



Advocacy & Accountability

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Thursday, February 5, 2026

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)
John Sullivan	Boston	Here (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Here (remote)
Dave Pavlik	Lexington	
Yem Lip	Malden	Here (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Here (remote)
Nicholas Rystrom	Revere	Here (remote)
Brendan O'Regan	Saugus	
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Here (in person)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Here (in person)
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	Here (in person)
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Here (remote)

Board of Directors members:

- Lou Taverna
- Andrew Pappastergion

Advisory Board and MWRA

staff:

- Christine Bennett, Research & Policy Analyst, Advisory Board
- Nathan Coté, Research & Policy Analyst, Advisory Board
- Matthew A. Romero, Executive Director, Advisory Board

- Abigail Bulman, Community Insights & Engagement Lead, Advisory Board
- Kishan Parida, Co-op Student, Advisory Board
- Colleen Rizzi, Director of Environmental and Regulatory Affairs, MWRA
- Hillary Coolidge, MWRA Staff
- Matthew Horan, Deputy Director, Finance/Treasurer, MWRA

Also in attendance:

From the Town of Reading:



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- Christopher Haley, Select Board Member
 - Christopher Cole, Director of Public Works
 - Karen Rose-Gillis, Town Official
 - Paul Silva, Resident
 - Melissa Murphy, Town Official
 - Karen Herrick, Town Official
 - Matthew Kraunelis, Town Manager
 - Jane Wellman, Assistant Town Manager
 - Michael Smith, Resident
 - Carlo Bacci, Resident
- From Advisory Committees:
- Andreae Down, WAC

B. MWRA Response to Advisory Board Inquiry re: Entrance Fee Relief

At the request of the Executive Director, and without objection from the Committee, this item was taken up first to accommodate representatives from the Town of Reading and MWRA staff.

The Committee reviewed MWRA's written response to the Advisory Board's inquiry regarding the Town of Reading's request for entrance fee relief.

Colleen Rizzi, MWRA Director of Environmental and Regulatory Affairs, explained that MWRA Operating Policy OP.10 governs admission to the water system and includes entrance fee provisions based on average and peak day usage. Communities have historically either paid entrance fees in a lump sum or financed them through MWRA amortization schedules. Reading elected to pay its entrance fee in a lump sum rather than finance through MWRA.

Ms. Rizzi noted that MWRA staff reviewed prior comparable situations and identified only one similar request (Town of Stoughton). In that instance, relief was provided through an adjustment to the interest rate applied to future financed payments. Because Reading did not finance its entrance fee through MWRA, that remedy is not available.

Matthew Horan, MWRA Deputy Director, Finance/Treasurer, outlined potential financial implications of providing relief. Mr. Horan explained that reimbursing the full entrance fee would require either significant use of rate stabilization funds or increases to system-wide water assessments. He further cautioned that establishing such a precedent could result in similar requests from other communities that previously paid entrance fees.

Matt Kraunelis, Town Manager of Reading, and Jane Wellman, Assistant Town Manager, reiterated the Town's request for partial relief, emphasizing fairness considerations and the impact of conservation measures that reduced actual usage below initial projections. Reading representatives indicated that



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they are seeking approximately \$2.2 million in relief and argued that the current outcome results in a disproportionate investment relative to usage.

Paul Silva, a Reading resident, also addressed the Committee regarding statutory interpretation and proportional investment concerns.

Committee members discussed the distinction between refinancing and refunding, the absence of a direct precedent for refunding lump-sum entrance fees, and the potential financial impact on other member communities.

David Manugian, Advisory Board Secretary and representative from the Town of Bedford, asked why the Town of Reading originally elected to pay an entrance fee based on a volume greater than the amount ultimately used.

Jane Wellman, Assistant Town Manager for the Town of Reading, explained that at the time Reading sought admission to the MWRA system, the Town’s withdrawals from its local water sources were placing significant stress on the Ipswich River Basin. She noted that state agencies and regional stakeholders had strongly encouraged Reading to pursue conservation measures and alternative supply options. In response, the Town joined the MWRA system at a level reflecting its then-current demand while simultaneously implementing aggressive conservation measures intended to reduce long-term consumption.

Mr. Manugian commented that, from his perspective, the additional capacity Reading purchased at the time functioned similarly to a financial option. He noted that the Town had the ability to utilize that higher capacity if conservation efforts proved less successful than anticipated, and that the value of that option existed at the time the entrance fee was paid, even if the capacity was ultimately not used.

Following discussion, a motion was made to direct Advisory Board staff to coordinate with MWRA staff to explore potential modifications to the entrance fee policy that would allow for relief based on contracted volume not utilized, and to analyze the financial impacts of any such modification on other member communities. It was moved by Sam Stivers, seconded by David Manugian, and a roll call vote was taken:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	No (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston	No (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	No (remote)
Dave Pavlik	Lexington	



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Yem Lip	Malden	No (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)
Nicholas Rystrom	Revere	Yes (remote)
Brendan O'Regan	Saugus	
Richard Raiche	Somerville	No (remote)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	No (remote)
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	No (remote)
Maurice Handel	MAPC	No (remote)

The motion failed by a vote of 3 in favor and 8 opposed, with no abstentions. Staff will transmit a formal letter to the Town of Reading documenting the Committee's action.

C. Executive Director's Report

Matthew Romero, Executive Director of the Advisory Board, informed the Committee that MWRA Executive Director Fred Laskey has formally announced his retirement. The MWRA Board of Directors has begun outlining a search process and anticipates forming a subcommittee consisting of the Secretary (as Chair), one representative from the Governor's appointees, one from the City of Boston's appointees, and one representative selected from the Advisory Board's three members on the MWRA Board.

Mr. Romero reported that he met with the Advisory Board's three MWRA Board members following the announcement to discuss process considerations and desired qualifications for the next Executive Director. Members discussed the importance of maintaining a strong working relationship between MWRA and its member communities, continued focus on ratepayer impacts, and the need for leadership experience aligned with MWRA's upcoming capital and operational challenges. It was noted that MWRA is considering engaging an executive search firm to assist in identifying and screening candidates. Staff will solicit Executive Committee input regarding desired qualifications and priorities for communication to the Advisory Board's representative on the search subcommittee. Mr. Romero also indicated that staff will prepare a formal letter recognizing Mr. Laskey's 25 years of service.

Mr. Romero reported that the Legislature overrode the Governor's veto restoring debt service assistance funding in the FY26 budget. However, the funding remains subject to potential reduction under the Governor's 9C authority. He noted that MWRA has received debt service assistance consistently from FY2016 through FY2023, though funding has not been received in the most recent fiscal years.

Members discussed the uncertainty of continued assistance and the implications for MWRA's long-term financial planning and rate stability.



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Mr. Romero and Christine Bennett, Research & Policy Analyst, informed the Committee that the Advisory Board received correspondence alleging unauthorized use of copyrighted images on its website. Staff removed the images promptly and consulted outside counsel. After reviewing the matter, staff formally responded asserting fair use as a public entity and disputing the claim. The matter has since been resolved without further action. Staff have implemented additional internal procedures to ensure appropriate sourcing of images and flagged the potential need to consider limited outside legal assistance in the future should similar matters arise.

D. FY26 Annual Independent Audit

Mr. Romero reported that the Advisory Board's annual independent audit has been completed. The audit resulted in no findings.

He thanked staff and the Advisory Board's financial consultants for their coordination and noted that the process continues to run smoothly. Going forward, audit coordination responsibilities will transition to the Advisory Board's part-time administrative staff member to allow research staff to focus on analytical and policy work. No action was required.

E. CSO Update

Mr. Romero and Richard Raiche, Chair of the Advisory Board and Chief Engineer for the City of Somerville, provided an update on MWRA's Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) long-term control planning process.

Mr. Romero explained that MWRA has revised its draft proposal following public comment and regulatory feedback. The updated draft now proposes elimination of CSOs in a typical 2050 year across the Mystic and Charles River watersheds, including the Alewife Brook sub-watershed. The revised proposal increases projected capital costs from approximately \$860 million under the prior alternative to approximately \$1.28 billion.

Mr. Raiche noted that the revised proposal reflects coordination among MWRA and its CSO partner communities and is expected to be submitted as a draft plan by the April 30, 2026 deadline. He emphasized that submission of the draft plan will initiate a formal review and comment period with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Members discussed projected financial impacts associated with the revised proposal. Preliminary estimates indicate that higher levels of CSO control would significantly increase MWRA's annual revenue requirements in future years. It was noted that increasing CSO-related spending would reduce MWRA's financial flexibility and may affect future capital planning, borrowing capacity, and the timing of other major infrastructure investments.





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Discussion also focused on affordability considerations and the importance of clearly communicating financial trade-offs to member communities and elected officials. Members emphasized the need to distinguish between CSO mitigation, stormwater management, and broader flooding challenges, particularly as public discussions increasingly conflate these issues.

Staff will continue coordinating with MWRA and partner communities and will provide additional financial analysis and outreach updates as the draft plan proceeds through regulatory review.

F. Action Item: Approval of the February 26, 2026 Advisory Board meeting agenda

A motion was made to approve the Advisory Board meeting agenda for February 26, 2026, as presented. It was moved by Sam Stivers, seconded by David Manugian, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

G. Action Item: Approval of the January 8, 2026 Executive Committee meeting minutes

A motion was made to approve the Executive Committee meeting minutes from January 8, 2026, as presented. It was moved by Sam Stivers, seconded by David Manugian, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

H. New Business

Mr. Romero noted that Yem Lip had requested discussion regarding the next phase of the Local Water System Assistance Program. As Mr. Lip was unable to remain for the meeting, the matter taken up for consideration at a future meeting.

No additional new business was raised.

I. Adjournment and Omnibus Roll Call Vote

A motion to adjourn and take up an omnibus roll call vote was put forth. It was moved by Sam Stivers and seconded by David Manugian, and added to the omnibus vote.

An omnibus vote took place on the following items:

- Approval of the February 26, 2026 Advisory Board meeting agenda
- Approval of the Executive Committee meeting minutes from January 8, 2026
- Adjournment of the meeting

The roll call vote was as follows:





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Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
Dave Pavlik	Lexington	
Yem Lip	Malden	<i>Not present at vote</i>
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)
Nicholas Rystrom	Revere	Yes (remote)
Brendan O'Regan	Saugus	
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Yes (in person)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Yes (in person)
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	Yes (in person)
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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