



Thursday, April 11, 2024  
Remote Connection via Zoom  
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 (BWSC)	Here (remote)
John Sanchez	Burlington	Here (remote)
Cate Fox-Lent	Chelsea	Arrived after vote
Yem Lip	Malden	Arrived after vote
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Arrived after vote
Brendan O'Regan	Saugus	Arrived after vote
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Here (remote)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Here (remote)
John P. DeAmicis	Stoneham	Here (remote)

### B. Executive Director's report

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) regulations on PFAS came out April 10, 2024, which issued final regulations on drinking water limits. A blog post on this topic was posted on the MWRA Advisory Board's website. The MWRA also posted a summary of the new rule on its website, which noted that fully supplied communities will comply. With partially supplied communities, this may not be so. Any community that wants a consultation can reach out to Stephen Estes-Smargiassi, Director of Planning and Sustainability at the MWRA. The EPA has six PFAS compounds that are relevant to the new rule, which are not the same compounds regulated by the State of Massachusetts. There will be a total of eight different compounds. The EPA is allowing five years, rather than the usual three, after promulgating the regulations for drinking water systems to come into compliance. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) may require a different timeline, and MWRA staff will reach out to communities with this information.

3M released its settlement of \$10.3 billion to public water suppliers over 13 years to help them mitigate the effects of PFAS on their systems if they did not opt out of the settlement.





The Massachusetts House Ways and Means Committee released its version of the FY25 budget on April 10, 2024, which included \$1.5 million for debt service assistance. The MWRA Advisory Board will keep an eye on the process.

## C. **Presentation – Preview of comments and recommendations on MWRA’s proposed FY25 CIP and CEB**

The MWRA’s proposed rate assessment increase came in at a combined 3% largely due to changes in favorable conditions in items such as chemicals. Where last year we were seeing considerable inflation, the MWRA had budgeted conservatively. This year the trends have reversed and some of those line items have gone down. Although no specific recommendations are out yet, the current target is to match the 2.4% combined rate increase from last year. The challenge continues to be on the water side, which is currently budgeted at 3.9% compared to sewer which is at 2.5%. Policy wise, the AB anticipates recommendations on watershed management.

The Advisory Board is reimagining the Comments and Recommendations (C&R) for this year. The C&R provides an overview of proposed expenses, highlights key insights into budget allocation, uses data visualization of expense categories to tell the “story” of the budget, and keeps an eye on the impact of expenses on the financial outlook for future years. A one-page high-level view of MWRA’s current expense budget (CEB) was presented showing changes from final FY24 dollars to proposed FY25 dollars.

Regarding the capital improvement plan (CIP), the Advisory Board’s C&R will reiterate recommendation to the Board of Directors a new phase of the Local Water Supply Assistance Program (LWSAP), a grant-only phase followed by a grant-loan phase for FY26 related to the Inflow/Infiltration program, and Lead Loan Program recommendations.

The C&R will also feature policy recommendations on Ranger Enforcement in the watershed, forestry management, and extending the MWRA pension funding deadline beyond the year 2030.

*The presentation of the preview of the Advisory Board C&R is featured on the event page of the MWRA Advisory Board’s website.*

John DeAmicis stated that in the future he’d like to see more detail on salary increases, average pay rates, low staffing rates, other post-employment benefits (OPEB), and pension.

David Manugian asked why 2.4% is a good target for the combined rate increase. Matthew Romero stated that they are starting at 3%, which is lower than usual as line items have come down from last year’s high inflation. He stated that the target rate increase is ultimately up to the Advisory Board.

## D. **AB draft FY25 operating budget**

The Preliminary FY25 MWRA Advisory Board operating budget will decrease from FY24 as it goes from 4 full-time budgeted Regular Employees to 3 full-time budgeted Regular Employees and 2 co-op Part-Time employees. This is a change from \$406,643 to \$324,559, a decrease of 20.2%. A new co-op student will start with the Advisory Board in July 2024 to begin collecting information for the 2024 Annual Water and Sewer Retail Rate Survey.

Matthew Romero cautioned that the budget would increase in future years as the Advisory Board began to





reach a full staff compliment of 4 employees in FY26, but that it would have been disingenuous to budget for full staff for next year when the plan is to bring on only one new employee.

## E. Proposed Lead Loan Program changes

Michael Rademacher mentioned that at the Operations Committee meeting on April 1, 2024, the Lead Loan Program was discussed. As is currently constituted, the program is 100% loan, zero percent interest. Some challenges for communities using these programs include removing lead lines on private property. To make it more attractive to communities and to incentivize private property owners to remove all lead lines, the Operations Committee recommends a change in the program to a 25% grant on the condition that the community commits to remove private side lead lines in addition to the public side. This was voted on during the Operations Committee to bring to today's Executive Committee meeting.

Matthew Romero expounded on this, stating that the program began after the Flint Michigan crisis of 2016. The Advisory Board recommended and the MWRA Board of Directors agreed to create a new program, the Lead Loan Program, that would provide interest free loans dedicated to removing lead service lines. Though the total amount was not known at the time what was needed, it was decided to be funded with an initial \$100 million with a commitment to increase the amount as needed. Since then, the Lead and Copper Rule revisions came out with more specific directives for communities, as well as the Lead and Copper Rule improvements which are anticipated in October 2024 with additional requirements and the goal of removing all the lead service lines and lines that are galvanized requiring replacement (GRR). The MWRA and the AB's concern is that if lead service lines are not removed from the community systems it will require adding orthophosphate for corrosion control at the Carroll Water Treatment Plant. Once the changes to treatment have been made, it is highly unlikely to ever be removed, even after all lead service lines are removed as required by the changes to the Lead and Copper rule. The updated requirements carve out an exception for adding corrosion control if a water system, in this case a partnership between the MWRA and the communities, commits to accelerating the removal of lead service lines and GRR over the course of five years. The cost of adding orthophosphate is in the \$60-80 million range over 20 years.

Programs that have been the most successful are those that have removed obstacles to property owners by offering free full line replacement. The cost of providing a 25% grant to communities is estimated at \$40 million. The rest are loans that would be paid back.

John Sanchez stated that this would be a change in that past programs the grants were based on a formula for what funds communities get. The change is that communities can apply for any amount of dollars if their goal is to replace all lead service lines, which begs the question of what 100% means.

Stephen Estes-Smargiassi stated that with any program it is difficult to get to 100% but thinks that a few holdouts will not be a problem. He thinks that if there are many homeowners not granting access to replace lead lines that EPA will have an issue, but a small amount will not cause issue. He also reiterated that if a community does not have any lead service lines it may be in their interest to encourage neighboring communities to remove theirs so that the entire system saves money and avoids adding orthophosphate.

John Sullivan asked if the present-value was given for the orthophosphate versus full lead-line replacement. Stephen Estes-Smargiassi said it was not given in that way. The projected operating costs over 20 years of adding orthophosphate uses the current dollars at current prices at \$3 million per year. He stated that this number is low because as demand for orthophosphate goes up and supply goes down, he anticipates the





price per pound will rise.

John Sullivan also stated that when the full inventory number of lead service lines being replaced is known whether switching from a 25% grant portion to a 100% grant is worth considering.

*A motion was put forward to recommend to the full Advisory Board modifications to the existing community assistance Lead Loan Program to make it a 25% grant/75% interest-free loan program subject to conditions to be finalized between Advisory Board and MWRA staff. It was moved by Richard Raiche, seconded by David Manugian, and moved to the omnibus vote at the end of the meeting.*

Elena Proakis Ellis asked if lead on private property is not removed will the town or city be required to bear the full cost of removal. Stephen Estes-Smargiassi said that although the EPA requires the removal, it is not requiring towns or cities to pay for it.

## F. New business

The Annual 2023 Water and Sewer Retail Rate Survey has been posted to the MWRA Advisory Board’s website. This year the report will be published in stages, with this initial post focusing on MWRA communities specifically. MWRA wholesale assessments in 2023 increased 2.41%, down from 2.85% in 2022. The average combined MWRA retail rate increase using 120 hundred cubic feet (HCF) is 5.5% in 2023, up from 4.05% in 2022. The average MWRA service area combined retail cost in 2023 is \$1,919 per year, up from \$1,835 in 2022, using 120 HCF. The average MWRA service area combined retail cost using reported DEP numbers is \$1,012 per year in 2023, up from \$930 in 2022. The individual community pages have been uploaded to the MWRA Advisory Board’s website.

## G. Consent agenda items

- Approval of the April 18, 2024 Advisory Board meeting agenda
- Approval of the Executive Committee meeting minutes from March 14, 2024

*A motion was put forward to approve the consent agenda items above. It was moved by David Manugian, seconded by Richard Raiche, and added to the omnibus vote at the end of the meeting.*

## H. Executive Session

*A motion was put forward to move into Executive Session to approve Executive Session meeting minutes. It was moved by David Manugian, seconded by John DeAmicis, and a roll call vote was taken:*

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston (BWSC)	Yes (remote)
John Sanchez	Burlington	Yes (remote)
Cate Fox-Lent	Chelsea	Yes (remote)





# Advocacy & Accountability

Representing over 3 million people in Massachusetts since 1985

Yem Lip	Malden	Yes (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)
Brendan O'Regan	Saugus	Yes (remote)
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Yes (remote)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Yes (remote)
John P. DeAmicis	Stoneham	Yes (remote)

During Executive Session, the Executive Session meeting minutes from June 10, 2022 were approved. No other actions were taken during Executive Session.

## I. Adjournment

*A motion to adjourn was put forward. It was moved by David Manugian, seconded by Richard Raiche, and added to the omnibus vote at the end of the meeting.*

## J. Omnibus roll call vote

*A motion to approve the omnibus roll call vote was put forward. It was moved by David Manugian and seconded by Richard Raiche. The items in the omnibus vote were as follows:*

- *to recommend to the full Advisory Board modifications to the existing community assistance Lead Loan Program to make it a 25% grant/75% interest-free loan program subject to conditions to be finalized between Advisory Board and MWRA staff.*
- *Approval of the consent agenda items:*
- *Approval of the Advisory Board meeting agenda for Mach 21, 2024.*
- *Approval of the February 8, 2024 Executive Committee meeting minutes.*
- *Meeting adjournment*

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston (BWSC)	Yes (remote)
John Sanchez	Burlington	Yes (remote)
Cate Fox-Lent	Chelsea	Yes (remote)
Yem Lip	Malden	Yes (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)
Brendan O'Regan	Saugus	Yes (remote)
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Yes (remote)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Yes (remote)
John P. DeAmicis	Stoneham	Yes (remote)





# Advocacy & Accountability

*Representing over 3 million people in Massachusetts since 1985*

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Raiche, 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.



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. Romero  
Executive Director