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Thursday, March 13, 2025

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 (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Here (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston (BWSC)	Here (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Here (remote)
David Pavlik	Lexington	Here (remote)
Yem Lip	Malden	Here (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Here (remote)
Nicholas Rystrom	Revere	Here (remote)
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Here
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Here
John P. DeAmicis	Stoneham	Here
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Here (remote)

Also in attendance:

Christine Bennett, Nathan Coté, Matthew Romero, Keira Kishnani, Paul Silva, Susan Herman, Andy Pappastergion, Chris Haley, Lou Taverna, Christopher Cole, Melissa Murphy, Michael Smith, Carolyn Francisco Murphy, Elena Proakis Ellis

B. Executive Director's Report

Matthew Romero, Executive Director of the Advisory Board, provided a brief update on several ongoing legislative and regulatory matters. He reported that both the MWRA and Advisory Board staff have been in contact with the Speaker's Office regarding two critical state budget line items: debt service assistance and the \$500,000 allocation for the Clinton Wastewater Treatment Plant. Updates on these discussions are expected in the coming weeks. He also noted that several other



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Matthew A. Romero
Executive Director



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pieces of legislation previously flagged to the Committee remain active, including the environmental bond bill and the so-called “WIPPES” bill.

Turning to the MWRA’s NPDES permit for Deer Island, Mr. Romero addressed a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in the *City and County of San Francisco v. EPA* case. He noted that MWRA’s lead counsel, Mr. Drew Siltan, participated in the legal team that argued the case, and that Mr. Siltan had offered an initial assessment of the ruling’s implications for Deer Island. The Court struck down the use of “end result” prohibitions related to water quality standards—an approach that MWRA had challenged in its own permit comments. Mr. Romero characterized the decision as favorable to MWRA’s position, though he cautioned that EPA may attempt to revise its language in future permit drafts to comply with the ruling while still pursuing similar outcomes.

Richard Raiche, Chairman of the Advisory Board, added that the EPA’s draft permit for New Bedford appears to reflect a preemptive response to the Supreme Court’s ruling, anticipating that outcome. He suggested that the structure and language of New Bedford’s permit may offer insight into the likely direction of EPA’s revisions to the Deer Island permit. Mr. Raiche also noted that due to staffing constraints, EPA does not expect to release a revised Deer Island permit until after the New Bedford public comment period has concluded and been evaluated. The Deer Island permit is therefore unlikely to be reissued before the summer.

John DeAmicis asked for clarification on the Court ruling’s impact, asking whether the decision ultimately benefits MWRA. Mr. Romero confirmed that the ruling aligned with the arguments submitted by MWRA and Advisory Board staff, while Mr. Raiche reiterated that the next phase would depend on how EPA responds to the decision in its future drafting.

Mr. Romero concluded his report by noting that he would continue working closely with legal counsel to review the New Bedford permit and assess its potential implications. There were no additional updates.

C. Public Comment Policy

Mr. Romero introduced the discussion by referencing the Executive Committee’s prior conversations regarding the development of a public comment policy. He explained that following those discussions, a small working group had been formed to further refine a draft policy, which was included in the meeting packet for the Committee’s consideration. Mr. Romero outlined the key elements of the proposed policy, which the working group had coalesced around.

The policy establishes a formal written framework to guide how the Advisory Board handles requests for public comment and participation. As presented, the policy does not create a standing public comment period at Advisory Board meetings. Instead, it provides a clear process for members of the public or communities to raise issues by working through their community’s appointing authority or designated representative. These requests would first be screened by Advisory Board staff to ensure the matter falls within the Advisory Board’s purview, and then presented to the Executive Committee, which would determine whether the item should be added





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to a future meeting agenda. If approved, the Chair would manage the meeting and any associated public comment in a structured manner.

Mr. Romero also noted that the draft policy includes provisions for the submission of correspondence, ensuring that individuals and communities can always send written communications to the Advisory Board. The Executive Committee would retain discretion over whether such correspondence requires a response or inclusion on a future agenda.

Mr. Romero invited additional input from Executive Committee members, particularly Mr. John Sullivan, who had not been able to attend the working group meetings but had previously shared his views with staff. Mr. Sullivan expressed his support for the final version of the policy.

Mr. DeAmicis asked how the new policy would apply to situations like the earlier agenda item, in which a large group of residents and officials from Reading had attended the meeting to discuss their concerns. Mr. Romero responded that, under the new policy, such participation would have required prior notice and Executive Committee approval. He noted that the policy would have allowed the Committee to either defer the matter to a future meeting or manage participation more tightly, depending on the circumstances. Mr. Raiche agreed, stating that the policy would give the Chair clearer authority to manage time and maintain structure during meetings.

David Pavlik added his support for the policy and thanked both Mr. Raiche and Mr. Romero for their leadership in bringing the effort to completion. He emphasized the importance of community designees as the appropriate conduit for raising concerns to the Advisory Board and noted that limiting participation to designated representatives helps ensure clarity and consistency in the issues brought forward.

Several members affirmed that the proposed policy struck the right balance—providing a transparent and accessible process for engagement, while also giving the Executive Committee and Advisory Board staff the necessary tools to manage meetings effectively.

A motion was put forward to approve the Public Comment Policy as written and provided in the meeting materials. It was moved by Maurice Handel and seconded by John Sullivan. The following roll call vote took place:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston (BWSC)	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
David Pavlik	Lexington	Yes (remote)
Yem Lip	Malden	<i>not present</i>
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)





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Nicholas Rystrom	Revere	Yes (remote)
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Yes
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Yes
John P. DeAmicis	Stoneham	Yes
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Yes (remote)

D. Quabbin Equity Legislation

Mr. Romero introduced the agenda item concerning a proposed letter in response to the most recent version of the Quabbin Equity Legislation. He noted that the draft letter had been included in the meeting packet and assumed that members had reviewed it in advance. He explained that the letter maintains a consistent position with past Advisory Board advocacy while addressing new provisions in the legislation that would significantly impact MWRA communities.

Mr. Romero summarized the proposed legislation's most pressing financial concern: a shift away from the existing per-gallon mitigation charge toward a \$35 million up-front payment into a newly created trust fund with future years' contributions inflated by index. He emphasized that this change would represent an immediate and permanent increase in water assessments for all member communities. When translated to system-wide impacts, this proposal could result in an approximate 14% increase in water rates in the first year alone, with no corresponding sunset provision. Mr. Romero stressed that the burden would fall entirely on MWRA ratepayers, without a clear nexus to water consumption or infrastructure needs.

Mr. DeAmicis inquired whether the Advisory Board could adopt a more direct approach in its advocacy, suggesting a simple communication highlighting the effective "14% water tax" embedded in the legislation. Mr. Romero responded that while the simplicity of that message is appealing, the complexities of the legislation—along with the public narrative being shaped by local legislators and media in the Quabbin region—require a more thorough response. He noted that recent press coverage largely echoes legislative talking points and that the Advisory Board's letter is intended to clearly present the ratepayer perspective, correct misconceptions, and defend the fairness of current mitigation practices.

In response to a question from Mr. DeAmicis about who would be leading opposition efforts on behalf of ratepayers, Mr. Romero confirmed that the Advisory Board would continue to play a central role. He underscored that the staff would be actively engaging legislators, especially in light of the legislation's potential to dramatically affect ratepayers across the system.

Mr. Sam Stivers moved to endorse the draft letter as presented. The motion was seconded and approved without opposition. Mr. Raiche noted that while the tone and language of the letter reflected Mr. Romero's authorship, he was willing to sign the letter on behalf of the Executive





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Committee. Mr. Romero added that following Executive Committee endorsement, the letter would also be brought to the full Advisory Board at its March 20, 2025 meeting for further support to strengthen its weight with decision-makers.

A motion was put forward to approve and send the draft letter to the MWRA Board of Directors as well as to recommend that the full Advisory Board vote to approve this letter at the March 20, 2025 meeting, as written and provided in the meeting materials. It was moved by Maurice Handel and seconded by Sam Stivers. The following roll call vote took place:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston (BWSC)	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
David Pavlik	Lexington	Yes (remote)
Yem Lip	Malden	<i>not present</i>
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)
Nicholas Rystrom	Revere	Yes (remote)
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Yes
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Yes
John P. DeAmicis	Stoneham	Yes
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Yes (remote)

E. Approval of the March 20, 2025 Advisory Board meeting agenda

A motion to approve the March 20, 2025 Advisory Board meeting agenda was put forth. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded by David Manugian, and added to the omnibus roll call vote.

F. Approval of Executive Committee meeting minutes from February 6, 2025

A motion to approve the February 6, 2025 Executive Committee meeting minutes was put forth. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded by Sam Stivers, and added to the omnibus roll call vote.

G. New business

Mr. Romero briefly addressed one item of new business, noting that he would forgo his full planned remarks in the interest of time. He informed the Committee that the temporary COVID-era legislation permitting remote and hybrid public meetings is currently set to expire on March 31st. Although several bills have been filed to extend or permanently amend the state's Open Meeting Law, no action has been finalized. Mr. Romero expressed hope that the Legislature would act, as





many stakeholders—including the Advisory Board—have found remote participation beneficial in expanding public access.

He noted, however, that if the law is not extended, the Advisory Board will need to comply with the original Open Meeting Law requirements for hybrid meetings, including maintaining a quorum of members physically present at the meeting location and ensuring that the Chair attends in person. Mr. Romero expressed concern that this could pose logistical challenges, as Advisory Board meetings often hover just above quorum, and in-person attendance tends to drop when meetings are held further from members' communities. He added that staff would continue outreach efforts to recruit new members and boost participation.

H. Correspondence: Entrance Fee Waiver Letter

The Executive Committee took up the correspondence item regarding Reading's entrance fee waiver request at the beginning of the meeting, out of order from the published agenda, in recognition of the number of guests in attendance and in the interest of time.

Mr. Romero opened the item by welcoming several guests from the Town of Reading and inviting introductions. In attendance were Matt Kraunelis, Town Manager; Chris Cole, Director of Public Works and Reading's appointed representative to the MWRA Advisory Board; Sharon Angstrom, Chief Financial Officer; Jayne Wellman, Assistant Town Manager; Melissa Murphy and Chris Haley, members of the Reading Select Board; and Paul Silva, a Reading resident who authored the letter under discussion. Also present was Michael Smith, Deputy Chief of Staff and Communications Director for House Minority Leader Brad Jones, who joined the meeting to express support for the Town's request on the Representative's behalf.

Mr. Romero provided a summary of the background and context for the letter. He noted that the correspondence had been shared with Executive Committee members in advance of the meeting, along with past materials from the extensive Advisory Board and Executive Committee deliberations that led to the 2022 recommendation to waive entrance fees for future community admissions. The decision followed months of analysis, financial modeling, legal consultation with MWRA bond counsel, and outreach to impacted communities. Mr. Romero emphasized that bond counsel's opinion at the time found that while entrance fees could be waived going forward, there was no legal obligation to refund previously paid fees. Nonetheless, the request from the Town of Reading warranted discussion, particularly given the level of community concern and the letter's direct appeal to both the MWRA and Advisory Board leadership.

Mr. Kraunelis addressed the Executive Committee to express the Town's full support for the waiver request outlined in Mr. Silva's letter. He stated that Reading had long believed it was treated unfairly during its admission to the MWRA water system, having paid nearly \$11 million in entrance fees—by far the highest amount of any community. He emphasized that this obligation, while incurred in 2007, continues to affect ratepayers today due to the debt the Town incurred to fund





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the payment. Mr. Kraunelis described the request as a matter of fairness and equity and urged the Executive Committee to revisit the issue, noting that Reading's water rates are now among the highest in Massachusetts.

Mr. Silva expanded on the arguments in his letter, explaining that Reading's entrance fee was calculated based on a projected average usage of 765 million gallons per year, while the actual 10-year average following admission was only 608 million gallons. This discrepancy, he argued, represented an overpayment of approximately \$2.2 million. Mr. Silva further noted that conditions cited in the 2022 decision to waive entrance fees—excess water supply, public health needs, and the financial benefit of increasing water sales—were all present when Reading joined the system in 2007–2008. He argued that the 2022 decision, while correct, highlighted the inconsistency and inequity in how Reading was treated, and that rectifying this discrepancy would not only be fair, but also fiscally manageable for the Authority.

Other Reading representatives reiterated these points. Mr. Haley emphasized the burden placed on Reading residents, who continue to pay off the debt associated with the entrance fee and now face some of the highest water rates in the state. Ms. Angstrom confirmed that the Town had paid the entrance fee in a lump sum by issuing debt, and while there is no longer an outstanding balance with the MWRA, the costs are still being borne by local ratepayers. Ms. Murphy questioned the fairness of a system in which Reading paid \$11 million while other communities, including Burlington and Wilmington, paid nothing or far less. Mr. Smith, speaking on behalf of Representative Brad Jones, urged the Advisory Board to seriously consider the request, again framing it as an issue of fairness and equity.

Executive Committee members acknowledged the significance of Reading's concerns. Several members recalled the lengthy and often contentious debates surrounding the 2022 entrance fee waiver, noting that it was one of the most thoroughly vetted decisions the Executive Committee had taken up, and the only major issue that did not pass with unanimous support. Members also emphasized that while Reading's concerns are valid, any reconsideration of past entrance fees must be approached comprehensively, with attention to all communities that paid entrance fees, including those that amortized payments over time or are still carrying debt related to their buy-in.

Mr. Romero responded to several questions, clarifying that communities such as Stoughton had opted for amortized payments, while Reading had paid its full fee through borrowing. He noted that the original entrance fee calculations were based on a depreciation model reflecting MWRA's prior capital investments in the water system. The intent of the fee was to ensure that newly admitted communities contributed their fair share of system costs already borne by existing member communities. Mr. Romero also acknowledged that while Reading had raised concerns in writing at the time of the original deliberations, the broader debate focused on prospective policy rather than retrospective remedies.

Members agreed that additional information would be needed before further deliberation, including a full breakdown of entrance fees paid by all affected communities, the status of those





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payments, and the potential implications—legal and financial—of issuing refunds or other forms of relief. Mr. Raiche stressed that any action should consider the broader implications across the MWRA system and that reviewing Reading in isolation would not be appropriate. Mr. Romero confirmed that MWRA General Counsel is reviewing the matter and that Advisory Board staff will coordinate with MWRA staff to compile the requested data and present it at a future meeting.

The Committee concluded the item without a vote, with consensus that no recommendation could be made without further information. Mr. Raiche thanked the delegation from Reading for their participation and reiterated that the Advisory Board would continue to evaluate the request with care and transparency.

I. Omnibus and Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was put forth. It was moved by Michael Rademacher, seconded by Maurice Handel, and added to the omnibus roll call vote.

A motion to take an omnibus roll call vote was put forth. It was moved by Maurice Handel and seconded by Michael Rademacher.

An omnibus vote took place on the following items:

- Approval of the March 20, 2025 Advisory Board meeting agenda.
- Approval of the Executive Committee meeting minutes from February 6, 2025.
- Adjournment of the meeting.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
John Sullivan	Boston (BWSC)	<i>not present</i>
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
David Pavlik	Lexington	Yes (remote)
Yem Lip	Malden	Yes (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)
Nicholas Rystrom	Revere	Yes (remote)
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Yes
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Yes
John P. DeAmicis	Stoneham	Yes
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Yes (remote)





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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.

DRAFT



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