



# Advocacy & Accountability

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Thursday February 26, 2026  
Remote Connection Via Zoom  
10:00 AM

## ADVISORY BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

### A. Roll call attendance

A commencing roll call was voted as follows:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Here (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Here (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston (BWSC)	Here (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Here (remote)
Brian White	Burlington	Here (remote)
Lucica Hiller	Cambridge	Here (remote)
Cate Fox-Lent	Chelsea	Here (remote)
Jason Mammone	Dedham	Here (remote)
Stephen Leone	Framingham	Here (remote)
Jamal Jones	Lexington	Here (remote)
Joe Beauchesne	Lynn	Here (remote)
Amy McHugh	Marblehead	Here (remote)
Scott Brinch	Medford	Here (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Here (remote)
Mike Retzky	Needham	Here (remote)

Name	Community	Vote
Tom Fitzgerald	Newton	Here (remote)
Robert Donnely	Norwood	Here (remote)
Margaret LaForest	Quincy	Here (remote)
Chris Cole	Reading	Here (remote)
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Here (remote)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Here (remote)
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	Here (remote)
Joseph Conway	Wakefield	Here (remote)
Patrick Fasanello	Walpole	Here (remote)
Ian McKenzie	Waltham	Here (remote)
Jeff Azano-Brown	Wellesley	Here (remote)
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Here (remote)
Lexi Dewey	Ct. River Basin	Here (remote)
J.R. Greene	Quabbin-Ware	Here (remote)

### **Board of Directors members:**

*Andrew Pappastergion, Lou Taverna*

### **Advisory Board and MWRA staff:**

*Matthew Romero, Christine Bennett, Abigail Bulman, Nathan Coté, Kishan Parida; Tom Durkin, Michael Cole, Matthew Horan, James Coyne, Colleen Rizzi, Stephen Cullen, Claudia Mazur, Denise Ellis-Hibbett, Michael O’Keefe, Jeremy Hall, Carolyn Francisco Murphy, Kathy Murtagh, Katherine Ronan, Christine Pieroni, Kristin MacDougall, Ethan Wenger, David Wu, Brian Kubaska, Chad Whiting*

### **Also in attendance:**



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*Andreae Downs (Wastewater Advisory Committee-WAC), Moussa Siri (Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee-WSCAC), William Fadden (WSCAC), Felina Silver (WAC), Craig Allen (WAC), Paul Rybicki (WSCAC), Lydia Olson (WSCAC - Mass Rivers Alliance), Emily Norton (Charles River Watershed Association), Julie Wood (Charles River Watershed Association), Erin Bonney Casey (WSCAC - Ipswich River Watershed Association), Patrick Herron (Mystic River Watershed Association), Andrew Hrycyna (Mystic River Watershed Association), Daniel Serna (Massachusetts Rural Water Association), Libby McLaughlin (Save the Harbor/Save the Bay), Kristin Anderson (Save the Alewife Brook), Warren Kimball (WSCAC), Maria Rose, Zhenyu Tian (WAC), Martin Pillsbury (WAC - WSCAC - MAPC), Kevin Brander (Commonwealth of Massachusetts), Christopher Dreher (WSCAC), Gwen Speeth, Janet Rothrock (WSCAC), Karen Lachmayr (WAC), Ann McDonald, John Reinhardt, Catherine Woodbury (City of Cambridge), Cathy Coniaris (Commonwealth of Massachusetts), Jonathan Smith (WAC - City of Somerville), Ben Rukavina, James Arsenault, Adriana Cillo (WAC - Boston Water and Sewer Commission), Bill Kiley (WSCAC - Boston Water and Sewer Commission), Susy King (Commonwealth of Massachusetts), Steve Horn (E.J. Prescott)*

## **B. Executive Director's Report**

Matthew Romero, Executive Director of the MWRA Advisory Board, provided a brief report.

Mr. Romero informed members that the search process for a new MWRA Executive Director is moving forward. The MWRA Board of Directors voted the previous day to establish a search subcommittee composed of members of the Board of Directors. Joseph Foti, representing the Advisory Board, will serve on that subcommittee. The MWRA also plans to engage a consulting firm to assist with the recruitment and prescreening process.

Mr. Romero noted that updates will be provided to Advisory Board members as the process progresses.

Mr. Romero also explained that an agenda item concerning PFAS and the MWRA system, which had appeared on a previous version of the meeting agenda, would need to be postponed and rescheduled for a future Advisory Board meeting.

## **C. Advisory Board Public Hearing on the MWRA's Proposed FY27 CEB & CIP**

At the request of the Chair, David Manugian (Bedford), Secretary of the Advisory Board, assumed the role of presiding officer for the public hearing portion of the meeting.

Mr. Manugian explained that the hearing was being conducted remotely via Zoom and recorded as part of the official public record. He outlined the structure of the hearing, which would include a presentation by MWRA staff, followed by an opportunity for public comment, and then questions or comments from Advisory Board members and members of the Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee (WSCAC) and Wastewater Advisory Committee (WAC).

Mr. Manugian noted that under Chapter 372 of the Acts of 1984, the MWRA is required to adopt its Current Expense Budget on or before June 30 each year. The Advisory Board is charged with reviewing the proposed budget and capital expenditures and providing comments and recommendations prior to





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adoption. The purpose of the hearing was to review the proposed FY27 Current Expense Budget and Capital Improvement Program and consider their impacts on member communities and ratepayers.

Members of the public were invited to register to provide verbal comments, which were limited to two minutes per speaker. Written comments could also be submitted to the Advisory Board by email or mail for inclusion in the public record.

Mr. Manugian then invited the MWRA finance staff to begin their presentation.

Mr. Romero introduced the MWRA finance staff presenting to the Advisory Board:

- Tom Durkin, MWRA Director of Finance
- Michael Cole, MWRA Budget Director
- Matthew Horan, MWRA Deputy Director of Finance/Treasurer
- James Coyne, MWRA Budget Manager

Mr. Durkin began the presentation by noting that the MWRA Board of Directors had voted the previous day to transmit the proposed FY27 Current Expense Budget to the Advisory Board for review and comment. He explained that MWRA budgeting follows a multi-year financial planning approach and that the FY27 budget reflects several years of planning and forecasting.

Mr. Cole provided an overview of the proposed FY27 Current Expense Budget of approximately \$943.8 million, representing an increase of approximately \$24.1 million, or 2.6 percent, over FY26. He explained that the budget consists primarily of three components: capital finance, direct expenses, and indirect expenses.

Mr. Cole highlighted key drivers of the proposed increase, including wages and salaries, fringe benefits, energy costs, and maintenance activities. He also discussed long-term trends affecting MWRA costs, including rising health insurance expenditures and volatility in electricity prices affecting operations at the Deer Island Treatment Plant.

Mr. Horan reviewed the capital finance component, explaining that approximately \$512 million of the FY27 budget relates to capital financing costs. These expenses largely represent principal and interest payments on previously issued bonds and projected borrowing to fund MWRA's Capital Improvement Program. Mr. Horan also discussed trends in interest rates and their implications for borrowing costs and investment income.

Mr. Cole then reviewed the revenue assumptions supporting the budget, noting that approximately 95 percent of MWRA revenues are derived from rate assessments paid by member communities, meaning that most MWRA expenditures are ultimately supported by ratepayers.

Mr. Durkin concluded the presentation with a discussion of proposed assessment increases. He explained that MWRA continues to target a combined annual assessment increase of approximately 2 to 3 percent. For FY27, MWRA is proposing a 3.0 percent combined increase, consisting of approximately 3.9 percent for water assessments and 2.4 percent for sewer assessments.



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Mr. Durkin also noted that MWRA is entering a period of increased capital investment due to major infrastructure needs, including the Metropolitan Tunnel Program, ongoing asset protection projects, and anticipated investments associated with the updated Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Long-Term Control Plan.

Mr. Manugian then opened the public comment portion of the hearing. Staff indicated that individuals wishing to provide verbal comment could register through the link provided during the meeting. After allowing time for additional registrations, staff reported that the individual who had initially signed up to speak had withdrawn their request. As a result, no public comments were provided during the hearing.

Mr. Manugian then closed the public comment portion of the hearing and opened the floor for questions or comments from Advisory Board members and members of WAC and WSCAC.

Several questions were raised during the discussion portion of the hearing. A question was asked regarding the \$20 million defeasance included in the FY27 Current Expense Budget. Mr. Horan explained that the defeasance funding consists of approximately \$12 million in projected year-end surplus related to debt service expenses combined with approximately \$8.5 million previously budgeted for debt prepayment. These funds are placed in escrow and invested in securities to retire selected bonds early, helping to smooth future debt service obligations and stabilize rate increases. Mr. Horan noted that MWRA has used defeasance as a rate management tool since 2006 and has completed nearly \$1 billion in defeasances during that time.

Members also asked about future opportunities for public input on the proposed budget and capital plan. Mr. Romero explained that MWRA will conduct its own formal budget hearing later in the spring, likely in April, and encouraged interested parties to participate in that hearing.

A question was also raised regarding anticipated capital spending associated with the updated CSO Long-Term Control Plan. Mr. Cole explained that the current draft Capital Improvement Program includes a \$5 million placeholder for design work related to CSO improvements. Additional projects and funding will be incorporated into the Capital Improvement Program once the final scope of the CSO project is determined. Mr. Horan added that the proposed CSO control plan includes approximately \$764 million in spending in current dollars and will be incorporated into future capital planning.

Discussion also addressed the Combined Heat and Power (CHP) project at the Deer Island Treatment Plant. Chad Whiting, Director of Deer Island, explained that the project is currently in the conceptual design phase. The proposed system would generate electricity first using reciprocating engines fueled by digester gas and then use the waste heat to meet the plant's heating needs.

A question was also raised regarding the clarifier rehabilitation project at Deer Island, currently the largest capital expenditure in the sewer program. Mr. Cole reported that construction began in 2023 and is anticipated to be completed in December 2028. Mr. Whiting noted that another major project under development is the residuals rehabilitation project for the digester system, currently at approximately 90 percent design and estimated at roughly \$425 million.



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Additional discussion focused on the financial implications of increased capital spending and potential CSO control plan mandates. Mr. Horan noted that additional mandated spending could place pressure on MWRA's financial metrics and borrowing capacity and may require prioritization of capital projects to maintain manageable rate increases.

After confirming that there were no further questions, Mr. Manugian concluded the public hearing and returned the meeting to the Chair.

## **D. Presentation – PFAS and the MWRA's System**

*Deferred to future meeting.*

## **E. Committee Reports**

### **a. Executive Committee – Richard Raiche**

Mr. Raiche reported that the MWRA Board of Directors had voted to submit the draft updated CSO Long-Term Control Plan for regulatory review. The plan will be transmitted to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the Environmental Protection Agency by April 30, 2026.

Mr. Raiche explained that the plan evaluates several potential CSO control scenarios and incorporates climate change projections through 2050. The recommended plan seeks to eliminate CSO discharges under projected typical year conditions for that timeframe. The plan will undergo regulatory review and include opportunities for public comment.

### **b. Finance Committee – Elena Proakis Ellis**

Ms. Proakis Ellis reported on updates to the Advisory Board's financial dashboards. She noted that new functionality allows users to view prior months' data through an interactive slider.

Ms. Proakis Ellis also reported that Kishan Parida, a Northeastern University co-op student, has developed a process to convert MWRA financial reports into formats that can be more easily integrated into the dashboard system. Mr. Parida is also developing a Power BI-based dashboard model that would allow the dashboards to become interactive. Staff hope to preview this system at an upcoming Advisory Board meeting.

### **c. Operations Committee – Michael Rademacher**

Mr. Rademacher provided an update on the Sunrise Senior Living project in Sharon, which the Advisory Board approved in January for admission to the MWRA wastewater system via connection through the Town of Norwood. The proposed 99-unit facility has a maximum daily wastewater flow of approximately 10,000 gallons per day and an average daily flow of approximately 6,000 gallons per day. Mr. Rademacher reported that the project exceeded required inflow and infiltration removal requirements and that remaining approvals are occurring at the local level. No further Advisory Board action is required at this time.





Mr. Rademacher also reported that the 8(m) Working Group met in February to continue discussions regarding the protection of MWRA infrastructure. Topics discussed included potential participation in the Dig Safe system, municipal permitting practices, improved infrastructure mapping, and outreach to licensed well drillers. Staff will continue to update the Advisory Board as the work progresses.

## F. MWRA Executive Director Update

Fred Laskey, Executive Director of the MWRA, addressed the Advisory Board.

Mr. Laskey reported on recent operational activities, including coordination with communities during recent winter weather events. He also discussed the significance of the updated CSO Long-Term Control Plan, describing it as a major initiative that will guide capital spending and environmental improvements for decades.

Mr. Laskey emphasized the importance of maintaining strong coordination between MWRA and member communities as the Authority moves forward with major capital projects, including the Metropolitan Tunnel Program and CSO control projects.

## G. Action Item: Approval of Advisory Board meeting minutes from January 15, 2026

*A motion was made to approve the Advisory Board meeting minutes from January 15, 2026, as presented. It was moved by David Manugian (Bedford), seconded by Michael Rademacher (Arlington), and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.*

## H. New Business

A member of the public raised a question regarding differences in municipal retail water billing practices across MWRA communities.

Mr. Romero explained that MWRA charges wholesale assessments to member communities, while retail water and sewer rates are set independently by each municipality. He encouraged the individual to review the Advisory Board's Annual Water and Sewer Retail Rate Survey, which compares retail billing practices among communities. Mr. Romero also suggested contacting Nathan Coté, Research & Policy Analyst, for additional information about the survey.

No additional new business was raised.

## I. Adjournment + Omnibus

*A motion was made to adjourn the meeting and conduct the omnibus roll call vote. It was moved by David Manugian (Bedford) and seconded by John Sullivan (Boston).*

The items included in the omnibus roll call vote were:

- Approval of the Advisory Board meeting minutes from January 15, 2026
- Adjournment of the meeting





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The following roll call vote took place:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston (BWSC)	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
Brian White	Burlington	Yes (remote)
Lucica Hiller	Cambridge	Yes (remote)
Cate Fox-Lent	Chelsea	Yes (remote)
Jason Mammone	Dedham	Not present
Stephen Leone	Framingham	Note present
Jamal Jones	Lexington	Yes (remote)
Joe Beauchesne	Lynn	Yes (remote)
Amy McHugh	Marblehead	Yes (remote)
Scott Brinch	Medford	Yes (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)
Mike Retzky	Needham	Yes (remote)

Name	Community	Vote
Tom Fitzgerald	Newton	Yes (remote)
Robert Donnelly	Norwood	Yes (remote)
Margaret LaForest	Quincy	Yes (remote)
Chris Cole	Reading	Yes (remote)
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Yes (remote)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Yes (remote)
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	Yes (remote)
Joseph Conway	Wakefield	Yes (remote)
Patrick Fasanello	Walpole	Yes (remote)
Ian McKenzie	Waltham	Yes (remote)
Jeff Azano-Brown	Wellesley	Yes (remote)
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Yes (remote)
Lexi Dewey	Ct. River Basin	Yes (remote)
J.R. Greene	Quabbin-Ware	Yes (remote)

Respectfully submitted,

David Manugian, Secretary

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



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