



# Advocacy & Accountability

Representing over 3 million people in Massachusetts since 1985

Thursday May 14, 2026  
Remote Connection Via Zoom  
10:00 AM

## ADVISORY BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

*Note: Michael Rademacher served as Acting Chair for the meeting in the absence of Advisory Board Chair Richard Raiche.*

### A. Roll call attendance

A commencing roll call was voted as follows:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Here (remote)
Daniel Maurer	Ashland	Here (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Here (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston	Here (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Here (remote)
Brian White	Burlington	Here (remote)
Lucica Hiller	Cambridge	Here (remote)
Cate Fox-Lent	Chelsea	Here (remote)
Ernest Lariviere	Everett	Here (remote)
Stephen Leone	Framingham	Here (remote)
Joe Beauchesne	Lynn	Here (remote)
Yem Lip	Malden	Here (remote)
Amy McHugh	Marblehead	Here (remote)
Tim McGivern	Medford	Here (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Here (remote)
Mike Retzky	Needham	Here (remote)
Thomas Fitzgerald	Newton	Here (remote)

Name	Community	Vote
Robert Donnelly	Norwood	Here (remote)
Margaret LaForest	Quincy	Here (remote)
Michael Kessman	Reading	Here (remote)
Brian Postlewaite	Somerville	Here (remote)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Here (remote)
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	Here (remote)
Gino Cresta	Swampscott	Here (remote)
Joseph Conway	Wakefield	Here (remote)
Patrick Fasanello	Walpole	Here (remote)
Michael Chiasson	Waltham	Here (remote)
Jeff Azano-Brown	Wellesley	Here (remote)
Jamie Dunbar	Wilbraham	Here (remote)
Joseph Lobao	Wilmington	Here (remote)
Sean Divoll	Worcester	Here (remote)
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Here (remote)
J.R. Greene	Quabbin-Ware	Here (remote)
Lexi Dewey	Ct. River Basin	Here (remote)

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

*Andrew Pappastergion, Lou Taverna, Joe Foti*

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

*Matthew Romero, Nathan Coté, Christine Bennett, Abigail Bulman, Stephanie Ackley; Stacie Marley, Colleen Rizzi, Michael Cole, Michael Altieri, Jim Coyne, Kathy Murtagh, Kim LeBeau, Rebecca Weidman, Matthew Horan, Katie Ronan, Tom Durkin, Sean Navin, Stephen Cullen, Stephen Estes-Smargiassi, Ethan Wenger*



2 Griffin Way, Suite A, Chelsea, MA 02150



(617) 788-2050



[mwra.ab@mwraadvisoryboard.com](mailto:mwra.ab@mwraadvisoryboard.com)

[mwraadvisoryboard.com](http://mwraadvisoryboard.com)

Matthew A.  
Matthew Romero



## **Also in attendance:**

*Lydia Olson (WSCAC/Mass Rivers Alliance), Andreae Downs (WAC), Moussa Siri (WSCAC), Katie Goldrick, William Cundiff (Southborough alternate), Fae Saulenas, Sean Harrington*

## **B. Emergency Amendment: Town of Wayland and the Baldwin Plant System Connection**

Matthew Romero, Executive Director of the MWRA Advisory Board, noted that an emergency amendment had been added to the agenda following a late request from the Town of Wayland regarding activation of its emergency MWRA water connection. Mr. Romero explained that the amended agenda had been properly reposted in accordance with Open Meeting Law requirements due to the emergency nature of the request.

Colleen Rizzi, Director of Environmental and Regulatory Affairs at MWRA, explained that Wayland had experienced a failure of the air system at its Baldwin Pond treatment plant, requiring the facility to be taken offline. She stated that the Town was concerned about its ability to meet water demand and maintain fire protection capacity while the plant remained out of service.

Ms. Rizzi reported that MWRA approved a short-term activation of Wayland's emergency connection to the Hultman Aqueduct to ensure adequate water supply from a public health and safety perspective. She further explained that staff were recommending approval of an emergency water supply contract for up to six months.

Ms. Rizzi noted that this represented Wayland's fourth activation of the emergency supply connection and that the Town continues to pursue full MWRA admission. She stated that Wayland recently completed review of its second MEPA filing and is preparing what is expected to be its final submission later this summer.

*A motion was made to vote to approve an emergency water supply withdrawal request from the Town of Wayland to activate its MWRA emergency connection pursuant to Policy OP.05. It was moved by David Manugian, seconded by Elena Proakis Ellis, and the following vote took place:*





# Advocacy & Accountability

Representing over 3 million people in Massachusetts since 1985

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
Daniel Maurer	Ashland	Yes (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
Brian White	Burlington	Yes (remote)
Lucica Hiller	Cambridge	Yes (remote)
Cate Fox-Lent	Chelsea	Yes (remote)
Ernest Lariviere	Everett	Yes (remote)
Stephen Leone	Framingham	Yes (remote)
Joe Beauchesne	Lynn	Yes (remote)
Yem Lip	Malden	Yes (remote)
Amy McHugh	Marblehead	Yes (remote)
Tim McGivern	Medford	Yes (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)
Mike Retzky	Needham	Yes (remote)
Thomas Fitzgerald	Newton	Yes (remote)

Name	Community	Vote
Robert Donnelly	Norwood	Yes (remote)
Margaret LaForest	Quincy	Yes (remote)
Michael Kessman	Reading	Yes (remote)
Brian Postlewaite	Somerville	Yes (remote)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Yes (remote)
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	Yes (remote)
Gino Cresta	Swampscott	Yes (remote)
Joseph Conway	Wakefield	Yes (remote)
Patrick Fasanello	Walpole	Yes (remote)
Michael Chiasson	Waltham	Yes (remote)
Jeff Azano-Brown	Wellesley	Yes (remote)
Jamie Dunbar	Wilbraham	Yes (remote)
Joseph Lobao	Wilmington	Yes (remote)
Sean Divoll	Worcester	Yes (remote)
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Yes (remote)
J.R. Greene	Quabbin-Ware	Yes (remote)
Lexi Dewey	Ct. River Basin	Yes (remote)

## C. Executive Director’s Report

Mr. Romero noted that May 9 marked Fred Laskey’s final day as Executive Director of MWRA and acknowledged Stephen Estes-Smargiassi’s appointment as Interim Executive Director during the ongoing search process for a permanent replacement.

Mr. Romero also reminded members about the upcoming Deer Island energy tour being coordinated jointly with the Wastewater Advisory Committee (WAC). Andreae Downs encouraged interested members to register promptly, noting that limited spaces remained available for the event.

Mr. Romero then provided a legislative update regarding the Mass Ready Act, formally known as the Environmental Bond Bill. He explained that the Senate version of the legislation modified provisions related to Quabbin watershed PILOT payments by increasing the proposed annual payment amount from \$50,000 to \$100,000 per community and expanding eligibility from 11 to 13 communities. He further noted that the legislation would add an additional seat to the MWRA Board of Directors specifically representing the Quabbin region.

Mr. Romero reported that the gubernatorial commission established to study PILOT payments statewide had been seated and would begin its work. He stated that MWRA is expected to provide testimony to the commission as discussions continue. Mr. Romero added that Advisory Board staff would continue coordinating with MWRA staff on outreach and communications efforts, particularly as the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Long-Term Control Plan enters its public comment period.





## D. Action Item – Approval of the MWRA Advisory Board’s FY27 Operating Budget

Mr. Romero presented the proposed FY27 Advisory Board operating budget, noting that the Executive Committee had previously reviewed the budget and recommended it for approval.

Mr. Romero explained that the most significant changes involved staffing costs. He stated that the prior fiscal year budget only partially funded a fourth full-time staff position because the position was added midway through the year. As a result, the FY27 budget reflects a full year of salary and fringe benefit costs for that position.

He also noted a modest increase in the co-op staffing line item, explaining that student work schedules had been adjusted to align with standard staff schedules in order to simplify payroll administration and scheduling consistency.

Mr. Romero emphasized that most remaining budget categories were level funded. During discussion, members reviewed the staffing and salary assumptions reflected in the budget presentation materials. Mr. Romero noted that the overall budget increase was largely attributable to personnel-related expenses.

*A motion was made to vote to approve the Advisory Board FY27 Operating Budget as presented and filed with the records of the meeting. It was moved by David Manugian, seconded by Maurice Handel, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.*

## E. Nomination & Election of an Advisory Board representative to the MWRA Board of Directors

Michael Rademacher introduced the nomination and election of an Advisory Board representative to the MWRA Board of Directors for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2026.

Matthew Romero noted that Lou Taverna was the only declared candidate for the position and that Mr. Taverna currently serves as the incumbent representative. The floor was opened for additional nominations, though none were offered.

Mr. Taverna addressed the Board and discussed several major issues facing MWRA over the coming years, including implementation of the proposed CSO program, the Metropolitan Tunnel Redundancy Project, watershed-related legislation, Deer Island asset management, pellet disposal challenges, and the ongoing search for a permanent MWRA Executive Director.

Mr. Taverna also acknowledged fellow MWRA Board members Andrew Pappastergion and Joe Foti, noting that he appreciated their guidance and collaboration during his first term representing the Advisory Board.

During discussion, Joe Foti and Andrew Pappastergion both expressed support for Mr. Taverna’s continued service, citing his prior experience as Advisory Board Chair and his contributions to MWRA Board deliberations.





# Advocacy & Accountability

Representing over 3 million people in Massachusetts since 1985

*A motion was made to vote to elect Lou Taverna as the Advisory Board representative to the MWRA Board of Directors for a three-year term from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2029. It was moved by David Manugian, seconded by Elena Proakis Ellis, and the following vote took place:*

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
Daniel Maurer	Ashland	Yes (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
Brian White	Burlington	Yes (remote)
Lucica Hiller	Cambridge	Yes (remote)
Cate Fox-Lent	Chelsea	Yes (remote)
Ernest Lariviere	Everett	Yes (remote)
Stephen Leone	Framingham	Yes (remote)
Joe Beauchesne	Lynn	Yes (remote)
Yem Lip	Malden	Yes (remote)
Amy McHugh	Marblehead	Yes (remote)
Tim McGivern	Medford	Yes (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)
Mike Retzky	Needham	Yes (remote)
Thomas Fitzgerald	Newton	Yes (remote)

Name	Community	Vote
Robert Donnelly	Norwood	Yes (remote)
Margaret LaForest	Quincy	Yes (remote)
Michael Kessman	Reading	Yes (remote)
Brian Postlewaite	Somerville	Yes (remote)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Yes (remote)
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	Yes (remote)
Gino Cresta	Swampscott	Yes (remote)
Joseph Conway	Wakefield	Yes (remote)
Patrick Fasanello	Walpole	Yes (remote)
Michael Chiasson	Waltham	Yes (remote)
Jeff Azano-Brown	Wellesley	Yes (remote)
Jamie Dunbar	Wilbraham	Yes (remote)
Joseph Lobao	Wilmington	Yes (remote)
Sean Divoll	Worcester	Yes (remote)
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Yes (remote)
J.R. Greene	Quabbin-Ware	Yes (remote)
Lexi Dewey	Ct. River Basin	Yes (remote)

**F. Action Item – Approval of the Advisory Board’s Comments & Recommendations on MWRA’s Proposed FY27 CEB & CIP**

Mr. Romero presented an overview of the Advisory Board’s proposed Comments and Recommendations regarding MWRA’s FY27 Current Expense Budget (CEB) and Capital Improvement Program (CIP). He emphasized that the presentation was intended as a high-level overview of the document and broader policy themes rather than a page-by-page review.

Mr. Romero explained that the Advisory Board was recommending a combined assessment increase of 2.50%, compared to MWRA’s proposed 2.99 percent increase. He stated that the recommendation reflected approximately \$4.3 million in net reductions, primarily associated with personnel vacancy assumptions and sludge pelletization landfill contingency funding.

He noted that the FY27 review differed from prior years because relatively few large reductions were identified. Mr. Romero stated that this reflected the long-term success of MWRA’s “sustainable and predictable” financial framework, which has helped communities rely on stable assessment growth for local budgeting purposes.

Mr. Romero discussed the historical evolution of MWRA’s financial structure, including the loss of state debt service assistance funding after the early 2000s recession period. He noted that MWRA adapted to those changes through disciplined financial management practices and that the Advisory Board ultimately embraced the sustainable and predictable assessment framework after initially expressing skepticism many years earlier.



# Advocacy & Accountability

*Representing over 3 million people in Massachusetts since 1985*

He explained that the Advisory Board is now advocating for an additional principle — “responsibility” — to guide future MWRA decision-making as the Authority enters a more financially complex period involving overlapping obligations such as CSO controls, tunnel redundancy projects, infrastructure rehabilitation, pension obligations, and workforce challenges.

Mr. Romero emphasized that “responsibility” does not mean opposition to investment but rather ensuring that projects and obligations are properly justified, transparent, realistically scoped, and evaluated in their full financial and operational context. He stated that the Advisory Board’s standard moving forward is whether “the value is worth the burden.”

A substantial portion of the presentation focused on the proposed CSO Long-Term Control Plan. Mr. Romero reviewed the Advisory Board’s community-level cost analysis dashboard and explained that much of the projected financial burden associated with the CSO program extends well beyond MWRA’s standard financial planning period through 2050. He stated that approximately two-thirds of projected costs occur after 2050 and emphasized the importance of evaluating those long-term impacts at the community level.

Mr. Romero described the Advisory Board’s terminology for the major CSO alternatives, including the “Future Storm Protection” (FSP) plan and the “Extreme Storm Protection” (ESP) plan. He explained that the FSP alternative incorporates forward-looking climate assumptions and represents one of the first climate-informed CSO planning efforts in the nation. He further stated that the ESP alternative would provide a materially higher level of storm protection but would also involve substantially greater costs, construction impacts, and long-term financial obligations.

Discussion also addressed the relationship between environmental outcomes and financial burdens. Mr. Romero noted that Advisory Board analysis suggests that increased CSO expenditures under the ESP alternative may not produce proportionate water quality improvements because stormwater runoff remains a dominant contributor to post-storm water quality impairments.

Mr. Romero additionally reviewed several process and governance recommendations included in the Comments and Recommendations document. These included recommendations related to procurement transparency, 8(m) permit tracking, workforce vacancy budgeting assumptions, spring revisit procedures, pension and OPEB planning, and preservation of the existing governance balance on the MWRA Board of Directors.

During discussion, Lucica Hiller asked questions regarding the Advisory Board review process and the impacts of the proposed reductions on MWRA staffing and operations. Mr. Romero explained that the Advisory Board’s role is to provide formal comments and recommendations to the MWRA Board of Directors, which then reviews and responds to those recommendations during the final budget adoption process.

Mr. Romero further clarified that the proposed personnel reductions did not eliminate positions, but rather adjusted vacancy assumptions to better reflect actual staffing trends and hiring experience over recent years. He noted that the recommendations still allowed for substantial hiring flexibility and included additional contingency funding.



2 Griffin Way, Suite A, Chelsea, MA 02150



(617) 788-2050



[mwra.ab@mwraadvisoryboard.com](mailto:mwra.ab@mwraadvisoryboard.com)

[mwraadvisoryboard.com](http://mwraadvisoryboard.com)

Matthew A.  
Matthew Romero



A motion was made to vote to approve the Advisory Board's Comments & Recommendations on MWRA's Proposed FY27 CEB and CIP. It was moved by David Manugian, seconded by Robert Donnelly, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

## G. Committee Reports

### a. Executive Committee – Richard Raiche

None.

### b. Finance Committee – Elena Proakis Ellis

Elena Proakis Ellis reported that the Finance Committee is actively seeking additional members and encouraged interested Advisory Board members to participate.

Christine Bennett then provided a demonstration of the updated Advisory Board CEB Dashboard 2.0, which is now available on the Advisory Board website. Ms. Bennett explained that the dashboard allows users to interactively review budgeted and actual MWRA spending trends across fiscal years and expenditure categories.

She noted that the updated version incorporated feedback received during prior previews and included improved graphics and interface functionality. Ms. Bennett encouraged members to explore the dashboard and provide additional recommendations for future refinements.

### c. Operations Committee – Michael Rademacher

Michael Rademacher reported that the Operations Committee had not recently met but noted that one recommendation developed through prior committee discussions had been incorporated into the Advisory Board's FY27 Comments and Recommendations document.

Mr. Rademacher explained that the recommendation calls for development of a centralized online intake and notification system for excavation, drilling, and construction activity occurring near MWRA infrastructure. He stated that prior committee discussions identified inconsistencies in the current 8(m) notification process and emphasized the value of a more consistent and trackable approach.

Mr. Rademacher added that the recommendation represents only an initial step and that additional committee discussions regarding broader coordination issues are expected to continue.

## H. MWRA Interim Executive Director Update – Stephen Estes-Smargiassi

Stephen Estes-Smargiassi, Interim Executive Director of MWRA, provided an update on several MWRA initiatives and ongoing activities.

Mr. Estes-Smargiassi discussed the recently filed draft Updated CSO Long-Term Control Plan and noted that the project has now entered a five-month public and regulatory comment period. He explained that MWRA would be conducting extensive outreach to municipalities, legislators, and stakeholders throughout the sewer district to encourage participation in the public review process.





# Advocacy & Accountability

Representing over 3 million people in Massachusetts since 1985

He urged Advisory Board members to engage local officials and residents in discussions regarding the plan, emphasizing the importance of receiving comments from the communities that ultimately fund the system.

Mr. Estes-Smargiassi also provided a drought update, noting that while MWRA remains in relatively stable condition, the region continues to experience drought conditions. He stated that MWRA is preparing additional water conservation outreach materials and encouraged continued public awareness regarding water conservation practices.

He further reported that MWRA has established an internal task force to evaluate the potential use of artificial intelligence technologies within the Authority. Mr. Estes-Smargiassi explained that the group is examining opportunities to improve operational efficiency while ensuring appropriate cybersecurity and governance protections.

Mr. Estes-Smargiassi also highlighted several electrification and greenhouse gas reduction initiatives underway at MWRA facilities, including deployment of additional electric vehicles, installation of EV charging infrastructure, and expansion of heat pump systems through state grant funding support.

Finally, Mr. Estes-Smargiassi noted that a retirement celebration honoring former Executive Director Fred Laskey would be held on May 28 and that additional event information would be distributed to Advisory Board members.

## **I. Action Item: Approval of Advisory Board meeting minutes from April 16, 2026**

*A motion was made to approve the Advisory Board meeting minutes from April 16, 2026, as presented. It was moved by Maurice Hanel, seconded by David Manugian, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.*

## **J. New Business**

Christine Bennett reminded members of an upcoming joint Deer Island energy tour scheduled for May 15, which will provide an in-depth overview of MWRA's energy programs.

Andreae Downs noted that legislation related to WIPPES labeling has been incorporated into the Environmental Bond Bill and encouraged members to engage with legislators on the issue.

## **K. Adjournment + Omnibus**

*A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded by Elena Proakis Ellis, and added to the omnibus roll call vote.*

*A motion was made to conduct the omnibus roll call vote. It was moved by David Manugian and seconded by Elena Proakis Ellis.*





# Advocacy & Accountability

Representing over 3 million people in Massachusetts since 1985

The items included in the omnibus roll call vote were:

- Approval of the Advisory Board FY27 Operating Budget as presented and filed with the records of the meeting
- Approval of the Advisory Board’s Comments & Recommendations on MWRA’s Proposed FY27 CEB and CIP
- Approval of the Advisory Board meeting minutes from April 19, 2026
- Adjournment of the meeting

The following roll call vote took place:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
Daniel Maurer	Ashland	Yes (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
Brian White	Burlington	Yes (remote)
Lucica Hiller	Cambridge	Yes (remote)
Cate Fox-Lent	Chelsea	Yes (remote)
Ernest Lariviere	Everett	Yes (remote)
Stephen Leone	Framingham	Yes (remote)
Joe Beauchesne	Lynn	Yes (remote)
Yem Lip	Malden	Yes (remote)
Amy McHugh	Marblehead	Yes (remote)
Tim McGivern	Medford	Yes (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)
Mike Retzky	Needham	Yes (remote)
Thomas Fitzgerald	Newton	Yes (remote)

Name	Community	Vote
Robert Donnelly	Norwood	Yes (remote)
Margaret LaForest	Quincy	Yes (remote)
Michael Kessman	Reading	Yes (remote)
Brian Postlewaite	Somerville	Yes (remote)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Yes (remote)
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	Yes (remote)
Gino Cresta	Swampscott	Yes (remote)
Joseph Conway	Wakefield	Yes (remote)
Patrick Fasanello	Walpole	Yes (remote)
Michael Chiasson	Waltham	Yes (remote)
Jeff Azano-Brown	Wellesley	Yes (remote)
Jamie Dunbar	Wilbraham	Not present
Joseph Lobao	Wilmington	Yes (remote)
Sean Divoll	Worcester	Yes (remote)
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Yes (remote)
J.R. Greene	Quabbin-Ware	Yes (remote)
Lexi Dewey	Ct. River Basin	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.



2 Griffin Way, Suite A, Chelsea, MA 02150



(617) 788-2050



[mwra.ab@mwraadvisoryboard.com](mailto:mwra.ab@mwraadvisoryboard.com)

[mwraadvisoryboard.com](http://mwraadvisoryboard.com)

Matthew A.  
Matthew Romero