



Advocacy & Accountability

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Thursday, September 17, 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	Here (in person)
Yem Lip	Malden	
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Here (remote)
Nicholas Rystrom	Revere	Here (remote)
Brendan O'Regan	Saugus	Here (remote)
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:

- Joseph Foti
- 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
- Jogeashwini Srinivasan-Ramesh, Co-op Student, Advisory Board
- Stephanie Ackley



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Matthew A. Romero
Executive Director



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B. Executive Director's Report

MWRA Advisory Board Executive Director Matthew Romero introduced Jogeashwini Srinivasan-Ramesh, the Advisory Board's new Northeastern University co-op. Mr. Romero then asked Research & Policy Analyst Nathan Coté to provide an update on the annual Rate Survey. Mr. Coté reported that the Rate Survey workflow has continued to be refined over successive co-op cycles, both in terms of managing the project and identifying candidates with the appropriate skills during the hiring process. Staff are currently entering and quality-checking rate formulas and calculations for MWRA communities, other Massachusetts communities with public water and sewer systems, and the national comparison communities. The first round of the "Beyond the Numbers" questionnaire has also been distributed, with an expanded focus on stormwater this year. Mr. Coté reported that the project remains on schedule. Mr. Romero added that recruitment for the next co-op cycle is already underway.

Mr. Romero reported that the Advisory Board's annual independent audit is about to begin. He noted that Stephanie Ackley has taken over a number of administrative and financial responsibilities, including payroll, bill payment, and work associated with the annual audit. This transition has shifted these responsibilities away from Analysis staff, allowing additional staff time to be devoted to research and analysis.

Mr. Romero then provided an update on issues involving the Quabbin watershed communities. Lou Taverna discussed the MWRA Board of Directors' special meeting held in July, where representatives from Quabbin-area communities raised concerns regarding access to water and other issues associated with the reservoir. Mr. Taverna noted that potential areas for cooperation include technical assistance, emergency-response support, and assistance navigating the process for siting drinking water wells on DCR property.

Mr. Romero said the Advisory Board supports identifying practical areas where MWRA can assist the watershed communities, while maintaining its position that MWRA ratepayers should not be responsible for constructing local wells, treatment facilities, or distribution infrastructure. Members discussed the challenges associated with providing public water in communities where distribution systems are limited or nonexistent, as well as the infrastructure and costs that would be associated with expanding service. Chair Richard Raiche suggested that MWRA evaluate whether additional service options are technically feasible and what they would entail financially. Staff agreed to follow up with MWRA on the issue.

Mr. Romero also reported that Connecticut River Valley gubernatorial representative Lexi Dewey intends to formally request that representatives of the Quabbin-area communities make a brief presentation at a future Advisory Board meeting, potentially in November, to present their concerns and perspectives directly to members.





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Turning to legislative matters, Mr. Romero noted that the Advisory Board has added a legislative section to News & Notes and plans to expand its legislative outreach during the next legislative session. He reported that staff from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) reached out following the first installment, and that the Advisory Board and MAPC are scheduled to meet on September 30 to discuss potential areas of collaboration on legislative initiatives and priorities.

Mr. Romero reported that the state budget continues to include the \$500,000 Clinton wastewater reimbursement and that \$1.5 million in debt service assistance has been included. Members briefly discussed historical funding levels and the Advisory Board's continued advocacy for additional assistance. The Committee also discussed the status of the Mass Ready Act and separate Quabbin equity legislation, including provisions affecting Quabbin-area communities that remained under consideration.

C. Advisory Board FY27 goals and objectives

Mr. Romero provided the Committee with a preview of the Advisory Board's FY27 goals and objectives, noting that a more detailed presentation would be provided at the following week's Advisory Board meeting alongside presentations from MWRA, WAC, and WSCAC on their respective priorities and challenges for the coming year.

Mr. Romero said the region is entering a significant transition following approximately two decades of comparatively lower capital spending after completion of major investments such as the Boston Harbor Project and the original CSO program. With aging infrastructure, the Metropolitan Water Tunnel Program, major Deer Island reinvestment, and other water and wastewater system needs ahead, MWRA is beginning a substantially more capital-intensive period. He characterized FY27 as an important preparation year for understanding and responding to that transition.

One area of focus will be MWRA's organizational and workforce capacity. Mr. Romero noted that the Advisory Board has historically examined persistent vacancies and personnel surpluses primarily as annual budget issues. Looking forward, however, MWRA will need to fill existing vacancies while potentially adding engineers, operators, project managers, supervisors, and other specialized staff needed to deliver a much larger capital program. He said the Advisory Board's role will be to determine whether additional capacity is demonstrated and appropriately sized to both the work that can realistically be delivered and the burden borne by ratepayers.

Mr. Romero also emphasized the delayed financial impact of capital spending. Project expenditures drive borrowing needs, which in turn generate debt service that ultimately flows into community assessments. As a result, near-term rate increases may remain relatively stable even as the longer-term financial outlook changes. He noted that the tunnel program, Deer Island reinvestment, CSO work, and the remainder of MWRA's capital program have different purposes and schedules but ultimately converge in the same assessment picture. The Advisory Board therefore intends to examine the combined trajectory early enough for project timing, sequencing, financing, and scope to be part of the





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discussion before those costs reach local water and sewer budgets.

Mr. Romero identified the ongoing CSO process and the upcoming proposed FY28 budget as issues requiring near-term attention. He also identified system expansion as an issue where a decision is not yet required but the available planning window is narrowing. MWRA's five-year entrance fee waiver expires in December 2027, and Mr. Romero noted that the Advisory Board should begin considering what should occur after the waiver expires rather than waiting until a decision is immediately required. Quabbin, PILOT, and other legislative matters were also identified as issues to continue monitoring.

More broadly, Mr. Romero said the Advisory Board's role remains to evaluate whether proposed investments provide sufficient public value for the costs communities will be asked to bear. This includes determining whether the need has been demonstrated, whether the scope and workforce capacity are appropriately sized, whether costs are fairly allocated, and whether communities are given sufficient information early enough to evaluate major decisions. With the Advisory Board office now fully staffed for the first time since before the pandemic, he said staff are better positioned to translate complex regional issues into information communities can use to understand the impacts, communicate with local stakeholders, and participate in Advisory Board decision-making.

During discussion, members asked about the timing of the CSO program. Chair Richard Raiche explained that design work would begin following final approval of the plan in early 2027, with an existing Somerville project expected to reach construction as early as summer 2027. Mr. Romero noted that CSO spending will occur alongside major Deer Island asset protection work and the Metropolitan Water Tunnel Program, underscoring the importance of viewing these investments collectively when considering future capital and debt service pressures.

Members also discussed potential system expansion. In response to a question regarding whether additional communities have expressed interest in joining MWRA, Mr. Romero said the MetroWest communities appear to be furthest along, with some communities having entered municipal agreements to jointly study the feasibility of connecting to MWRA. He noted continued activity on the South Shore, while communities in the Ipswich River basin continue to evaluate MWRA as an option but face significant costs and logistical challenges associated with connecting to the system.

D. CSO Updated Long-Term Control Plan

Mr. Romero asked Abigail Bulman, Community Insight & Engagement Lead, to provide an update on the Advisory Board's recent CSO outreach. Ms. Bulman reported that staff have been conducting targeted outreach to municipal officials and legislators, including distribution of the Advisory Board's CSO Resources Hub and press release and notification that the public comment deadline had been extended to October 30. Additional outreach was planned to continue highlighting available resources and inviting officials to upcoming Advisory Board events. Mr. Romero said staff have sought to provide new



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information with each communication, including the CSO dashboard, dashboard walkthrough video, and Resources Hub, rather than repeatedly sending the same message.

Mr. Romero then discussed the municipal CSO comment template prepared by staff. He explained that the template was intentionally written from a municipal perspective rather than as a generic Advisory Board letter. The template supports the proposed April 30 plan while emphasizing the local tradeoffs associated with additional mandated CSO spending. Mr. Romero noted that MWRA ratepayers include residents, businesses, nonprofits, and other local institutions that also bear municipal tax and utility costs. The template therefore encourages communities to identify local infrastructure, stormwater, sewer, and other priorities that could compete for resources if CSO costs increase.

Chair Raiche discussed the preliminary cost-sharing arrangements among MWRA, Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville and noted that the existing allocations are tied to the proposed plan. He said more stringent control requirements could require the participating entities to revisit those allocations. Chair Raiche also noted that the public comment period had been extended while the deadline for moving from the draft to the final plan had not similarly been extended and said an extension of the final submission deadline would be requested.

Chair Raiche also discussed ongoing modeling of the collection systems and the relationship between CSOs, sanitary sewer overflows, and flooding during larger storms. He explained that modeling indicates widespread SSOs and flooding beginning with larger design storms and cautioned that controlling CSOs to a 25-year level would not necessarily eliminate all sanitary sewage reaching the rivers through other pathways. He noted that additional modeling is being conducted to determine whether modifications could provide additional control beyond the future typical-year standard while remaining technically and financially reasonable.

Mr. Romero confirmed that the Advisory Board's CSO dashboard uses the preliminary cost allocation associated with the proposed alternative and cautioned that MWRA's share could change if a more stringent alternative were required. Staff are customizing the municipal template for individual communities by incorporating community-specific CSO cost projections and MWRA assessments, while also providing opportunities for municipalities to describe local projects and financial pressures.

Mr. Romero then reviewed the Advisory Board's draft comments on the Updated Long-term Control Plan. He said the comments approach the issue from the Advisory Board's broader regional and ratepayer perspective and argue that increasingly costly mandates should be supported by correspondingly strong evidence of public value. The draft supports the proposed alternative and focuses on the incremental benefits and costs associated with moving to more stringent levels of CSO control.



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Members discussed how additional CSO costs would affect communities throughout the MWRA wastewater system, including communities without combined sewers. David Pavlik noted that upstream communities may not view CSOs as a local issue but would nevertheless experience the resulting wastewater assessment impacts. Mr. Romero agreed that these costs may be less visible to communities without CSOs until they begin appearing in future assessments. Members also discussed the broader pressures facing both water and sewer rates as MWRA undertakes CSO work, the Metropolitan Water Tunnel Program, and other major capital investments.

Mr. Romero emphasized that neither the municipal template nor the Advisory Board's draft comments required a vote at this meeting. Both documents will be distributed to Advisory Board members in advance of the September meeting. Communities will then have time to consider whether to submit their own comments, while Advisory Board members will have an opportunity to review and ask questions about the regional comments before a formal vote in October. MWRA staff will also be available to address technical questions before the vote.

Mr. Romero concluded that the Advisory Board recognizes that additional work was anticipated following completion of the original Long-term Control Plan. He said the question now before regulators and the participating entities is determining the appropriate level of additional control, and that the Advisory Board's outreach and comments are intended to inform that decision.

E. December 10th Advisory Board Holiday Open House

Mr. Romero reported that the Advisory Board Holiday Open House has been scheduled for December 10 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. He said the event will again provide an informal opportunity for members, MWRA staff, municipal officials, and other attendees to connect, exchange ideas, and network in a setting similar to the informal conversations that occurred when Advisory Board meetings were held in person each month.

Mr. Romero noted that the Open House has been well received in previous years and that the venue has been placed on hold, with the remaining contractual arrangements to be finalized.

F. Action Item: Nomination of Executive Committee

Mr. Romero reported that the proposed FY27 slate of Executive Committee members and officers remains unchanged from the previous year. He explained that the Executive Committee serves as the Nominating Committee and recommends a slate for consideration by the full Advisory Board. He also noted that additional nominations may be made from the floor at the Advisory Board meeting.

A motion was made to nominate the proposed slate of Executive Committee members and officers for FY27, as presented. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded by Sam Stivers, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.





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G. Action Item: Approval of the September 24, 2026 Advisory Board meeting agenda

A motion was made to approve the Advisory Board meeting agenda for September 24, 2026, as presented. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded by Sam Stivers, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

H. Action Item: Approval of Executive Committee minutes from June 11, 2026

A motion was made to approve the Advisory Board meeting minutes from June 11, 2026, as presented. It was moved by Sam Stivers, seconded by Maurice Handel, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

I. New Business

None.

J. Adjournment

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

K. Omnibus Roll Call Vote

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

An omnibus vote took place on the following items:

- Approval of the September 24, 2026 Advisory Board meeting agenda
- Approval of the June 11, 2026 Executive Committee meeting minutes
- Approval of the nomination of the FY27 Executive Committee
- Adjournment

The following vote took place:

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





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Dave Pavlik	Lexington	Yes (in person)
Yem Lip	Malden	
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)
Nicholas Rystrom	Revere	Yes (remote)
Brendan O'Regan	Saugus	Yes (remote)
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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Manugian".

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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