project list must come first.

David Pavlik emphasized the importance of communicating the implications of the CSO plan to communities that may not be directly affected by overflows but will be responsible for the financial impact. He noted that communities like Lexington need clear information in order to incorporate the costs into their long-term capital planning. Mr. Romero agreed that broader outreach is important.

Mr. Raiche also cautioned that advocacy groups such as the Charles River Watershed Association, are pressing for total CSO elimination and framing the issue as a regional economic driver tied to clean waterways. He argued that if such goals are pursued, the state should share in the cost burden rather than



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relying solely on MWRA ratepayers. Mr. Romero agreed, citing recent press coverage in which he underscored that CSO investments must be considered carefully to avoid disproportionate impacts on ratepayers.

Mr. Pavlik asked whether the MWRA enabling act provides authority related to CSOs that could be relevant to the current process. Mr. Romero responded that he doubted the legislation would contain prescriptive language, given how the original CSO program was implemented, but agreed that staff could review the issue further. Bernadette Russo was asked to make a note to follow up.

Mr. Raiche concluded the discussion by noting that CSO planning will remain a recurring agenda item in the months ahead.

F. PFAS update

Matthew Romero introduced the discussion on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), noting that the issue has increasingly surfaced at the Advisory Board level as communities become more aware of its potential impacts. He explained that Jay Hersey had flagged the matter and provided materials that were shared with members in the meeting packet. Mr. Romero said that before inviting MWRA staff to present, it would be useful to identify the specific questions and concerns raised by communities so the presentation could be tailored accordingly.

Mr. Hersey explained that the issue was first brought to him by a vocal Brookline Town Meeting member who had raised questions both during and outside of Town Meeting. This resident expressed concern about PFAS contamination from rainfall entering the Quabbin Reservoir, as well as long-term accumulation in biosolids. Mr. Hersey noted that while MWRA has consistently reported only trace levels of PFAS in its drinking water supply, questions about both the water and wastewater sides of the system are growing. He emphasized that disposal of biosolids poses significant cost risks, as landfilling or incineration could drive expenses much higher, and landfills may eventually refuse to accept the material.

Mr. Romero agreed that MWRA's standard talking points on PFAS may not be sufficient, and that members would benefit from a more detailed "state of play." He suggested MWRA should provide clearer information on current detection levels, regulatory thresholds, and whether advances in testing technology might soon allow more precise monitoring.

Mr. Hersey added that states such as California and New York appear to be further ahead in addressing PFAS, and that Massachusetts could benefit from examining their approaches. He warned that if New England landfills stop accepting biosolids, MWRA may be forced to ship waste by rail to other regions, raising both cost and equity concerns. Mr. Romero observed that even those arrangements may not be sustainable, as other states could eventually refuse out-of-state waste.

Sam Stivers raised a related question about the science of PFAS remediation, asking whether there are ongoing efforts to break down the most harmful subsets of the chemicals and whether MWRA had insights



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on progress in this area. Mr. Raiche added that MWRA must understand the need to communicate beyond cost and compliance, emphasizing that residents and advocates increasingly demand action that goes beyond minimum regulatory requirements.

David Pavlik supported the idea of an MWRA presentation, suggesting that coordination with the Department of Environmental Protection would strengthen credibility. He explained that he regularly fields resident questions about whether local water is safe to drink, noting that the current public focus is shifting from PFAS to microplastics, and before that, to lead and copper. He argued that giving the public a clearer picture of MWRA's efforts across these emerging issues would be valuable.

G. December 11th Advisory Board Holiday Open House

Matthew Romero reflected on the success of last year's event, noting that members had enjoyed gathering in person without the pressure of conducting formal business. He emphasized the value of the open house in allowing members to build relationships and engage in informal conversations similar to those that had taken place before and after in-person meetings prior to the pandemic. Mr. Romero thanked David Pavlik for connecting the Advisory Board with the museum venue, which had offered a discounted rate and provided a welcoming setting for the event.

Mr. Romero asked the Committee for its views on whether the open house should be held at the same venue each year or rotated geographically around the MWRA service area, as was once done with formal meetings. He noted that a geographic rotation would result in visiting different parts of the system only once every four years and questioned whether the additional planning burden would be worthwhile.

Jay Hersey expressed support for using the same museum venue, saying he appreciated that it was not tied to any particular town and that its neutral setting encouraged a relaxed and collegial atmosphere. Sam Stivers agreed, adding that finding a venue that works well and can host the event consistently is valuable. Mr. Romero noted that Advisory Board staff also favored returning to the museum, given their positive experience working with its staff and the convenience of its central location. Mr. Raiche commented that he did not see a strong need to vary the location geographically, particularly since the open house is not a monthly or recurring meeting.

Maurice Handel voiced agreement, observing that the museum worked well for last year's event. With no objections raised, Mr. Romero concluded that there was consensus to return to the same venue. He said staff would contact the museum to confirm arrangements and expected to provide details on the date and time by the next meeting.

H. Action Item: Bylaws amendment

Matthew Romero explained that the amendment was primarily housekeeping. He noted that under former Executive Director Joe Favaloro, the practice had been to allow anyone interested to join the Executive Committee without a formal bylaw change, and at one point membership had reached as high as nineteen. When the bylaws were revised a few years ago, this informality was corrected, but an error in phrasing last



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year left the current language unclear. The intent had always been to reduce the size of the Committee, particularly after attrition had lowered the number of active members.

Mr. Romero observed that with more members, quorum issues became more frequent, as individuals assumed their absence would not affect attendance, only for several to be missing at once. He credited Maurice Handel with stepping in during a past meeting to prevent a quorum failure. He suggested that the most effective way forward would be to reduce the Committee formally to thirteen members, which reflects current participation levels.

Mr. Handel asked about the difficulty of maintaining quorum depending on the total number of members.

Mr. Romero responded that a smaller committee would improve attendance consistency. A staff member clarified that the proposed text, included in the meeting packet, sets the Executive Committee at five officers plus up to eight additional members, for a total of thirteen. Mr. Handel then asked for clarity on the precise text that members would be voting on, and Mr. Romero confirmed that it was the version circulated in the packet, not the older version mistakenly shown on the screen.

One member asked whether reducing the size of the Committee risked excluding underrepresented regions. Mr. Romero replied that the Advisory Board currently maintains good geographic and demographic representation, though the South Shore tends to lag somewhat. He emphasized that if future interest arises, rather than informally adding members as had been done in the past, staff would bring the matter back to the Committee for formal consideration.

In response to a question from Mr. DeAmicis Mr. Romero confirmed that the amendment would set the number at thirteen.

A motion was made to approve the bylaw change as presented in the packet for the officers plus six to eight additional members. 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. Action Item: Nomination of the Executive Committee

Matthew Romero noted that members had received the slate of Executive Committee officers and members in their meeting packets. He reported that, unlike recent years when membership changes had been more frequent, no changes were anticipated this year. Mr. Romero expressed his appreciation that the current composition of the Committee remained stable.

Richard Raiche asked whether Cambridge had requested to join the Executive Committee. Mr. Romero replied that to his knowledge they had not, likely because they are already represented in other ways. At this point, David Pavlik informed the Committee that he had accepted a new role as Manager of Operations in Lexington. He explained that historically, Lexington's water and sewer superintendent has served as the community's designee on the Advisory Board, and with a hiring process underway for that





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position, his long-term role was uncertain. Mr. Pavlik reported that Lexington had identified a candidate for the superintendent position, with a second interview scheduled soon, and promised to keep the Committee updated.

Mr. Romero suggested that once the new superintendent is appointed, Lexington could designate Mr. Pavlik as an alternate, which would preserve his ability to participate and, if needed, continue to serve on the Executive Committee. He emphasized that alternates have full voting rights and could fill leadership roles.

Mr. Pavlik thanked members for their support, noting that leaving the Advisory Board had been one of the more difficult aspects of his career transition because of how much he had enjoyed working with colleagues. Committee members congratulated Mr. Pavlik on his promotion, with Jay Hersey offering particular praise.

A motion was made to approve the Executive Committee, serving its role as the Nominating Committee, to nominate the slate of Executive Committee members and officers as presented in the meeting materials for vote by the full Advisory Board. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded by John DeAmicis, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

J. Action Item: Approval of the September 18th, 2025 Advisory Board meeting agenda

A motion was made to approve the Executive Committee meeting minutes from September 18, 2025. It was moved by John DeAmicis, seconded by Sam Stivers, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

K. Action Item: Approval of Executive Committee meeting minutes from June 12, 2025

A motion was made to approve the Executive Committee meeting minutes from June 12, 2025. 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. New Business

None.

M. 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.

N. 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:

- *Approval of the amendment of the Advisory Board bylaws*



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- Approval of the nomination of the FY26 Executive Committee
- Approval of the meeting agenda for September 18, 2025
- Approval of the meeting minutes from June 12, 2025
- Adjournment of the meeting

The roll call vote was as follows:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes
Dave Pavlik	Lexington	Yes (remote)
Yem Lip	Malden	Yes (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)
Nicholas Rystrom	Revere	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.

