



Advocacy & Accountability

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Thursday January 16, 2025
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)
Dan Maurer	Ashland	Here (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Here (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston (BWSC)	Here (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Here (remote)
Michael Trotta	Canton	Here (remote)
Stephen Leone	Framingham	Here (remote)
David Pavlik	Lexington	Here (remote)
James Finegan	Lynnfield W.D.	Here (remote)
Yem Lip	Malden	Here (remote)
Amy McHugh	Marblehead	Here (remote)
Timothy McGivern	Medford	Here (remote)

Name	Community	Vote
John Terry	Needham	Here (remote)
Tom Fitzgerald	Newton	Here (remote)
Mark Ryan	Norwood	Here (remote)
Margaret Laforest	Quincy	Here (remote)
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Here (remote)
William Cundiff	Southborough	Here (remote)
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	Here (remote)
Pat Fasanello	Walpole	Here (remote)
David Cohen	Wellesley	Here (remote)
Joseph Lobao	Wilmington	Here (remote)
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Here (remote)
J.R. Greene	Quabbin/Ware	Here (remote)

Other attendees included:

Nathan Coté
Ian McKenzie
Lou Taverna
Christine Bennett
Tom Durkin
Colleen Rizzi
David Coppes

Andrew Pappastergion
Keira Kishnani
Carolyn Francisco
Murphy
Jim Coyne
Matthew Romero

Mike Cole
Matthew Horan
John Scannell
Vyctoria Walsh
Moussa Siri
Stephen Estes-
Smargiassi

Rebecca Weidmann
Mike Retzky
Leo Norton
Katherine Ronan
Sean Navin
Joe Foti
Fred Laskey

B. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Matthew Romero began by welcoming Keira Kishnani, who will be with the Advisory Board through June, assisting with social media efforts and providing crucial support during the upcoming budget season. She is pursuing a Bachelor of Science (BS) in Economics and Business at Northeastern University with a concentration in FinTech and a minor in Film Production. Keira has already started by helping to prepare this month's CEB Dashboard and will be



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involved in budget briefings. Mr. Romero also took a moment to recognize the contributions of Kareen Sud, who recently completed her co-op term. During her time with the Advisory Board, Kareen played a pivotal role in launching the podcast and reshaping the Advisory Board's social media strategy.

Switching gears, Mr. Romero highlighted a noteworthy career milestone for a former Advisory Board staff member. Travis Ahern, who once served on the Advisory Board team, has been appointed as the new Executive Director of the Cannabis Control Commission. The Board extended its congratulations to Mr. Ahern on this achievement.

Turning to policy matters, Mr. Romero discussed the upcoming public meeting on the Long-Term CSO Control Plan, which is being hosted by the MWRA, Somerville, and Cambridge. The meeting is scheduled for January 22, 2025, at 6:00 PM, and he strongly encouraged Advisory Board members to attend or ensure their communities are represented. He noted that past meetings have been dominated by advocacy groups, and in the previous session, he was the only voice advocating for a ratepayer perspective, emphasizing the need to consider cost implications in decision-making. Advisory Board Chair Richard Raiche, representing Somerville, added that this is the fourth public meeting in the process and will be the first to present cost estimates for different CSO control alternatives. The discussion will also address broader concerns, including the level of control required and the reality that CSOs are only one of many pressing infrastructure challenges competing for funding.

Mr. Romero also announced that the MWRA Board of Directors has commissioned a non-union compensation study, which will be conducted by the Collins Center at UMass Boston. The Advisory Board has previously worked with the Collins Center on an economic development report, which quantified the link between water and sewer infrastructure investment and economic growth. To ensure the Advisory Board remains engaged in this study, Mr. Romero has volunteered to serve on the working group overseeing the process and will provide updates as it progresses.

Shifting to legislative matters, Mr. Romero outlined the Advisory Board's recent efforts to advance key water infrastructure policies. The Advisory Board has been working with the Water Infrastructure Alliance and recently met with Representatives Edward Philips, Jessica Giannino, Michael Kushmerek, and Meghan Kilcoyne to discuss the idea of a Water Omnibus Bill. This proposed legislation would consolidate various water-related funding and policy measures—many of which have previously been scattered across bills such as the Environmental Bond Bill and the Housing Bill—into a single legislative package. The goal is to increase visibility and support for these priorities within the Legislature. Additionally, the Advisory Board is working to identify a new legislative champion, as Representative Carolyn Dykema's absence continues to be felt.

In a related effort, the Advisory Board participated in a State of Water Infrastructure Briefing for incoming legislators, introduced by Representative Jay Livingstone, who is sponsoring a water bond bill. The briefing covered critical topics, including the funding gap for water, wastewater, and



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stormwater infrastructure, the impact of expiring federal programs, regulatory pressures such as PFAS and lead service line replacements, and the long-term impact of these challenges on rates. Mr. Romero noted that a PowerPoint presentation and a YouTube video of the briefing will be shared with Advisory Board members in a follow-up email for those interested in a deeper dive into the discussion.

Looking ahead, Mr. Romero noted that the WIPPES Bill is expected to be refiled this session, with ACEC-MA and WAC hopeful for progress. Additionally, the Quabbin Equity Bill, which seeks to impose a per-gallon water tax and includes other provisions the Advisory Board views as harmful to ratepayers, is also expected to return. Just as in the previous session, the Advisory Board will oppose the bill and will likely call on members to assist in advocacy efforts to prevent its passage.

Wrapping up his report, Mr. Romero assured members that he would continue providing regular updates on legislative developments as the session progresses. With no further questions, he concluded his remarks and turned the floor back to the Chair.

C. Presentation-MWRA Watersheds Annual Update – John Scannell, Director, Division of Water Supply Protection

Mr. Raiche welcomed John Scannell, Director of the Division of Water Supply Protection, for his annual update on MWRA's watershed management efforts. Mr. Raiche noted that the Division works in tandem with MWRA to manage the watersheds and invited Mr. Scannell to begin his presentation.

Mr. Scannell started by explaining that watershed management is guided by a Watershed Protection Plan, which is approved by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The current plan covers fiscal years 2024 to 2028 and details the Division's regulatory efforts to protect the Quabbin, Wachusett, and Ware River watersheds. He highlighted several priority initiatives from the past year and also presented a "By the Numbers" breakdown of key activities from 2024.

One major initiative has been a Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment, designed to evaluate and prepare the watersheds for long-term environmental changes. This assessment, conducted with consultant Tighe & Bond, began last year and aligns with the State's Resilient Mass Plan. The first phase, now completed, involved creating an inventory of natural assets—including forests, wetlands, open water, groundwater, and soils—while developing a methodology for assessing climate impacts on these assets.

Mr. Scannell then addressed the Governor's Forests Climate Solutions Initiative, which placed a temporary pause on state forestry projects upon Governor Healey's inauguration. A Forestry Climate Committee was formed to review existing forestry practices, culminating in a report released last year. The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) followed up in June with guidance affirming that the Division's forestry practices align with state climate goals.





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Consequently, forestry operations resumed in summer 2024 with only minor modifications to practices. The Division is still working to designate forest reserves, where active forestry will not occur, and improve public communication about forest management. Despite the earlier pause, forestry work resumed in the second half of the year, with nine lots sold at Quabbin, two at Ware River, and five at Wachusett.

Land acquisition remains a key strategy in watershed protection. In 2024, the Division conserved 317 acres through purchases and easements. The MWRA Board of Directors approves all acquisitions, with some purchases proceeding quickly while others require extensive due diligence. The Division also manages over 200 Watershed Preservation Restrictions (WPRs)—which are conservation easements that protect land from development while allowing private ownership. Staff monitor federally funded WPRs annually, while other WPRs are inspected on a biennial basis to ensure compliance. Additionally, two landowner newsletters were distributed in 2024.

The Division surveyed and re-marked property boundaries, covering dozens of miles in 2024 to ensure that encroachments and boundary disputes are addressed. Staff also worked on hazard tree removal, cutting 69 trees along public roadways near Wachusett. Mr. Scannell highlighted efforts to enhance forest resilience, particularly through prescribed fire management in the Ware River and Quabbin watersheds. The Division conducted five prescribed burns in 2024, managed by DCR's Forest Fire Control team, with staff participation. Additionally, forest improvement work included thinning vegetation in specific areas to promote native species growth, focusing on supporting oak regeneration.

The Division continues to actively monitor and manage wildlife in the watersheds. Deer population control remains a priority, with 142 deer harvested during controlled hunts in three Quabbin locations—Quabbin Park, Prescott Peninsula, and Petersham. Controlled hunts help prevent overbrowsing, which can harm forest regeneration.

The Division also conducted bird population management, including the longstanding gull and geese harassment program to reduce impacts on water quality. Gull populations at Wachusett Reservoir have dropped significantly since the program began, from over 10,000 birds to about 2,250 in 2024. Staff also manage Canada geese nesting sites at Quabbin, Wachusett, and Sudbury, preventing overpopulation.

Quabbin was the first location in Massachusetts to successfully reintroduce loons, and the Division continues to support nesting efforts by providing floating nesting rafts to counteract rising water levels. Additionally, staff maintain a fishing line and lead sinker collection program, removing over 10 miles of discarded fishing line and four pounds of lead sinkers in 2024 to protect loons and other waterfowl.

Watershed rangers remain highly active, engaging with nearly 40,000 visitors in 2024 across Quabbin, Wachusett, and the Ware River watershed. The Quabbin Reservoir boat launch program



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saw over 6,500 boats launched and nearly 20,000 visitors last year, with staff ensuring recreational access remains well-controlled and environmentally responsible.

The Division continues to collaborate with MWRA, state, and local law enforcement on watershed security, working 365 days a year to protect water resources and critical infrastructure.

Major infrastructure projects in 2024 included stormwater management improvements at Wachusett, where contractors removed 123 tons of sediment from stormwater treatment structures. Renovation of the Old Stone Church area included erosion control measures, while 1,800 feet of fencing along Wachusett Reservoir's most sensitive shoreline areas were replaced. Accessibility improvements at Wachusett Dam included a new walkway for individuals with mobility impairments.

The Division maintains a rigorous water quality monitoring program, collecting over 1,600 samples from Quabbin alone in 2024, in addition to real-time monitoring buoys deployed by MWRA.

Aquatic invasive species management remains a priority, with 16,000 gallons of invasive plants removed from Wachusett's Stillwater and Thomas Basins. New invasive species were also identified in the Potapog and O'Loughlin Ponds near Quabbin, prompting enhanced management efforts.

The Division's GIS capabilities continue to expand, supporting initiatives such as hunting maps, ensuring hunters understand where they can and cannot go, and a new public access mapping tool, which received 15,000 views since launching in April 2024. Education efforts also remain a focus, with the stormy but successful Massachusetts Envirothon competition held at Wachusett. The Quabbin Visitor Center welcomed over 6,000 guests, and staff conducted multiple school and interpretive programs to educate the public on watershed protection.

Following the presentation, Mr. Raiche asked about forest management efforts, specifically whether replanting efforts prioritize native species. Mr. Scannell explained that the Division does not actively plant trees but instead promotes natural regeneration by carefully selecting areas where native species thrive.

Board Member J.R. Greene, representing Quabbin/Ware, inquired about watershed advisory councils. Mr. Scannell confirmed that councils are active for Quabbin and the Ware River, but past efforts to revive a Wachusett council have been unsuccessful due to lack of interest.

Mr. Raiche thanked Mr. Scannell and his staff for their work, closing the discussion by acknowledging the Division's strong staffing levels, which Mr. Scannell credited to sustained hiring efforts and the Advisory Board's support in previous years.



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D. Committee Reports

- **Executive Committee Report**

Mr. Raiche introduced the Executive Committee Report, noting that the Advisory Board's December open house was well attended and met its goal of providing a low-pressure, face-to-face engagement opportunity without the formalities of conducting business or reaching quorum. Given the success of the event, the Advisory Board plans to continue this approach moving forward, with at least two in-person opportunities per year—one being a summer field trip and the other the winter open house.

- **Finance Committee Report**

Christine Bennett began by introducing a new dashboard aimed at providing Advisory Board members with quick access to frequently sought information. This dashboard, now available on the Advisory Board's website, contains a series of tiles with embedded links to key budget planning documents, MWRA system information, and other financial resources. Users can hover over the tiles to see the embedded links, which direct them to documents either uploaded to the Advisory Board's website or housed on the MWRA website.

She then previewed the webpage where all dashboards—including the new Quick Reference Dashboard—are now located, with plans to add more as they are developed. While the Current Expense Budget (CEB) Dashboard has not yet been updated, she assured members that it is in progress and will be available on the website early next week with performance data through December.

Regarding budget performance, Ms. Bennett noted that the MWRA budget is tightening, meaning actual spending is increasingly aligning with budgeted figures. The variance in the expense budget has decreased from 3.4% to 2.9% since the last update. Personnel costs remain a significant driver of variance, largely due to staffing shortages, but December saw a slight uptick in full-time equivalents. The maintenance budget, which previously showed the largest absolute variance, continues to be an area of close monitoring. She concluded by stating that the Advisory Board will notify members once the updated dashboard is live.

After her presentation, Mr. Raiche commended the Advisory Board staff for their work, emphasizing how valuable it is to have such well-organized financial information at members' fingertips. Mr. Romero added that while the Advisory Board is helping to organize and highlight these resources, the real credit belongs to MWRA staff, who compile and maintain much of the data. He reiterated that the goal is to make sure Advisory Board members know where to find the most relevant information.

Operations Committee Report





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Michael Rademacher announced that the next Operations Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 22, at 1:00 PM. These meetings are typically well attended because they cover topics directly relevant to Advisory Board communities. The upcoming meeting will focus on how MWRA staff is seeking community assistance in the 8M permit process, particularly in light of the Dorchester Tunnel incident, where a private contractor caused damage. Additionally, the committee will discuss how communities can help MWRA anticipate and manage developer requests to connect to the MWRA sewer system. Lastly, there will be an update on the Wastewater Metering Program, now that wastewater assessments are fully based on the new meters.

Mr. Rademacher noted that while the meeting registration link was not yet available on the Advisory Board's calendar, members should expect it soon.

Mr. Romero reinforced the importance of Advisory Board members attending, especially for discussions on the 8M permit process and sewer system expansion, as MWRA is specifically requesting input from communities.

Mr. Raiche added that the 8M permitting discussion is particularly crucial, as it involves coordinating with municipal departments that are not always directly involved with the Advisory Board. He emphasized that these meetings serve as an opportunity to foster those connections between MWRA and key municipal stakeholders.

With no further questions, Mr. Raiche thanked the committee chairs and Advisory Board staff before moving on to the next agenda item.

E. Approval of Advisory Board meeting minutes from November 21, 2024

A motion was put forward to approve the Advisory Board meeting minutes from November 21, 2024. They were moved by David Manugian, seconded by Michael Rademacher, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

F. New business

Mr. Romero provided several updates under new business, beginning with the 2024 Water and Sewer Retail Rate Survey, which is nearing completion and is expected to be released before the end of the month. Once available, members will receive a direct link to the report, which will also be posted on the Advisory Board's website.

He then highlighted the EPA's recent action on PFAS in biosolids and sludge, noting that this is the agency's first significant attempt at assessing PFAS-related risks in wastewater treatment. Given the topic's importance, Mr. Romero invited Fred Laskey, Executive Director of MWRA, to discuss the implications of the EPA's preliminary findings and other pressing issues from the MWRA Board of Directors meeting.

He began by summarizing the previous day's MWRA Board meeting, noting that attendance was strong and the discussions were productive. The most pressing issue he raised to the Board was the EPA's preliminary assessment of PFAS risks. The early analysis does not look favorable for MWRA, as the proposed numbers





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for PFAS levels appear far stricter than current MWRA figures. This could pose significant operational and financial challenges, especially if ground application of biosolids is further restricted or eliminated.

Mr. Laskey explained that the original contingency plan for managing biosolids involved shipping materials by rail to Utah, a solution MWRA had explored decades ago and maintained as an emergency backup until around 20 years ago. With PFAS restrictions evolving, MWRA must now revisit disposal options, which could have major cost implications. He noted that MWRA is not alone in this predicament—many utilities across the country are facing the same issue—but emphasized the need for proactive planning.

Mr. Laskey then provided an update on the SCADA system cutover at the Carroll Water Treatment Plant, describing it as a massive, complex project. Mr. Laskey reflected on how surprising it is that the Carroll Treatment Plant has been in operation for nearly 20 years and is now undergoing a full-scale SCADA system rehabilitation to ensure another two decades of reliability. The project includes upgrading the plant's wiring network, enhancing redundancy, and implementing other operational improvements. While there have been some challenges, including change orders and unexpected complexities, the project remains a critical investment in MWRA's long-term infrastructure.

Shifting focus back to governance, Mr. Laskey emphasized the detailed planning process that goes into MWRA Board meetings, often preparing agenda items months in advance. He credited MWRA's rigorous preparation for enabling thorough, well-informed discussions among Board members, who bring a range of expertise and independent perspectives. Despite occasional spirited debates, he said the Board ultimately works toward consensus-based decision-making, which has been a cornerstone of MWRA's success. He also acknowledged the uncertainty surrounding federal environmental policies, particularly given the ongoing political shifts in Washington, D.C. While speculation is rampant about potential changes at the EPA, Mr. Laskey advocated for a measured approach, advising MWRA to maintain its momentum and remain adaptable to whatever policy directions emerge.

Following his remarks, Mr. Romero highlighted the MWRA Board of Directors meeting materials, which are posted on the MWRA's website. He encouraged members to explore these resources, noting that the Board package contains a wealth of historical and policy information. Mr. Laskey agreed, emphasizing that these materials serve as a critical record of decisions, offering insight into why policies were adopted, how funding was allocated, and the rationale behind key operational choices. He credited longtime Board members, including John Carroll, Andy Pappastergion, and Joseph Foti, for insisting on comprehensive documentation of MWRA's decision-making processes.

Mr. Raiche thanked Mr. Laskey and Mr. Romero for their insights and noted his appreciation for the new Board meeting link on the Advisory Board's website. He suggested that tracking engagement with these materials could help determine how members are using the information.

G. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was put forward. It was moved by David Manugian, seconded by Maurice Handel, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

H. Omnibus Roll Call Vote

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





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An omnibus vote on the following items took place:

- Approval of the Advisory Board meeting minutes from November 21, 2024
- Adjournment of the meeting.

The omnibus vote was as follows:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
Dan Maurer	Ashland	Abstain
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston (BWSC)	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
Michael Trotta	Canton	Yes (remote)
Stephen Leone	Framingham	Yes (remote)
David Pavlik	Lexington	Yes (remote)
James Finegan	Lynnfield W.D.	Yes (remote)
Yem Lip	Malden	Yes (remote)
Amy McHugh	Marblehead	Yes (remote)
Timothy McGivern	Medford	Yes (remote)

Name	Community	Vote
John Terry	Needham	Yes (remote)
Tom Fitzgerald	Newton	Yes (remote)
Mark Ryan	Norwood	Yes (remote)
Margaret Laforest	Quincy	Yes (remote)
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Yes (remote)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Yes (remote)
John DeAmicis	Stoneham	Yes (remote)
Pat Fasanella	Walpole	Yes (remote)
David Cohen	Wellesley	Yes (remote)
Joseph Lobao	Wilmington	Yes (remote)
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Yes (remote)
J.R. Greene	Quabbin/Ware	Yes (remote)

Respectfully submitted,

David Manugian, Secretary

These minutes reflect the discussion of the meeting. The Advisory Board maintains audio recordings of Advisory Board meetings that are available upon request.



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