



Advocacy & Accountability

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Thursday, May 9, 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 (in person)
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:

- *Andy Pappastergion*
- *Lou Taverna*

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*

Also in attendance:

- *Andreae Downs, WAC*



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Matthew A. Romero
Executive Director



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B. Action Item: Nomination of an Advisory Board representative to the MWRA Board of Directors

(This item was taken out of order from the agenda)

Executive Committee Chair Richard Raiche explained that, to date, the Advisory Board had received one nomination for the Advisory Board representative seat on the MWRA Board of Directors for the three-year term beginning July 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2029. Incumbent representative Louis “Lou” Taverna addressed the Committee and thanked members for their support and consideration. Mr. Taverna discussed several major issues expected to face the MWRA over the coming years, including Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) program decisions, construction and financing of the Metropolitan Tunnel redundancy project, current concerns from Quabbin Reservoir communities, PFAS-related pellet disposal issues, and the ongoing MWRA Executive Director search process.

Committee members thanked Mr. Taverna for his service and expressed support for his continued representation on the MWRA Board of Directors. Mr. Raiche stated that, based on his attendance at MWRA Board meetings over the previous year, Mr. Taverna had quickly become an effective and engaged representative for the Advisory Board. MWRA Board member Andrew Pappastergion also expressed strong support for Mr. Taverna’s renomination.

John DeAmicis, Executive Committee member from Stoneham, made a motion to nominate Lou Taverna as the Advisory Board representative to the MWRA Board of Directors. Advisory Board Executive Director Matthew Romero recommended a friendly amendment to close nominations. The vote was as follows:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (in person)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
Dave Pavlik	Lexington	
Yem Lip	Malden	Yes (remote)
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)





C. Executive Director's Report

Advisory Board Executive Director Matthew Romero informed the Committee that May 8, 2026 would be MWRA Executive Director Fred Laskey's final day with the Authority. Mr. Romero stated that a retirement event was expected later in the month and anticipated that many current and former MWRA and municipal officials would attend. Mr. Romero also provided an update on the current MWRA Executive Director search process, noting that he and former Advisory Board Executive Director Joe Favaloro had recently met with representatives from the executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to discuss the Advisory Board's perspective on the qualities and challenges facing the next Executive Director. Mr. Romero stated that stakeholders involved in the process recognized that the MWRA was entering a period of increasingly complex operational and policy challenges, including Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) matters and Metropolitan Tunnel redundancy planning. He further noted that Advisory Board representative Joseph Foti was serving on the search committee and that the search process was expected to move into the résumé review and semifinalist stage in the coming weeks.

Mr. Romero also discussed recent outreach efforts related to vacant gubernatorial-appointed seats on the Advisory Board. Following attendance at Save the Harbor/Save the Bay's annual gala, Mr. Romero met with the Executive Director of Save the Harbor/Save the Bay to discuss the statutory language governing those seats and the importance of appointing individuals with direct familiarity with Boston Harbor and watershed issues. He explained that several seats had remained vacant for years and expressed hope that the outreach efforts would help identify candidates with meaningful experience related to harbor and watershed concerns.

Advisory Board Research & Policy Analyst Christine Bennett then provided the Committee with a demonstration of the Advisory Board's new interactive Power BI Current Expense Budget (CEB) dashboard, which staff had been developing in coordination with the Advisory Board's web team and co-op student Kishan Parida. Mr. Romero explained that the dashboard would allow users to interact dynamically with MWRA budget data over time, including customized comparisons by fiscal year, season, and expense category, rather than relying solely on static dashboard snapshots. Ms. Bennett demonstrated several dashboard features, including interactive filtering tools and date-range selection capabilities, and noted that Committee members would receive a direct link to test the dashboard and provide feedback before it was fully integrated into the Advisory Board website.

Mr. Romero additionally reminded members about the upcoming Deer Island energy tour being conducted jointly with the Wastewater Advisory Committee (WAC). He explained that the tour had evolved from a previously planned presentation on MWRA energy projects and would now include on-site discussion of combined heat and power initiatives, battery storage pilots, and other energy efficiency efforts at Deer Island. Mr. Romero stated that Advisory Board staff had been actively encouraging legislators and municipal officials to attend and were preparing informational materials and community-specific dashboard printouts for attendees. Wastewater Advisory Committee Executive





Director Andreae Downs noted that the tour would also include discussion of newer green energy initiatives and battery storage efforts occurring at Deer Island.

Mr. Raiche informed members that the proposed updated CSO Long-Term Control Plan (LTCP) had officially been submitted and was available online through the City of Somerville's public engagement website. Mr. Raiche explained that both technical and plain-language press releases had been issued regarding the plan and noted that a public meeting on the LTCP was scheduled for June 2, 2026, with a formal public hearing anticipated later in the year. Mr. Romero added that the Advisory Board's related press materials focused specifically on the Advisory Board's dashboard analysis and the local community impacts associated with the proposed CSO plan.

D. Legislative Update

Mr. Romero provided an update on the recently renamed "Mass Ready Act," the Commonwealth's environmental bond legislation, with particular focus on provisions affecting Quabbin Reservoir communities. Mr. Romero explained that the original proposal had included temporary annual payments of \$50,000 to certain Quabbin communities while a statewide Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) commission reviewed PILOT policies and practices across Massachusetts. He reported that the Senate version of the legislation increased the proposed payment amount to \$100,000 per community, expanded the number of eligible communities from 11 to 13, and proposed adding an additional Quabbin-specific seat to the MWRA Board of Directors.

Mr. Romero informed the Committee that the Governor had formally seated the statewide PILOT commission earlier in April. He stated that a major component of the Advisory Board's upcoming comments and recommendations would focus on concerns about effectively prejudging the commission's work by approving additional PILOT payments before the commission had completed its review. Mr. Romero also noted that no MWRA representative had been appointed directly to the commission, although MWRA staff were expected to provide testimony and information regarding the Authority's existing PILOT practices. Earlier observations from MWRA Board member Andrew Pappastergion regarding the issue were referenced during the discussion.

Mr. Romero further explained that Advisory Board staff planned to continue coordinating with MWRA staff regarding legislative and communications strategy moving forward, particularly in relation to Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) matters and other emerging policy issues. He stated that both the Advisory Board and MWRA recognized the need for more proactive public communication and outreach regarding major initiatives and regional infrastructure challenges.

E. Presentation – Comments & Recommendations on MWRA's Proposed FY27 CIP and CEB

Mr. Romero presented a preliminary overview of the Advisory Board's draft comments and recommendations regarding the MWRA's proposed FY27 Current Expense Budget (CEB) and Capital Improvement Program (CIP). He explained that the presentation to the Executive Committee would





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serve as a higher-level preview of the materials that would later be presented to the full Advisory Board. Mr. Romero noted that draft materials and highlights documents had been shared with Committee members through the Executive Committee Dropbox folder and would continue to be refined prior to the Advisory Board meeting.

Mr. Romero stated that the MWRA's proposed combined water and sewer revenue requirement increase for FY27 was 2.99 percent, while Advisory Board staff were recommending a reduced increase of 2.5%, representing approximately \$4.3 million in reductions. He explained that the majority of the proposed reductions stemmed from staffing vacancy assumptions within both the water and sewer budgets. Mr. Romero stated that the MWRA continued to budget for staffing levels that had consistently proven difficult to fill, despite ongoing hiring challenges across the organization. Advisory Board Research & Policy Analyst Christine Bennett explained that Advisory Board staff recommendations still incorporated assumptions for continued hiring activity and included an additional financial cushion beyond observed hiring trends.

Mr. Romero also reviewed proposed reductions related to sludge pelletization and projected landfill disposal costs associated with potential PFAS-related regulatory changes. Mr. Romero explained that MWRA spring budget revisions had added additional funding for potential pellet landfill disposal costs and described Advisory Board concerns regarding how those revised assumptions had been incorporated into the budget process. Committee members discussed the MWRA's use of "spring revisit" adjustments and broader concerns about maintaining transparency between originally proposed budget assumptions and later revisions.

The presentation further focused on several long-term policy and financial pressures facing the MWRA, including future Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) expenditures, Metropolitan Tunnel redundancy planning, Deer Island capital replacement needs, pension and Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) obligations, workforce recruitment challenges, PFAS-related regulatory uncertainty, and watershed management concerns. Mr. Romero emphasized that the Advisory Board's recommendations sought to move beyond solely focusing on short-term rate reductions and instead promote a broader framework centered on "sustainable, predictable, and responsible" long-term financial planning.

Committee members also discussed MWRA procurement practices and concerns regarding limited bidder participation on certain MWRA construction projects. Mr. Romero described Advisory Board staff efforts to analyze recent MWRA procurement data, including bidder participation and contract award trends, and suggested that additional data collection and review could help identify opportunities to improve procurement competitiveness. Mr. Raiche discussed Somerville's past experience reviewing municipal procurement practices and noted that outdated contract requirements and administrative practices could discourage contractor participation.



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Additional discussion addressed the MWRA's governance structure, ongoing workforce and infrastructure challenges, watershed management concerns involving potential herbicide use, and the need for clearer long-term public communication regarding major infrastructure investments and affordability impacts. Mr. Romero also emphasized the importance of evaluating regional infrastructure decisions through the lens of local community impacts and ratepayer affordability, particularly in relation to long-term CSO planning costs.

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

F. Action Item: Advisory Board FY27 Operating Budget

Mr. Romero presented the proposed FY27 Advisory Board operating budget and noted that the budget remained substantially unchanged from the version previously reviewed by the Executive Committee, aside from correction of a typographical error previously identified by Committee member Sam Stivers. Mr. Romero explained that the largest year-over-year increase reflected the full annual funding of a recently added staff position, which had only been partially funded in the prior fiscal year due to the timing of the hire. He also noted a modest increase related to co-op staffing hours after staff determined that co-op employees could work a standard 37.5-hour schedule rather than the previously assumed 35-hour weekly cap.

Following discussion, Mr. Raiche requested a motion to recommend that the full Advisory Board approve the Advisory Board's FY27 operating budget. The motion was seconded and was later included in the omnibus roll call vote.

A motion was made to recommend that the full Advisory Board approve the Advisory Board's Operating Budget for FY27. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded by David Manugian, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

G. Action Item: Approval of the May 14, 2026 Advisory Board meeting agenda

A motion was made to approve the Advisory Board meeting agenda for May 14, 2026, as presented. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded by David Manugian, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

H. New Business

Mr. Romero informed the Committee that a vacancy currently existed on the Finance Committee following the departure of a Needham representative from the Advisory Board. Mr. Romero explained that, under the Advisory Board bylaws, the chairs of the Operations Committee and Finance Committee are authorized to designate members to their respective committees. He stated that Finance Committee





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Chair Elena Proakis-Ellis had appointed David Manugian to fill the vacancy after he expressed interest in serving. Mr. Romero also noted that Ms. Proakis-Ellis had asked staff to continue soliciting interest from other Executive Committee members who might wish to serve on the Finance Committee in the future.

I. Omnibus Roll Call Vote

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

An omnibus vote took place on the following items:

- To recommend that the full Advisory Board approve Advisory Board’s Comments & Recommendations on the MWRA’s Proposed FY27 CIP and CEB
- Approval of the May 14, 2026 Advisory Board meeting agenda
- To recommend that the full Advisory Board approve the Advisory Board’s Operating Budget for FY27

The following vote took place:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (in person)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
Dave Pavlik	Lexington	
Yem Lip	Malden	Yes (remote)
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)

J. Executive Session



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A motion that the Board enter executive session pursuant to the Open Meeting Law, to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel, specifically the Executive Director, regarding contract renewal. The Board will return to open session solely to report any action taken, if any, and to adjourn. was put forth. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded by David Manugian. The following vote took place:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (in person)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
Dave Pavlik	Lexington	
Yem Lip	Malden	Yes (remote)
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)

Executive session concluded with one vote being taken, which was to offer the Executive Director a new employment agreement for a three-year period with adjustments agreed to by the Executive Committee. Mr. Raiche noted that the most prominent adjustment was the inclusion of a three-year rolling renewal provision, similar to the arrangement utilized for the previous Executive Director, which would eliminate the need to renegotiate the agreement again in three years.

K. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was put forth. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded by Sam Stivers, and added to the omnibus vote.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (in person)
David Manugian	Bedford	
John Sullivan	Boston	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
Dave Pavlik	Lexington	





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Yem Lip	Malden	Yes (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	
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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