Thursday, October 15, 2026
Hybrid Meeting
10:00 AM

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

A. Roll Call Attendance

A commencing roll call voted as follows:

Name	Community	Attendance
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Here (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Here (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston	
Jay Hersey	Brookline	
David 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*
- *Jogeashwini Srinivasan-Ramesh, Co-op Student, Advisory Board*
- *Stephanie Ackley*

B. Executive Director's Report

Matthew A. Romero, Executive Director of the MWRA Advisory Board, began his report with an update on the selection process for MWRA's next Executive Director. Mr. Romero reported that the selection committee had announced two finalists: Matt Brown, Interim Chief Executive Officer and General Manager of DC Water, who also served as Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President of Operations and Engineering; and Jonathan Gulliver, Undersecretary of Transportation and State Highway Administrator for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

Mr. Romero explained that the executive search firm Isaacson, Miller was coordinating individual interviews between the finalists and members of the MWRA Board of Directors ahead of an anticipated vote on October 21. He also noted that Mr. Foti had stepped down from the selection committee to avoid a potential appearance of a conflict of interest arising from a reporting relationship with Mr. Gulliver. He was seeking additional ethics guidance regarding participation in the upcoming vote.

In response to questions from John DeAmicis, Andy Pappastergion, the Advisory Board's representative on the MWRA Board of Directors, provided an overview of the selection process. Mr. Pappastergion explained that the four-member screening committee, chaired by the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs, had reviewed approximately 47 applicants and selected eight candidates for virtual interviews in August. Five candidates subsequently advanced to in-person interviews in Boston in September, after which the committee selected the two finalists. He clarified that the screening committee's work was complete and that responsibility for the final selection now rested with the full Board of Directors.

Richard Raiche, Chair of the Advisory Board, discussed the anticipated process following the vote, including authorization to negotiate a contract with the selected candidate and subsequent Board approval of the contract terms. Mr. Pappastergion confirmed that the Board would also establish the new Executive Director's start date. He noted that the Board had previously adjusted the position's salary range based on the completed non-union compensation study and anticipated that the new Executive Director's salary would exceed that of former Executive Director Fred Laskey while remaining within the approved range.

Lou Taverna reported that he had scheduled virtual interviews with both finalists in preparation for the upcoming vote. Mr. Pappastergion reflected on the difficulty and significance of the selection process, describing it as one of the most demanding responsibilities he had undertaken during his 30 years on the Board of Directors. Mr. Romero indicated that the Advisory Board would provide an update on the selection at its October 22 meeting.

Mr. DeAmicis also asked about the future role of Stephen Estes-Smargiassi, who was serving as MWRA's Interim Executive Director. Mr. Romero explained that Mr. Estes-Smargiassi was expected to transition

into a position comparable to his previous role following the appointment of a permanent Executive Director. He anticipated that Mr. Estes-Smargiassi would remain with MWRA for an unspecified period to assist with the leadership transition, including the onboarding of Kathy Baskin, the new Director of Planning and Sustainability.

Mr. Romero concluded his report with an update on Advisory Board membership. He noted that the Governor's Office was considering appointments to several long-vacant gubernatorial seats on the Advisory Board, potentially filling those positions together. He also reported that Watertown had appointed a new representative and that the Advisory Board was pursuing an opportunity to fill Winchester's vacant seat following an inquiry from a local official regarding the Updated CSO Control Plan.

Additionally, Mr. Romero reported that Advisory Board staff had been reviewing municipal contact information and membership records to identify vacancies, retirements, and changes in representation. Abigail Bulman, Community Insights and Engagement Lead, had received responses to a recent outreach effort verifying community contacts and representatives. Mr. Romero emphasized that filling vacant seats and ensuring communities had officially designated voting representatives would be a major membership priority for the coming year.

C. Draft Advisory Board Comments on the Draft Updated Long-Term CSO Control Plan

Mr. Romero presented the Advisory Board's draft comments on the Draft Updated Long-Term CSO Control Plan for the Executive Committee's recommendation to the full Advisory Board. He noted that there had been no substantive changes to the comments since the Committee's previous review, with only minor formatting adjustments made to the document.

Mr. Romero also reiterated that Advisory Board staff continued to conduct outreach and remained available to meet with interested parties regarding the proposed CSO plan. Ms. Bulman provided an update on the Advisory Board's outreach strategy for the remaining weeks of the public comment period. She explained that staff had developed a tiered outreach plan, including the distribution of a media packet containing materials developed throughout the review process. The packet was scheduled to be distributed that day as part of continued outreach to municipal leaders, legislators, and other interested parties.

Mr. Raiche asked whether members had any questions or comments on the draft letter. Hearing none, he requested a motion recommending that the full Advisory Board approve the comments.

A motion was made to recommend that the Advisory Board approve the draft Advisory Board comments on the Draft Updated Long-Term CSO Control Plan. It was moved by David Manugian, seconded by Sam Stivers, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

D. November Advisory Board Agenda Item - Quabbin

Mr. Romero reported that Lexi Dewey, the Advisory Board's Connecticut River Basin representative, had expressed interest in inviting representatives from the Quabbin Reservoir host communities to speak at the November Advisory Board meeting. He compared the request to the Committee's previous authorization for representatives of Save the Alewife Brook to address the Advisory Board. Mr. Romero explained that he had discussed the proposal with Ms. Dewey but had not yet received a formal request identifying the proposed speakers.

Mr. Romero expressed concerns about the potential selection of speakers, emphasizing that the presentation should provide an opportunity for constructive dialogue rather than perpetuate disagreements between eastern and western Massachusetts communities. He noted that he had encouraged Ms. Dewey to identify community representatives interested in discussing potential solutions and areas of common ground. He also expressed reservations about inviting legislators to make presentations, noting that, to his knowledge, legislators had not previously been invited to address the Advisory Board in that capacity. Mr. Romero emphasized that the Advisory Board's membership represented its appointing communities and that requests to address the Board should be considered with that purpose in mind.

Mr. Raiche confirmed that no formal request had been submitted and suggested that the matter could be deferred until one was received. Mr. Romero explained that the item had been included on the October agenda to allow sufficient time for consideration ahead of the proposed November presentation. He indicated that, depending on the individuals proposed, staff might recommend declining the request and suggesting alternative representatives who could contribute to a more constructive discussion.

Ms. Proakis Ellis expressed a different perspective, emphasizing the importance of allowing individuals with opposing viewpoints to address the Advisory Board. She noted that the Advisory Board had taken a relatively clear position on the Quabbin-related issues and cautioned that declining to hear opposing perspectives could create the impression that the Board was unwilling to consider other views. She suggested that presentations could be subject to reasonable time limits, allowing participation without significantly disrupting the meeting. Mr. Romero responded that his concern was not with hearing opposing viewpoints but with ensuring that invited speakers were interested in substantive engagement rather than furthering existing divisions. He noted that some community leaders had expressed similar frustrations with the contentious nature of the discussions and wanted to focus on potential solutions.

Ms. Proakis Ellis reiterated that hearing from individuals with whom members strongly disagreed could still be valuable, particularly if it provided an opportunity for both sides to better understand each other's positions. Mr. DeAmicis agreed that he was generally open to hearing from opposing viewpoints, provided the discussion remained civil.

Mr. Handel also supported allowing public participation and suggested establishing a designated public comment period at the beginning of Advisory Board meetings. He referenced Needham's Select Board, which provides a 15-minute public comment period, as an example of how participation could be accommodated while maintaining control over meeting schedules. He suggested that such an approach would provide an opportunity for ratepayers to be heard without interfering with the Board's regular business.

Mr. Raiche acknowledged the perspectives raised and indicated that the Committee would consider the request if and when it was formally submitted. Mr. Romero confirmed that any proposed presentation would require Executive Committee approval under the Advisory Board's procedures for placing items on meeting agendas. No action was taken.

E. Quabbin Regional Issues

Mr. Romero provided an update on MWRA's application under the Interbasin Transfer Act (IBTA), noting that he had recently attended a public hearing before the Water Resources Commission (WRC). In response to a request from Mr. DeAmicis for background, Mr. Romero explained that MWRA was seeking advance authorization to transfer up to 20 million gallons per day (MGD) from the Quabbin Reservoir to support potential future water system expansion.

Mr. Romero explained that regulatory changes adopted in 2018 allowed the donor basin and receiving basin portions of the IBTA review to proceed separately. Under this process, MWRA could obtain authorization for the proposed 20 MGD transfer before identifying specific receiving communities, which would subsequently undergo their own regulatory reviews. He noted that the requested volume was consistent with the 20 MGD of system expansion previously supported by the Advisory Board as part of its recommendation to waive entrance fees for eligible new water system communities.

Mr. DeAmicis asked about the relationship between the proposed authorization and MWRA's existing water withdrawals, noting that the system currently uses approximately 200 MGD compared with historical withdrawals of approximately 300 MGD. Mr. Romero explained that the proposed authorization concerned additional transfers associated with future system expansion, rather than existing withdrawals. He also clarified that communities seeking to join MWRA's water system would still be subject to the applicable IBTA review process.

Mr. Romero reported that the recent public hearing had attracted considerable participation from Quabbin-area residents and advocates, many of whom raised concerns extending beyond the specific transfer application. Although the Advisory Board had not traditionally submitted comments on IBTA applications, he explained that staff had prepared a draft comment letter in response to the heightened attention surrounding the proposal. The public comment deadline had recently been extended to the October 28, allowing additional time for members to review the draft.

Mr. Romero explained that the proposed comments emphasized the Advisory Board's general support for responsible water system expansion and the benefits it could provide to existing member communities. He stressed that the separation of donor and receiving basin reviews did not eliminate subsequent regulatory requirements or the Advisory Board's authority to approve individual communities seeking admission to the MWRA system. He further emphasized that the Advisory Board was not a monolithic body, as its members represented communities with differing interests and would need to evaluate each proposed expansion on its individual merits. He noted that the earlier decision to support entrance fee waivers had required extensive discussion and consideration of the financial implications for existing members.

Mr. Raiche agreed that submitting comments was appropriate, noting that the Advisory Board had already established its general support for system expansion through the entrance fee waiver discussions. He emphasized, however, that support for expansion as a concept did not constitute automatic approval of individual projects, which would continue to be evaluated against separate criteria. He supported submitting a letter that reflected both the Advisory Board's position on responsible system expansion and its continuing role in reviewing future admission requests. Mr. Romero encouraged members to review the draft letter and provide any suggested revisions before the end of the public comment period.

Turning to the Commonwealth's Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Commission, Mr. Romero reported that he had participated remotely in a recent listening session. He explained that the Commission was examining PILOT programs across Massachusetts as part of the Governor's broader initiatives addressing Quabbin-area concerns, including payments associated with MWRA watershed lands.

Mr. Romero noted that the administration had provided a useful comparison between MWRA's watershed PILOT program and the Commonwealth's broader PILOT program. He explained that the discussion highlighted several features of MWRA's program that were not available under the state's program, including provisions related to reimbursement calculations and the treatment of certain municipal costs. Based on the feedback he received during the session, including discussions with Senator Jo Comerford and other participants, he believed that several aspects of MWRA's program were viewed favorably by representatives of communities receiving payments under other arrangements.

During the discussion, Mr. DeAmicis raised the issue of communities that host MWRA facilities but do not receive PILOT payments. He cited Stoneham, noting that a substantial portion of the community's land was devoted to conservation and water-related infrastructure, including pumping stations, reservoirs, and other facilities. Mr. Romero acknowledged the distinction but cautioned that extending PILOT payments to every community hosting MWRA infrastructure would create additional costs for MWRA ratepayers.

Mr. Romero identified potential opportunities for collaboration with Quabbin-area communities, particularly regarding reimbursement for emergency response services. He explained that local municipalities may incur costs when responding to incidents on watershed properties, sometimes arriving before MWRA or state personnel. He suggested that developing appropriate reimbursement arrangements for those services could provide a constructive area of agreement, separate from the broader disagreements surrounding PILOT payments. He referenced MWRA's existing practices for reimbursing certain municipal emergency response costs as a potential model.

Mr. Romero indicated that staff would continue exploring opportunities for cooperation while maintaining the Advisory Board's established positions on watershed PILOT payments. Mr. DeAmicis asked about the total amount of MWRA's PILOT payments, and Mr. Romero indicated that the figure was available in MWRA's budget but declined to provide an estimate without verifying the amount.

F. 2026 Water & Sewer Retail Rate Survey

Nathan Coté, Research & Policy Analyst for the MWRA Advisory Board, provided an update on the 2026 Water & Sewer Rate Survey, noting that it remained the Advisory Board's most requested publication. Mr. Coté explained that Jogeashwini Srinivasan-Ramesh, the Advisory Board's Northeastern University co-op, had been assisting with data collection and outreach to communities to ensure that the survey reflected the most current water and sewer rates.

Mr. Coté also discussed the Beyond the Numbers questionnaire, which was designed to gather additional information about the challenges and practices of municipal water and sewer utilities beyond their rates. The questionnaire covered topics including financial challenges, billing practices, staffing, regulatory requirements, and stormwater management. He noted that staff had been promoting the questionnaire through the Advisory Board's newsletter and direct outreach to communities.

Mr. Coté encouraged Committee members to complete the questionnaire or forward it to the appropriate individuals within their communities. He emphasized the importance of obtaining broad participation and reminded members that responses were requested by November 1, 2026.

G. Independent Annual Audit

Mr. Romero introduced Stephanie Ackley, the Advisory Board's part-time Administrative Assistant, who had taken the lead on coordinating the FY26 Independent Annual Audit.

Ms. Ackley reported that the audit commenced on October 1, 2026, and was being conducted by Randall Davis, CPA, of Davis Kelley, LLP. She noted that Mr. Davis had been involved in the Advisory Board's annual audits for more than 20 years, including his work at his previous firm. The audit focused on reviewing the Advisory Board's financial records and ensuring that its financial statements were accurate and free from material misstatements, fraud, or asset misappropriation.

Ms. Ackley explained that the auditor's initial information requests had been completed and submitted on October 7, ahead of the October 9 deadline. Davis Kelley had been provided access to the Advisory Board's internal controls, financial procedures, payroll records, retirement statements, bookkeeping records, and bank statements. Growth Lab, the Advisory Board's financial management partner, had also provided supplemental reporting and supporting documentation in response to the auditor's inquiries.

As part of the audit, several staff members involved in financial and operational reporting completed a fraud risk questionnaire addressing invoice processing, approval procedures, authorization controls, and recordkeeping practices. Ms. Ackley noted that she had been working to formalize the Advisory Board's standard operating procedures and had incorporated those improvements into the audit documentation. She anticipated receiving the auditor's final assessment between late October and early November. Any recommended adjustments would be shared with Growth Lab to support the reconciliation and financial closeout of FY26, while additional findings would be used to strengthen the Advisory Board's internal procedures.

Mr. Romero thanked Ms. Ackley for her work and acknowledged Mr. Coté's earlier contributions to maintaining financial procedures during a period of limited staffing. He explained that, following his appointment as Executive Director, the Advisory Board had worked to reestablish appropriate separation of duties so that the individuals approving invoices and payroll were not also responsible for processing those transactions. Mr. Davis had assisted in maintaining those safeguards during the staffing transition, and Ms. Ackley was now helping to formalize the procedures. Mr. Romero indicated that staff would provide further updates on any recommended changes intended to strengthen financial oversight and prevent potential misuse of funds.

Mr. DeAmicis asked whether MWRA's own annual independent audit was presented to its Board of Directors. Mr. Pappastergion confirmed that it was.

H. December 10th Advisory Board Holiday Gathering

Mr. Romero reminded members that the Advisory Board's annual holiday gathering would take place on Thursday, December 10, 2026, at the Masonic Museum, where the event had been held for the previous two years. He encouraged members to invite colleagues, municipal officials, and other individuals from their communities who might benefit from meeting Advisory Board members and staff. He noted that the RSVP link was now available and would be included in the meeting materials.

Mr. Raiche echoed the invitation, encouraging members to bring additional colleagues from their organizations to help expand participation in the event. Mr. Romero particularly encouraged members to invite junior engineers, assistant directors, and other municipal staff who might eventually serve on the Advisory Board. He explained that introducing younger professionals to the Advisory Board's work

could help develop future membership and provide continuity as existing representatives retired or transitioned into other positions.

Mr. Raiche also suggested inviting MWRA staff members with whom communities regularly interacted, particularly those who had recently assumed new responsibilities following internal staffing changes. Members briefly discussed Kathy Baskin's appointment and her previous experience with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the Charles River Watershed Association. Mr. Romero noted that Ms. Baskin had extensive experience working with MWRA and the Advisory Board and expressed enthusiasm about continuing that relationship.

Mr. Romero encouraged members to contact Advisory Board staff with suggestions for specific individuals they would like invited and expressed hope that attendance would continue to grow following the success of the previous two gatherings.

I. Action Item: Approval of the October 22, 2026 Advisory Board meeting agenda

A motion was made to approve the Advisory Board meeting agenda for October 22, 2026, as presented. It was moved by David Manugian, seconded by Maurice Handel, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

J. Action Item: Approval of Executive Committee minutes from September 17, 2026

A motion was made to approve the Executive Committee meeting minutes from September 17, 2026, as presented. It was moved by David Manugian, seconded by Sam Stivers, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

K. New Business

None.

L. Adjournment and Omnibus Roll Call Vote

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting and was added to the omnibus roll call vote, which also included the recommendation that the Advisory Board approve its comments on the Draft Updated Long-Term CSO Control Plan, approval of the October 22, 2026 Advisory Board meeting agenda, and approval of the September 17, 2026 Executive Committee meeting minutes. It was moved by Maurice Handel, and seconded by Sam Stivers.

An omnibus vote took place on the following items:

- To recommend that the Advisory Board approve the draft Advisory Board comments on the Draft Updated Long-Term CSO Control Plan
- Approval of the October 22, 2026 Advisory Board meeting agenda
- Approval of the Executive Committee meeting minutes from September 17, 2026

- Adjournment of the meeting

The following vote took place:

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

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.