



Advocacy & Accountability

Representing over 3 million people in Massachusetts since 1985

Thursday May 16, 2024
Remote Connection Via Zoom
10:00 AM

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

A. Roll call attendance

A commencing roll call was voted as follows:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Here (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Here (remote)
Gerry Daigle	Belmont	Here (remote)
John P. Sullivan, Jr.	Boston	Here (remote)
Jim Arsenault	Braintree	Here (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Here (remote)
John Sanchez	Burlington	Here (remote)
Ernest Lariviere	Everett	Here (remote)
Cate Fox-Lent	Chelsea	Here (remote)
Ted Drobiak	Chicopee	Here (remote)
Steve Leone	Framingham	Here (remote)
James Finegan	Lynnfield W.D.	Here (remote)
Yem Lip	Malden	Here (remote)
Timothy McGivern	Medford	Here (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Here (remote)
Chase Berkeley	Milton	Here (remote)
Vicky Masone	Nahant	Here (remote)

Name	Community	Vote
John Terry	Needham	Here (remote)
Tom Fitzgerald	Newton	Here (remote)
Dave Scribner	Peabody	Here (remote)
Chris Cole	Reading	Here (remote)
Brendan O'Regan	Saugus	Here (remote)
Rich Raiche	Somerville	Here (remote)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Here (remote)
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	Here (remote)
Gino Cresta	Swampscott	Here (remote)
Eric Sherman	Wakefield	Here (remote)
Patrick Fasanello	Walpole	Here (remote)
	Waltham	Here (remote)
David Cohen	Wellesley	Here (remote)
Bob Rafferty	Westwood	Here (remote)
Joseph Lobao	Wilmington	Here (remote)
J.R. Greene	Quabbin and Ware Watershed	Here (remote)
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Here (remote)

1

B. Nomination and election of an Advisory Board representative to the MWRA Board of Director's for a three-year term from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2027

A motion was put forward to appoint Mr. Pappastergion as the Advisory Board's representative to the MWRA Board of Directors for a three-year term from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2027. It was moved by Maurice Handel and seconded by David Manugian. A roll-call vote was taken:



2 Griffin Way, Suite A, Chelsea, MA 02150



(617) 788-2050



mwra.ab@mwraadvisoryboard.com

mwraadvisoryboard.com

Matthew A. Romero
Executive Director



Advocacy & Accountability

Representing over 3 million people in Massachusetts since 1985

Community	Vote
Arlington	Yes (remote)
Bedford	Yes (remote)
Belmont	Yes (remote)
Boston	Yes (remote)
Braintree	Yes (remote)
Brookline	Yes (remote)
Burlington	Yes (remote)
Everett	Yes (remote)
Chelsea	Yes (remote)
Chicopee	Yes (remote)
Framingham	Yes (remote)
Lynnfield W.D.	Yes (remote)
Malden	Yes (remote)
Medford	Yes (remote)
Melrose	Yes (remote)
Milton	Yes (remote)
Nahant	Yes (remote)
Needham	Yes (remote)

Community	Vote
Newton	Yes (remote)
Peabody	Yes (remote)
Reading	Yes (remote)
Saugus	Yes (remote)
Somerville	Yes (remote)
Southborough	Yes (remote)
Stoneham	Yes (remote)
Swampscott	Yes (remote)
Wakefield	Yes (remote)
Walpole	Yes (remote)
Waltham	Yes (remote)
Wellesley	Yes (remote)
Westwood	Yes (remote)
Wilmington	Yes (remote)
Quabbin and Ware Watershed	Yes (remote)
MAPC	Yes (remote)

Mr. Pappastergion was unable to attend the meeting and asked Joe Foti to speak for him, who spoke on Andy's passion and commitment to representing the Advisory Board on the Board of Directors over the last 27 years.

C. Executive Director's report

Matthew Romero gave an update on the 2023 Annual Water and Sewer Retail Rate Survey, noting that the section entitled "Comparative Residential Water and Sewer Rates for U.S. Cities" is now complete, and attention is being placed on completing the final section of the survey with non-MWRA Massachusetts communities.

D. Action Item: Approval of the MWRA Advisory Board's final FY25 operating budget

The Advisory Board FY25 operating budget has decreased in recent years, largely due to the elimination of the rent line item after moving from Charlestown to Chelsea, as well as budgeting for three full-time employees and two co-ops, rather than four full-time employees in FY25. Mr. Romero cautioned that while there would be a decrease in FY25 there would likely be a significant increase in FY26 as the Advisory Board hires its fourth and final member of staff. Knowing the Advisory Board was only planning on hiring one position in FY25 the budget reflects only three FTEs rather than four.

John Terry inquired about the rent line item, noting that a legal opinion should be sought as the Advisory Board does not pay rent and resides in a larger entity. Matthew Romero noted that the Retirement Board has been in the MWRA's facility as well and is also a separate entity from the MWRA, and that he will seek an opinion and come back with an update.

Andreae Downs asked what year-over-year pay increases at the Advisory Board are, which Matthew Romero stated it's typically 4% each year, but ultimately, it's up to the Executive Committee what increases are.





Advocacy & Accountability

Representing over 3 million people in Massachusetts since 1985

A motion was put forward to approve the MWRA Advisory Board's FY25 operating budget. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded by Rich Raiche, and added to the omnibus vote at the end of the meeting.

E. **Presentation – Advisory Board Comments & Recommendations on MWRA's proposed FY25 CEB & CIP**

Expenses have gone up 2.9% in PFY25 from FY24, with a rate change of 3.0%, up from 2.4% in FY24. As in recent years there has been a divergent split in assessments between water and sewer rates, this is portrayed in the Comments & Recommendations. This reflects debt coming due from projects such as the Carroll Water Treatment Plant and the Metro-West Tunnel on the water side, while on the sewer side debt is coming down for projects such as Deer Island.

In the last several years, effort has been made to get the most up-to-date information from the MWRA regarding the CEB with the so-called "Spring Revisits." An example would be instead of using a budget assumption for chemical prices, actual awarded contracts reflect accurate pricing. For the PFY25 CEB, approximately \$2.5 million has been added back into the budget through the Spring Revisit process on the sewer side. On the water side approximately \$1.4 million has been added back. The Advisory Board has recommended adjusting the staffing vacancy rate by an additional 35 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, bringing the total to 70 FTEs. The rationale for this adjustment is that the MWRA has typically been about 100 FTEs under budget, reflecting hiring difficulties. This is assuming a \$113,000 salary per employee. Separately, the Advisory Board has recommended a reduction of about \$1.6 million for corresponding reductions for 30 FTEs in fringe benefits expenses, which the Authority does not include in its vacancy rate. The Rate Revenue Requirement on the sewer side is 2.16%. The use of rate stabilization funds at \$1.5 million is being recommended to help with rate relief on the water side, bringing the Rate Revenue Requirement to 3.18%. The combined Rate Revenue Requirement is 2.53%.

The Advisory Board recommends ratifying additional phases to the Inflow/Infiltration Assistance Program with a Phase 15 \$100 million interest-free loan available in FY25 and a Phase 16 \$125 million grant-loan (75% grant, 25% loan) available in FY26 with 10-year loan repayments. The authorization of Phase 4 of the Local Water Supply Assistance Program totaling \$300 million was also recommended, as well as modifying 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.

The Advisory Board recommended addressing the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Ranger's lack of enforcement options on watershed lands. This includes suggestions such as developing non-punitive educational notices for serious offenders, reviving ban/suspension systems, and possible legislative fixes to restore ranger enforcement authority. The opposition to proposed legislation "An Act Relative to the Quabbin Watershed and Regional Equity" was also recommended, which includes recommending that no funding be allocated for the Quabbin expansion study beyond the existing 12 communities already included in the proposal.

The Advisory Board also recommends redirecting all future Other Post-Employment Benefit (OPEB) contributions to the pension until full funding is achieved in FY30.

J.R. Greene pointed out that DCR Rangers do not actually ride horses at the Quabbin.

A motion was put forward to approve the Comments & Recommendations on the MWRA's proposed FY25 CIP and CEB to formally transmit to the MWRA. It was moved by Michael Rademacher, seconded by Rich





Advocacy & Accountability

Representing over 3 million people in Massachusetts since 1985

Raiche, and moved to the omnibus vote at the end of the meeting.

F. **Committee Reports**

Matthew Romero gave an Operations Committee update, noting that Advisory Board staff will be reaching out to schedule a site visit at the Needham facility where the borings from the Metropolitan Tunnel Redundancy Project are. The aim is to have an Operations Committee meeting at this location, as well as a site visit. The aim is to have this in June, and a poll will go out to Operations Committee members to gauge availability.

G. **MWRA Executive Director update – Fred Laskey**

Fred Laskey could not be at the meeting.

H. **Consent agenda items**

A motion was put forward to approve the Advisory Board meeting minutes from April 18, 2024. It was moved by David Manugian, seconded by Michael Rademacher, and moved to the omnibus vote at the end of the meeting.

I. **New Business**

Matthew Romero noted that testimony has been submitted on the legislation “An Act Relative to the Quabbin Watershed and Regional Equity”, and that a template letter has been drafted for communities interested in submitting their own testimony to share their concerns.

J.R. Greene stated that he was not consulted when the legislation was crafted, and that he thinks it is flawed in several ways, but does support some of the concepts in it, including adding a seat or two to the MWRA Board of Directors for Western and/or Central Massachusetts representatives.

Matthew Romero noted that MWRA wastewater communities may have received a letter from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on April 17th where they state they expect communities to consult and coordinate with MWRA regarding the Deer Island permit application and information about individual community sewer systems in that application. The Advisory Board reached out to outside counsel and some guidance was provided. Although the letter references Mass DEP’s authority to require the submission of information, the letter that was sent on April 17th does not impose any requirements on the communities. There is no obligation to coordinate or consult with MWRA currently. That said, we do need to understand what Mass DEP is expecting from communities and MWRA. Matthew Romero will be working with MWRA to reach out to Mass DEP to get clarification. Based on this clarification, he will follow up with more information and guidance.

Mr. Romero also stated that the Advisory Board is coordinating with counsel of combined sewer overflow (CSO) communities that have entered into a common interest agreement and a comment letter provided by outside counsel will be submitted. DEP’s letter reopens comments on the permit until May 30th, 2024. For any wastewater communities that have not submitted comments, it is strongly encouraged to use the template provided by Advisory Board counsel and submit it to preserve the right to appeal provisions of the permit down the road.

J. **Adjournment**



2 Griffin Way, Suite A, Chelsea, MA 02150



(617) 788-2050



mwra.ab@mwraadvisoryboard.com

mwraadvisoryboard.com

Matthew A. Romero
Executive Director



Advocacy & Accountability

Representing over 3 million people in Massachusetts since 1985

A motion to adjourn was put forward. It was moved by Rich Raiche, seconded by Bedford, and added to the omnibus vote at the end of the meeting.

A motion to approve the omnibus vote by roll call was put forward. It was moved by Maurice Handel and seconded by David Manugian.

An omnibus vote on the following items took place:

- Approval of the Advisory Board's FY25 operating budget
- Approval of the Comments & Recommendations on the MWRA's proposed FY25 CIP and CEB for transmittal to the MWRA
- Andy Pappastergion's appointment to the MWRA BOD
- Approval of the consent agenda
- Adjournment

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
Gerry Daigle	Belmont	Yes (remote)
John P. Sullivan, Jr.	Boston	Yes (remote)
Jim Arsenault	Braintree	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
John Sanchez	Burlington	Yes (remote)
Cate Fox-Lent	Chelsea	Yes (remote)
Steve Leone	Framingham	Yes (remote)
James Finegan	Lynnfield W.D.	Yes (remote)
Yem Lip	Malden	Yes (remote)
Amy McHue	Marblehead	Yes (remote)
Timothy McGivern	Medford	Yes (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)
Chase Berkeley	Milton	Yes (remote)
Vicky Masone	Nahant	Yes (remote)

Name	Community	Vote
John Terry	Needham	Yes (remote)
Tom Fitzgerald	Newton	Yes (remote)
Dave Scribner	Peabody	Yes (remote)
Chris Cole	Reading	Yes (remote)
Nicholas Rystrom	Revere	Yes (remote)
Rich Raiche	Somerville	Yes (remote)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Yes (remote)
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	Yes (remote)
Gino Cresta	Swampscott	Yes (remote)
Eric Sherman	Wakefield	Yes (remote)
Patrick Fasanello	Walpole	Yes (remote)
	Waltham	Yes (remote)
Joseph Lobao	Wilmington	Yes (remote)
J.R. Greene	Quabbin and Ware Watershed	Yes (remote)
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Yes (remote)

1

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Raiche, 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

mwraadvisoryboard.com

Matthew A. Romero
Executive Director