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Matthew A. Romero
Executive Director



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ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
Thursday, June 26, 2025 at 10:00 AM
REMOTE

[Zoom \(www.mwraadvisoryboard.com/event\)](https://www.mwraadvisoryboard.com/event)

AGENDA

- A. Roll call attendance [5 min]
- B. Executive Director's report [5 min]
- C. Presentation – Update on MWRA's recruiting and hiring efforts – *Michele Gillen, Director of Administration; Wendy Chu, Human Resources Director; Tomeka Cribb, Associate Special Assistant for Affirmative Action* [20 min + 10 min Q&A]
- D. Committee Reports
 - Executive Committee – *Rich Raiche*
 - Report of the Nomination Committee [5 min]
 - **Action Item:** Nomination and election of an Advisory Board representative to the MWRA Board of Directors for a three-year term from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2028 [5 min]
 - Finance Committee – *Elena Proakis Ellis*
 - FY25 budget update [5 min]
 - Final FY26 CEB and community assessments [5 min]
 - Operations Committee – *Mike Rademacher*
 - Volunteers for 8M permit working group [5 min]
- E. Legislative Update [5 min]
- F. MWRA Executive Director Update – *Fred Laskey* [5 min]
- G. **ACTION ITEM** –
 - Approval of Advisory Board meeting minutes from May 15, 2025 [5 min]
 - Approval of Advisory Board meeting minutes from April 17, 2025 [5 min]
- H. New business
- I. Omnibus roll call vote and adjournment [5 min]

I certify on this date, Notice was Posted as "MWRA Advisory Board Meeting" at [mwraadvisoryboard.com](https://www.mwraadvisoryboard.com) and emailed to regs@sec.state.ma.us, contactanf@mass.gov, openmeeting@mass.gov, openmeeting@state.ma.us

Christine Bennett, Research & Policy Analyst
Date Posted on Website: 06-12-2025



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Matthew A. Romero
Executive Director

Placeholder for J. Foti Nomination Materials

May 5, 2025

MWRA Advisory Board
2 Griffin Way
Chelsea, MA 02150

Dear Advisory Board members:

Please accept this letter as notification of my intent to seek re-election as your representative to the MWRA Board of Directors. As such, I humbly request your consideration of nomination to this position.

Since joining the Board of Directors, I have collaborated with my colleagues to protect the interests of member communities. With guidance from membership and staff, I will continue to work with Andy and Lou to ensure the Advisory Board has a strong voice at the Board of Directors.

It has been a privilege to serve as your representative on the Board of Directors. I appreciate the trust you have shown in me over the years and am proud of the work we have accomplished together. With the support of the membership, I commit to ensuring the Advisory Board has a solid presence at the Board of Directors.

Thank you for your past support and consideration of my nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph Foti". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'J' and 'F'.



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Thursday May 15, 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) |
| David Manugian | Bedford | Here (remote) |
| John Sullivan | Boston (BWSC) | Here (remote) |
| Jay Hersey | Brookline | Here (remote) |
| Brian White | Burlington | Here (remote) |
| Kathy Watkins | Cambridge | 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) |
| Elena Proakis Ellis | Melrose | Here (remote) |
| Mike Retzky | Needham | Here (remote) |

| Name | Community | Vote |
|-------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Mike Retzky | Needham | Here (remote) |
| Tom Fitzgerald | Newton | Here (remote) |
| Margaret LaForest | Quincy | Here (remote) |
| Nicholas Rystrom | Revere | Here (remote) |
| Richard Raiche | Somerville | Here (remote) |
| Sam Stivers | Southborough | Here (remote) |
| John DeAmicis | Stoneham | Here (remote) |
| Joseph Conway | Wakefield | Here (remote) |
| Ian McKenzie | Walpole | Here (remote) |
| David Cohen | Wellesley | Here (remote) |
| Joseph Lobao | Wilmington | Here (remote) |
| John Westerling | Worcester | Here (remote) |
| J.R. Greene | Quabbin/Ware | Here (remote) |
| Maurice Handel | MAPC | Here (remote) |

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B. Executive Director's Report

Matthew Romero, Executive Director of the MWRA Advisory Board, provided updates on membership outreach and legislative matters.

He noted that with a fuller Advisory Board staff now in place, efforts are resuming to address long-standing vacancies. Outreach is ongoing to fill both gubernatorial appointee positions and open community seats. Mr. Romero encouraged attendees to suggest potential nominees, particularly in communities that currently lack voting representation.

On the legislative front, Mr. Romero reported that the Senate Ways and Means Committee's budget proposal does not include MWRA debt service assistance. While it appears to include the usual \$500,000 allocation for Clinton, a key section of the language is missing. Advisory Board and MWRA staff are reviewing whether this omission was an error or intentional.





The Advisory Board has also submitted testimony in support of the WIPPES legislation and continues to track other legislation as it progresses.

C. Approval of the MWRA Advisory Board's final FY26 operating budget

Matthew Romero, Executive Director of the MWRA Advisory Board, presented the Advisory Board's proposed FY26 operating budget for final approval. He noted that the budget had been reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee in advance of this meeting.

Key changes include the return to a full staff complement of four full-time employees and the planned addition of a part-time administrative assistant. This new role will focus on core administrative functions such as payroll, accounts payable, and tracking paid time off. The position is intended to relieve the staff analyst of routine duties and allow for greater focus on analytical projects and long-term initiatives.

Mr. Romero also confirmed continued participation in Northeastern University's co-op program. The incoming co-op student, Bernadette, will begin in July following the conclusion of the current co-op's term in June.

A motion was put forward to approve the Advisory Board FY26 Operating Budget as presented and filed with the records of the meeting. It was moved by David Manugian, seconded by Michael Rademacher, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

D. Presentation: Advisory Board Comments & Recommendations on MWRA's proposed FY26 CEB & CIP

Matthew Romero, Executive Director of the MWRA Advisory Board, presented the Preliminary FY26 Comments & Recommendations report, which had been distributed in advance. He explained that this year's report marks the MWRA's 40th anniversary and places a strong emphasis on long-term planning, fiscal transparency, and ratepayer affordability. A central recommendation is to reconvene the Long-Term Rates Management Committee to reestablish alignment between capital spending, obligation forecasting, and rate setting—especially given the scale of upcoming investments such as the Metropolitan Tunnel Redundancy Program. Mr. Romero noted that without renewed coordination, the risk of backloading costs and burdening future ratepayers increases significantly.

He went on to summarize other key themes from the report. The Advisory Board recommends reducing MWRA's proposed FY26 rate increase from 2.98% to 2.70%, supported by approximately \$5.8 million in targeted expenditure reductions. The report also calls on MWRA to make strategic use of operating surpluses—directing savings from vacancies and other areas into pre-funding pension and OPEB liabilities or defeasing outstanding debt. Additionally, Mr. Romero highlighted concerns about persistent vacancies and recommended greater





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transparency around staffing targets and budgeting practices. He encouraged members to review the full draft and provide feedback ahead of the final vote in June, noting the importance of clearly communicating the tradeoffs between operating decisions, capital investments, and long-term financial sustainability.

A motion was made to approve the Advisory Board's Comments & Recommendations on MWRA's Proposed FY26 CEB and CIP. It was moved by David Manugian, seconded by Maurice Handel, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

E. Committee reports

• Finance Committee

Finance Committee Chair Elena Proakis Ellis noted that there were no major updates since the last full committee meeting. However, she mentioned that Christine Bennett had continued work on updates to the online dashboard and that progress would be shared at a future meeting.

• Operations Committee

Operations Committee Chair Michael Rademacher turned to Executive Director Matthew Romero to introduce the discussion of the Lynnfield Center Water District's application for admission to the MWRA waterworks system. Mr. Romero summarized that the application had already been reviewed and unanimously approved by both the Operations and Executive Committees. He then introduced Colleen Rizzi, Director of Environmental and Regulatory Affairs at MWRA, to provide a high-level overview of the request.

Ms. Rizzi explained that Lynnfield Center Water District is seeking admission through an interconnection with the Town of Wakefield, a current partial MWRA member. The district seeks supplemental water due to quality and quantity issues in its groundwater supply, and has completed all required environmental and regulatory steps, including NEPA and Water Resources Commission approvals. Their average daily demand is projected at 0.28 MGD, with a max day of 0.36 MGD.

The last remaining step is the passage of legislation—House Bill 972—required to amend the MWRA Enabling Act and formally admit the district. She clarified that the Advisory Board is being asked to recommend approval contingent upon the bill's passage, so that once enacted, MWRA staff can bring it directly to the Board of Directors for a final vote. Questions from members, including Mr. Pavlik, clarified the timing, legal structure, and emergency provisions.

A motion was put forward to recommend that the Advisory Board approve LCWD's admission to the MWRA waterworks system to MWRA Board of Directors pursuant to MWRA's Policy #OP.10 and contingent on the passage of H.972 as presented with the meeting materials and final MWRA Board of Directors approval. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded by





Michael Rademacher, and added to the omnibus roll call vote at the end of the meeting.

• Executive Committee

The Executive Committee report followed, with Chair Richard Raiche explaining that the Board lacked a quorum of member communities required to act on the one item scheduled for action: the nomination of Joe Foti to a position on the Executive Committee. Mr. Raiche stated that while the Executive Committee had met and unanimously supported Mr. Foti's nomination—he being the only individual to submit a formal application—procedurally, the Advisory Board still allows for nominations from the floor. Without a quorum, however, the nomination could not proceed and would be tabled until the next meeting. Mr. Raiche added that while Mr. Foti had made a strong impression during the Executive Committee's deliberations, it would not be appropriate for him to address the full Board until a vote could formally take place.

F. MWRA Executive Director Update

In staffing news, Mr. Laskey acknowledged the planned retirements of several long-serving employees, including Chief Operating Officer Dave Coppes, Teddy Regan, and Susan Carter. He recognized the potential concern these departures may raise but affirmed MWRA's efforts to maintain strong institutional continuity. He emphasized that MWRA has invested in building a deep internal bench and is actively recruiting for key positions. Mr. Laskey also credited the Human Resources team with expanding recruitment partnerships with local colleges and deploying new outreach strategies to strengthen the hiring pipeline.

G. Approval of Advisory Board meeting minutes from April 18, 2025

Minutes will be put on the June Advisory Board meeting agenda as they have not been reviewed yet.

H. New business

None.

I. Adjournment

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

J. Omnibus Roll Call Vote

A motion to approve the omnibus vote 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 FY26 Operating Budget as presented and filed with the records of the meeting.





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- Approval of the Advisory Board's Comments & Recommendations on MWRA's Proposed FY26 CEB and CIP.
- To recommend that the MWRA Board of Directors approve LCWD's admission to the MWRA waterworks system to the Executive Committee pursuant to MWRA's Policy #OP.10 and contingent on the passage of H.972 as presented with the meeting materials and final MWRA Board of Directors approval
- Adjournment of the meeting.

The omnibus vote was 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) |
| Brian White | Burlington | Here (remote) |
| Kathy Watkins | Cambridge | 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) |
| Elena Proakis Ellis | Melrose | Here (remote) |
| Mike Retzky | Needham | Here (remote) |

| Name | Community | Vote |
|-------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Mike Retzky | Needham | Here (remote) |
| Tom Fitzgerald | Newton | Here (remote) |
| Margaret LaForest | Quincy | Here (remote) |
| Nicholas Rystrom | Revere | Here (remote) |
| Richard Raiche | Somerville | Here (remote) |
| Sam Stivers | Southborough | Here (remote) |
| John DeAmicis | Stoneham | Here (remote) |
| Joseph Conway | Wakefield | Here (remote) |
| Ian McKenzie | Walpole | Here (remote) |
| David Cohen | Wellesley | Here (remote) |
| Joseph Lobao | Wilmington | Here (remote) |
| John Westerling | Worcester | Here (remote) |
| J.R. Greene | Quabbin/Ware | Here (remote) |
| Maurice Handel | MAPC | Here (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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Matthew A.
Matthew Romero



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Thursday April 17, 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) |
| Brian White | Burlington | Here (remote) |
| Kathy Watkins | Cambridge | Here (remote) |
| Michael Trotta | Canton | Here (remote) |
| Cate Fox-Lent | Chelsea | Here (remote) |
| Stephen Leone | Framingham | 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 |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Elena Proakis Ellis | Melrose | Here (remote) |
| Mike Retzky | Needham | Here (remote) |
| Margaret LaForest | Quincy | Here (remote) |
| Chris Cole | Reading | Here (remote) |
| Nicholas Rystrom | Revere | Here (remote) |
| Richard Raiche | Somerville | Here (remote) |
| Sam Stivers | Southborough | Here (remote) |
| John DeAmicis | Stoneham | Here (remote) |
| Pat Fasanello | Walpole | Here (remote) |
| Ian McKenzie | Waltham | Here (remote) |
| David Cohen | Wellesley | Here (remote) |
| Joseph Lobao | Wilmington | Here (remote) |
| J.R. Greene | Quabbin/Ware | Here (remote) |
| Maurice Handel | MAPC | Here (remote) |

Other attendees included:

Nathan Côté
Keira Kishnani
Christine Bennett
Moussa Siri
William Cundiff
Colleen Rizzi
Fred Laskey

Katie Ronan
Joseph Nolan
Lou Taverna
Michael Altieri
Matthew Horan
David Coppes
Matthew Dam
Ralph Francesconi

Kevin McKenna
Meghan Cavalier
Mike Cole
Jim Coyne
Andreae Downs
Sean Navin
Andy Pappastergion
Julie Greenwood

Tom Durkin
Joe Foti
John Terry

B. Executive Director's Report

Matthew Romero, Executive Director of the MWRA Advisory Board, provided several legislative and programmatic updates. He began by sharing recent news that the House budget includes \$1.5 million in debt service assistance, along with a \$500,000 reimbursement for the Clinton



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Matthew A.
Matthew Romero



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Wastewater Treatment Plant. Mr. Romero expressed gratitude to the Speaker's Office and noted that the Advisory Board will continue to monitor the budget as it proceeds through the legislative process.

He then reported on the MWRA Board of Directors meeting held the day before, which both he and Chair Richard Raiche attended in person. One of the agenda items was the letter approved by the Advisory Board last month concerning the Quabbin study. According to Mr. Romero, MWRA staff presented both the study and the related Quabbin legislation referenced in the Advisory Board's letter, and he expects this issue to remain active in the coming months.

Mr. Romero also previewed his upcoming participation in a Water Infrastructure Alliance meeting later this month, where updates will be provided on both the Omnibus Water Infrastructure Bill and the WIPES Bill—two legislative efforts the Advisory Board has supported. In addition, he highlighted a letter recently sent to the Massachusetts congressional delegation emphasizing the bipartisan importance of investing in water infrastructure. This communication was endorsed by a subset of the Alliance.

Turning to Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs), Mr. Romero noted his participation in a recent public listening session on the CSO long-term control plan. He was the only speaker raising concerns about the financial burden on communities and ratepayers. He has since adapted that presentation into a blog post, which is available on the Advisory Board's website along with the slides. A link to the post will be shared in the follow-up email for this meeting, and he plans to update the post to include a link to the Summer Voice landing page, where recordings and materials from the session are being hosted.

Regarding system expansion, Mr. Romero described his recent meeting with the Metro West System Expansion Working Group. The group is exploring a potential regional line to serve multiple communities, and while progress has been slower than anticipated, it continues. A number of communities—including Acton, Ayer, Bedford, Concord, Groton, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, and Westford—have either expressed support or taken formal action to join a shared consultant services agreement. Some others, such as Sudbury, are pursuing their own consultant as they evaluate MWRA membership. The working group is aiming to begin this phase in June, following what Mr. Romero said the Working Group described as an "aggressive six-month schedule." MWRA has committed to assisting with technical questions throughout this process. The group has also started briefing elected officials, including Representative Katherine Clark, Representative Kate Hogan, and Senator Jamie Eldridge, in anticipation of future infrastructure funding needs.

Mr. Romero concluded his remarks by noting that a smaller system expansion update would be shared later in the meeting by Mr. Michael Rademacher.

C. Presentation: 8M Permitting Process



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Matthew Romero



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Matthew Dam, Director of Toxic Reduction and Control at MWRA, provided an in-depth overview of the 8M permitting process, joined by Ralph Francesconi, Program Manager of Construction Permitting, and Kevin McKenna, Project Manager for 8M Permits. Mr. Dam opened the presentation by acknowledging the longstanding experience of his colleagues, noting that between them they have issued the vast majority of 8M permits for water and wastewater work across MWRA communities.

Mr. Francesconi began by explaining the statutory basis for 8M permitting, which stems from Section 8M of Chapter 372 of the Acts of 1984. He clarified that the permits are required for any construction, excavation, or other physical work within MWRA-owned easements or infrastructure corridors. He emphasized that the permitting process supports coordination between the MWRA and municipalities, and helps prevent infrastructure damage, such as accidental strikes to water or sewer lines. Mr. Francesconi then walked through examples of past permit applications, a reference guide available on the MWRA website, and the types of municipal and consultant submissions MWRA receives.

Mr. McKenna described the internal processing of permit requests and how they are logged, reviewed, and tracked post-9/11 for security purposes. He stressed that MWRA cannot release plans directly, but directs applicants to specific contacts for both water and sewer inquiries. He outlined expectations for submitted applications—including section views of proposed work—and provided examples of effective and ineffective mock-out practices in the field. He emphasized the importance of permitting prior to field work, particularly when MWRA inspectors are involved in locating infrastructure or confirming safe boring areas.

Mr. Francesconi and Mr. McKenna alternated slides illustrating how 8M permits prevent accidents and streamline major projects. One successful case involved Eversource's long-term transmission and distribution expansion, where early MWRA coordination helped align multi-year construction with municipal interests. Another highlighted the "Bread & Circus" project in Cambridge (now Whole Foods), where MWRA worked with private developers to allow for at-grade parking over key infrastructure, including sewer pipes, while ensuring full future access through custom engineering solutions.

The presenters reviewed how permit requests are processed internally, including biweekly review meetings with MWRA operations, engineering, and legal teams. Mr. Francesconi explained that while permits are not instantaneous, timely applications with appropriate documentation can be processed efficiently. He encouraged applicants to submit plans both electronically and by mail and to allocate lead time whenever possible.

Several case studies illustrated the consequences of proceeding without a permit. In one example, a contractor bored underneath a 48-inch pipe without authorization, dislodging the thrust block and causing a significant rupture. In another, unauthorized excavation over a MWRA pipe prompted emergency shutdown and inspection. These were contrasted with compliant cases





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where developers submitted detailed engineering plans with structural protections—such as pipe strapping and beam support—approved by MWRA’s technical services group.

The presentation also addressed broader procedural challenges. Mr. Francesconi and Mr. McKenna reviewed how MWRA tracks construction in public rights-of-way using shared permit feeds from communities such as Arlington and Cambridge, and expressed interest in seeing more towns adopt similar systems. They encouraged communities to direct private contractors, especially geothermal well drillers, to MWRA when work occurs near or over MWRA infrastructure.

The discussion shifted to concerns raised by Advisory Board members. Amy McHugh, representing Marblehead, voiced strong concerns about gaps in oversight, particularly in communities where MWRA infrastructure runs beneath or near private property. She emphasized the need for MWRA to join the Dig Safe system or implement a more visible alert mechanism. Ms. McHugh was assured by Mr. Francesconi and Deputy COO Rebecca Weidman that MWRA mapping is available upon request and that discussions about joining Dig Safe have occurred internally but were historically cost-prohibitive.

Mr. Dam and Mr. Romero encouraged communities to submit contact information for all relevant departments and officials to help MWRA proactively identify responsible parties and improve awareness of 8M obligations. Mr. Hersey of Brookline and Mr. McGivern of Medford shared examples of internal changes their communities had implemented after experiencing issues with unpermitted work. These included inter-departmental coordination, requiring 8M documentation as part of local excavation permits, and working with Boards of Health on geothermal applications.

Katherine Watkins of Cambridge echoed support for hosting a focused Operations Committee meeting to explore best practices for managing geothermal and deep-bore work, which Mr. Romero endorsed as a valuable next step. She also noted growing interest in diagonal drilling and complex subsurface activity, suggesting that evolving technologies will make local and MWRA coordination even more essential.

To close, Mr. Romero asked about potential penalties for failing to secure an 8M permit. Mr. McKenna confirmed that MWRA permits are revocable and non-transferrable, and that violations have led to cease-and-desist orders and court proceedings. While MWRA does not currently assess monetary fines, damages may be pursued through MWRA’s Risk Management program. Mr. Francesconi reiterated that in emergencies, communities should bypass permitting and call MWRA directly, emphasizing the agency’s 24/7 response capacity.

Chair Richard Raiche concluded the presentation by thanking Mr. Dam, Mr. Francesconi, and Mr. McKenna for their thorough and constructive presentation, adding that their guidance has been invaluable to many communities over the years.

D. Presentation: Proposed FY26 Comments & Recommendations Preview



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Mr. Romero provided a detailed overview of the Advisory Board's upcoming Comments and Recommendations (C&R) for the Proposed FY26 Current Expense Budget (CEB) and Capital Improvement Program (CIP). He opened by acknowledging Joseph Nolan from the Utility Contractors' Association of New England (UCANE), who was in attendance and represents contractors often involved in work requiring 8M permits. Mr. Romero invited Mr. Nolan and UCANE members to participate in future discussions around permitting best practices.

Transitioning into the budget presentation, Mr. Romero reflected on the Advisory Board's statutory responsibility to review and comment on MWRA's CEB and CIP. He emphasized the growing significance of this role, citing emerging financial pressures such as the potential impacts of Quabbin-related legislation, the cost implications of PFAS-related landfill restrictions, and the potential \$4.7 billion price tag of the updated Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Long-Term Control Plan. Mr. Romero noted that while the Advisory Board's work might not attract headlines, it remains a critical tool to advocate for accountability, transparency, and ratepayer protection.

Mr. Romero explained that the Advisory Board's review this year continues a "back-to-basics" approach that includes renewed analytical rigor. Building on the visual and narrative refresh initiated in FY25, the team has already completed draft versions of visual summaries for all major line items and is now focusing on drafting narrative sections. Mr. Romero credited Christine from the Advisory Board staff for her role in enhancing the dashboard and visualization efforts.

Addressing the FY26 CEB, Mr. Romero noted that the total budget is \$922.2 million—an increase of 2.4% over the prior year. He explained that capital financing remains the largest category at 56% of the budget, followed by personnel-related expenses at 19%. These two categories together account for roughly 75% of MWRA's expenses. He then reviewed historical and projected assessment increases for member communities, emphasizing that while the combined utility rate path remains steady, water operations continue to present the greatest fiscal challenge. The Advisory Board expects to recommend a rate increase in the range of 2.5% to 2.9%, slightly below MWRA's proposed 3%.

Personnel budgeting remains a key area of focus. Mr. Romero presented updated staffing figures and highlighted the gap between MWRA's budgeted and actual filled Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions. For FY26, MWRA budgeted 1,168 FTEs, compared to a year-to-date average of 1,062—representing a shortfall of 106 positions, or roughly \$12.2 million in potential wage savings. He also noted that fringe benefits are not adjusted for assumed vacancies. As a result, the Advisory Board is considering a recommendation to direct year-end surpluses in wages and fringe benefits toward future obligations. Specifically, surplus wages could be applied as optional pension contributions, while fringe benefit surpluses could be directed to the OPEB trust. Mr. Romero likened this to the MWRA's policy for using debt





192 service surpluses to defease future debt, a policy change that the Advisory Board had
193 previously endorsed.

194
195 A second personnel-related recommendation is to reconvene the Long-Term Rates
196 Management Committee to evaluate sustainable rate paths and address future financial
197 impacts—including those stemming from the Metropolitan Tunnel project and updated CSO
198 mandates. Mr. Romero noted particular concern about the divergence between water and
199 sewer rate increases and emphasized the need for strategic alignment.

200
201 On the CIP side, Mr. Romero shared preliminary figures showing wastewater projects
202 continuing to dominate MWRA’s capital spending. He highlighted the importance of refining
203 cost estimates for large projects, especially at Deer Island and in the CSO program. He
204 compared the costs of the original CSO long-term control plan (\$1.44 per gallon in 2024
205 dollars) to the updated proposal, which could exceed \$23 per gallon—more than 16 times as
206 expensive. Given this discrepancy, the Advisory Board will recommend updated cost modeling
207 and an analysis of potential rate impacts at multiple CSO investment levels. This work would
208 inform both CIP guidance and long-term rate forecasting.

209
210 Finally, Mr. Romero addressed several policy matters. He noted ongoing opposition to the
211 Quabbin equity legislation and continued monitoring of the Department of Conservation and
212 Recreation’s efforts to restore ranger enforcement powers. He also mentioned growing calls
213 for a new moratorium on forestry in watershed lands, which the Advisory Board has
214 historically opposed.

215
216 A new policy proposal under consideration would address the high upfront infrastructure costs
217 facing communities seeking to join the MWRA waterworks system. Mr. Romero outlined a
218 potential model where MWRA could fund connection costs upfront and recover them over
219 time, either through a direct fee or loan-style repayment. Once the connection is paid off, the
220 community would assume a normal ratepayer status. He cited Burlington’s successful use of
221 MassWorks funding as a precedent, while noting that such funding alone is often insufficient
222 to cover full connection costs.

223
224 Mr. Romero concluded by reiterating that the full Comments and Recommendations
225 document would be reviewed by the Executive Committee in May and presented to the full
226 Advisory Board at the May meeting for approval. No questions were raised following the
227 presentation.

228 229 E. Committee reports

- 230 • Executive Committee
- 231
- 232





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Chair Richard Raiche announced the formal opening of the nomination period for the Advisory Board's representative to the MWRA Board of Directors. The current representative, Mr. Foti, has expressed interest in running for re-election; however, the seat remains open to any interested Advisory Board member. All candidates must submit a letter of intent and a letter of consideration. The Executive Committee, serving as the nominating committee, will present its recommendation at the May meeting, with the full Advisory Board scheduled to vote on May 15th. Mr. Raiche reminded members that the election follows a one-community, one-vote format, so achieving quorum is essential. Members unable to attend were encouraged to submit a proxy designee, especially in light of the Advisory Board's newly relaxed proxy designation rules.

Executive Director Matthew Romero emphasized that nominations may also be made from the floor during the meeting, and reiterated the Advisory Board's commitment to transparency in the process.

- **Finance Committee**

Finance Committee Chair Elena Proakis Ellis reported that the committee met on March 26th to review staffing vacancies and surpluses in the personnel budget, issues that were also addressed in the earlier Comments and Recommendations preview. The Committee recommended refinements to how Advisory Board staff present these data trends, and staff have since been implementing those changes.

The next Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for April 24th, when the group will review the proposed FY26 Comments and Recommendations in more detail. Ms. Proakis Ellis then turned the floor over to Christine Bennett for an update on the Advisory Board's dashboards.

Christine Bennett shared that the March data have been fully incorporated into the financial dashboards. At the request of Mr. Sullivan of Boston, a new tile was added to the Quick Reference Dashboard linking to MWRA's most recent report on infiltration and inflow (I/I) activity by community. The tile also includes a direct link to the MWRA's I/I Financial Assistance Program webpage. Ms. Bennett reminded members that the dashboards can be accessed from the Advisory Board homepage by clicking the link in the upper right-hand corner.

- **Operations Committee**

Operations Committee Chair Michael Rademacher provided three updates. First, he noted that a meeting of the committee will be scheduled in the coming weeks to review the application from the Lynnfield Center Water District to join the MWRA waterworks system through Wakefield. The vote under consideration would recommend approval to the





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Executive Committee and the full Advisory Board, contingent on the district securing enabling legislation and a subsequent vote by the MWRA Board of Directors. Mr. Rademacher noted that MWRA staff and project proponents will attend the meeting to answer questions. The goal is to complete the review in time for a vote at the May Advisory Board meeting, allowing the process to continue without disruption during the summer.

Second, Mr. Rademacher issued a reminder for all communities to complete the 8M contact form, which helps MWRA compile an accurate and comprehensive list of municipal departments responsible for excavation permitting. The contact form is intended to enhance coordination and ensure that departments such as DPWs, Boards of Health, and Building Departments are aware of MWRA infrastructure and the 8M permitting requirements. Members were encouraged to reach out to Nathan Côté to confirm whether their community has submitted the form.

Lastly, Mr. Rademacher announced an upcoming Inflow and Infiltration (I/I) Workshop scheduled for May 15th, co-hosted by the Advisory Board and MWRA. The session will focus on strategies for removing private inflow, the broader impacts of I/I on infrastructure, and funding opportunities through the MWRA's I/I Financial Assistance Program. It will also feature community case studies. All communities are encouraged to attend regardless of whether they operate a wastewater system. Training Contact Hours (TCHs) will be available.

Matthew Romero added that the workshop is open to any attendees who might benefit or need TCH credits and urged members to invite additional colleagues who could use the training.

Chair Raiche closed the committee reports by thanking all three committees for their recent surge in activity and commended both committee members and other participating Advisory Board members for their engagement and contributions.

F. MWRA Executive Director Update

Fred Laskey, Executive Director of the MWRA, offered his regular update and opened by highlighting MWRA's internal celebration of Women's History Month and Public Works recognition efforts. As part of a new employee engagement initiative, MWRA hosted a two-part "Lunch to Learn" speaker series featuring guest panelists and peer discussions on MWRA operations. Participants included Katie Fox-Lent, Elena Proakis Ellis, Marina Fernandez of Milton, and Erin Chute of Brookline. Mr. Laskey noted the value of hearing from women leading across the public works field and emphasized how dramatically the field has shifted from being male-dominated to increasingly inclusive.

Mr. Laskey reported the successful completion of MWRA's Risk and Resilience Assessment, a comprehensive security review required under the federal American Water Infrastructure Act.





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The report has been submitted to the EPA and reflects MWRA's continued efforts to assess and address vulnerabilities across its systems.

He also discussed MWRA's involvement in upcoming events. On Marathon Monday, MWRA will provide five dump trucks for security purposes along the Boston Marathon route and will position its water wagon in a high-visibility area. The water wagon will also be featured at the Lexington 250th celebration, giving attendees the chance to enjoy MWRA water while promoting public awareness of the agency. MWRA will also contribute to Earth Day clean-up efforts in Chelsea and has coordinated with Brian Swett from the City of Boston to gather information on Earth Day events across the region.

In staffing news, Mr. Laskey acknowledged the planned retirements of several long-serving employees, including Chief Operating Officer Dave Coppes, Teddy Regan, and Susan Carter. He recognized the potential concern these departures may raise but affirmed MWRA's efforts to maintain strong institutional continuity. He emphasized that MWRA has invested in building a deep internal bench and is actively recruiting for key positions. Mr. Laskey also credited the Human Resources team with expanding recruitment partnerships with local colleges and deploying new outreach strategies to strengthen the hiring pipeline.

Turning to capital program issues, Mr. Laskey reiterated that major investments are imminent on both the water and wastewater sides of the system. He highlighted the cost implications of advancing the CSO Long-Term Control Plan and completing the Metropolitan Water Tunnel, both of which will exert considerable pressure on MWRA's capital budget and impact future rate planning. Mr. Laskey committed to working closely with the Advisory Board and its member communities to navigate these challenges collaboratively.

Following Mr. Laskey's remarks, Andreae Downs raised a concern on behalf of the Water Advisory Committee (WAC) regarding staffing redundancies and the preservation of institutional knowledge. Ms. Downs observed that while MWRA has a strong track record of operational redundancy, gaps in administrative or support staff transitions can result in procedural confusion or overlooked responsibilities. She cited examples such as delays in WAC contract renewals and missed operational details like propane billing. Ms. Downs emphasized the importance of maintaining detailed standard operating procedures and preserving internal knowledge as part of succession planning, particularly in the context of retirements and continued underspending on FTEs.

Mr. Laskey agreed and acknowledged the importance of Ms. Downs's point. He emphasized that MWRA is actively expanding HR staff and recruitment capacity, including participating in job fairs and leveraging digital tools to attract qualified applicants. He welcomed any referrals from Advisory Board members and noted that MWRA is working diligently to fill its pipeline with strong candidates.





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Matthew Romero noted that MWRA's workforce development strategies would be the subject of a featured presentation at the June Advisory Board meeting. Michele Gillen and MWRA staff will be invited to share updates on workforce initiatives highlighted at the recent NEWWA (New England Water Works) conference.

Chair Raiche then voiced support for the MWRA water wagon as a community outreach tool. He referenced its recent appearance at Somerville's Civic Day and suggested that events like these help educate the public—especially children—on regional water infrastructure. He encouraged members to use such opportunities to spread awareness of the MWRA. Mr. Romero added a lighthearted suggestion to affix a QR code linking to MWRA's careers page directly on the side of the water wagon to boost hiring efforts. Ms. Katie Ronan, MWRA Chief of Staff noted that MWRA had already done so.

Mr. Laskey agreed and noted that over 100 community events have already been booked. He invited any community with an upcoming town event, festival, or sports tournament to reach out to Katie Ronan to coordinate the water wagon's participation.

Amy McHugh from Marblehead then asked that MWRA staff notify local public works officials when the water wagon is scheduled to appear in their communities. She noted that it had previously appeared at Marblehead's arts festival without her department's awareness, missing an opportunity for additional outreach. Mr. Laskey thanked Ms. McHugh for the suggestion and agreed to improve notification protocols moving forward.

G. Approval of Advisory Board meeting minutes from March 20, 2025

A motion was put forward to approve the Advisory Board minutes from March 20, 2025. It was moved by Maurice Handel, seconded by Michael Rademacher, and moved to the omnibus vote at the end of the meeting.

H. New business

Mr. Romero reminded attendees to enter their names and affiliations into the chat, if they had not already done so, to ensure an accurate record for the meeting minutes.

Mr. Romero then shared that Advisory Board staff are exploring the possibility of opening the Zoom meeting early next month—approximately 15 minutes before the scheduled start time—to provide an opportunity for informal conversation among members. This time would be reserved for general discussion unrelated to MWRA or Advisory Board business, with the goal of replicating the informal networking that previously occurred during in-person meetings.

Fred Laskey noted that the proposed informal session should be reviewed to ensure compliance with open meeting law. Mr. Romero confirmed that the Advisory Board would take appropriate steps to clarify that the early portion of the meeting is not an official session





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and that no Advisory Board or MWRA business will be discussed.

I. Adjournment

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

J. Omnibus Roll Call Vote

A motion to approve the omnibus vote was put forward. It was moved by Michael Rademacher and seconded by John DeAmicis.

An omnibus vote on the following items took place:

- Approval of the March 20, 2025 Advisory Board meeting minutes
- Adjournment of the meeting.

The omnibus vote was as follows:

| Name | Community | Vote |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Michael Rademacher | Arlington | Yes (remote) |
| Dan Maurer | Ashland | Yes (remote) |
| David Manugian | Bedford | Not present |
| John Sullivan | Boston (BWSC) | Yes (remote) |
| Jay Hersey | Brookline | Yes (remote) |
| Brian White | Burlington | Yes (remote) |
| Kathy Watkins | Cambridge | Yes (remote) |
| Michael Trotta | Canton | Not present |
| Cate Fox-Lent | Chelsea | Not present |
| Stephen Leone | Framingham | 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 |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Elena Proakis Ellis | Melrose | Yes (remote) |
| Mike Retzky | Needham | Yes (remote) |
| Margaret LaForest | Quincy | Not present |
| Chris Cole | Reading | Yes (remote) |
| Nicholas Rystrom | Revere | Not present |
| Richard Raiche | Somerville | Yes (remote) |
| Sam Stivers | Southborough | Yes (remote) |
| John DeAmicis | Stoneham | Yes (remote) |
| Pat Fasanello | Walpole | Yes (remote) |
| Ian McKenzie | Waltham | Yes (remote) |
| David Cohen | Wellesley | Yes (remote) |
| Joseph Lobao | Wilmington | Yes (remote) |
| J.R. Greene | Quabbin/Ware | Yes (remote) |
| Maurice Handel | MAPC | 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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Matthew A.
Matthew Romero



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FY 2026 Potential Meeting Schedules for Executive Committee and Advisory Board

Executive Committee

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| July | No meeting |
| August | No meeting |
| September 11, 2025 | 10am-11:30am |
| October 16, 2025 (if needed) | 10am-11:30am |
| November 13, 2025 | 10am-11:30am |
| December 11, 2025 | (if needed) |
| January 8, 2026 | 10am-11:30am |
| February 5, 2026 | 10am-11:30am |
| March 12, 2026 | 10am-11:30am |
| April 9, 2026 | 10am-11:30am |
| May 7, 2026 | 10am-11:30am |
| June 11, 2026 | 10am-11:30am |

Advisory Board

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| July | No meeting |
| August 21, 2025 | Field trip |
| September 18, 2025 | 10am-11:30am |
| October 23, 2025 (if needed) | 10am-11:30am |
| November 20, 2025 | 10am-11:30am |
| December | No meeting |
| January 15, 2026 | 10am-11:30am |
| February 12, 2026 | 10am-11:30am |
| March 19, 2026 | 10am-11:30am |
| April 16, 2026 | 10am-11:30am |
| May 21, 2026 | 10am-11:30am |
| June 25, 2026 | 10am-11:30am |

MWRA Board of Directors' and Committee Meetings for FY 2026

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|--|
| July 23, 2025 | Chelsea | 1-3:30pm | Board Meeting |
| August 20, 2025 (if needed) | Remote, or Chelsea | TBD | IF NEEDED |
| September 17, 2025 | Deer Island | 10am-3pm | Quarterly Committees and Board Meeting |
| October 22, 2025 | POTENTIAL OFFSITE | Morning tour; 1-3:30pm | POTENTIAL OFF-SITE Board Meeting |
| November 19, 2025 | Deer Island | 1-3:30pm | Board Meeting |
| December 10, 2025 | Chelsea | 10am-3pm | Quarterly Committees and Board Meeting |
| January 14, 2026 | Deer Island | 1-3:30pm | Board Meeting |
| February 11, 2026 | Chelsea | 1-3:30pm | Board Meeting |
| March 18, 2026 | Deer Island | 10am-3pm | Quarterly Committees and Board Meeting |
| April 15, 2026 | POTENTIAL OFFSITE | Morning tour; 1-3:30pm | POTENTIAL OFF-SITE Board Meeting |
| May 20, 2026 | Deer Island | 11am-12pm | POTENTIAL Budget Hearings (Committee of the Whole) |
| | | 1-3:30pm | Board Meeting |
| June 24, 2026 | Deer Island | 10am-3pm | Quarterly Committees and Board Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expected to include Personnel Committee Meeting Independent of Management and Executive Director's Review |

Updated June 13, 2025



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Matthew A. Romero
Executive Director