



**DEDHAM-WESTWOOD WATER DISTRICT**  
**General Business Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, September 6, 2022 | 6:30 PM**

**Hybrid Meeting**  
**In-Person Attendance at 50 Elm Street in Dedham, MA 02026**

**Announcement of the Audio and/or Video Recording**

The Chair, James Fox, called the meeting to order at 6:30p.m. and announced the meeting would be audio- and video-recorded.

**Attendance**

James Fox, Chair

Robert Lexander, Vice-Chair

Andrew Kara, Clerk

Eric Merithew, Member

Gary Yessaillian, Member (remote)

Blake Lukis, Executive Director

Bob Marsh, Business Manager

Pauline Donoghue, Treasurer

Steve Locke, Operations Manager (remote)

Allyssa Jewell, Communications Coordinator

**Absent**

John Healy, Member

**Roll-Call Attendance**

Messrs. Fox, Lexander, Kara, Merithew, and Yessaillian, Present; Mr. Healy, Absent.

Mr. Fox confirmed a quorum present.

**Approval of Minutes of July 12, 2022**

Mr. Fox called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes for July 12, 2022. A motion was made by Mr. Kara to approve the minutes, as reviewed, for July 12, 2022; the motion was seconded by Mr. Lexander. With no discussion necessary, a roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Fox, Lexander, Kara, Merithew, and Yessaillian all voted Aye.

Motion passes unanimously.

**Financials and Warrant**

Warrant

Previously Board-approved, Ms. Donoghue presented Warrants 50-57 for July 11 to August 4 activity. For the Board's review and approval, Ms. Donoghue presented Warrants 58-65 for August 8 to 31 activity.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Donoghue highlighted:

- Reconciled cash balances for June and July – At July 31, July is down from June.
- Treasurer's Report cash balance has been reconciled to June 30.

- Monthly summary of reconciled cash and disbursements is current through July 31.
- Monthly summary of reconciled cash and distribution for prior year ended December 31, 2021.

Mr. Fox inquired about budget-to-actual, and Ms. Donoghue answered that revenue is slightly increased.

Ms. Donoghue informed that better returns on investments being sought has resulted in Dedham Savings Bank now giving 125 basis points, increased from 50 at beginning of the year. She notified that treasury investments are being researched. Details of investing in the current market were discussed.

## **Business Manager Report**

### Business Operating Reports

Mr. Lukis shared his screen for Mr. Marsh to report operating results for the month of July including the Profit & Loss Summary. Mr. Marsh explained the billed water revenue was above budget, with the rate increase included in the budget. He noted the tier increases are coming through. Year-to-Date, the trend has been consistent with every month except April above, and excess revenue over expenses is favorable. The Pro-Forma shows MWRA for THM flushing, how one incident affects the District's P&L.

Mr. Marsh explained labor costs include union, overtime, and projects, with some employees opting not to carry coverage offsetting these expenses. Highlighting Depreciation, Mr. Marsh notes it is a small unfavorable variance negative to the budget, but hopes August will bring a turnaround.

Mr. Marsh reported the five-year plan is being completed, using outside direction since borrowing percentages have increased. Feeling good where the plan is heading, he hopes to present it to the Board at the next meeting.

For a flash report on revenue, Mr. Marsh stated August beat budget thanks to the tier-structure impact and volume. Some discussion was held regarding these details. Mr. Fox remarked that revenue is increased though water was purchased. Mr. Lukis responded that demand was reduced, resulting in Well 5 off, hoping this will not be the case for the rest of the season. Mr. Merithew commented that the tier structure is doing what was hoped for, and asked if any customer negative comments or complaints were received. Mr. Lukis informed that he had inquired with Customer Service and no issues were presented from the first changed billing in July. Mr. Lukis also referred to the additional MWRA spring purchase and that more was pumped this July than last. Mr. Lexander described past issues in meeting demand.

## **Operations Manager Report**

### Pumping and Operational Report

Mr. Locke shared his screen to highlight the Stage 1 to Stage 2A water restrictions on July 31. He stated pumpage has been reduced because of raised precipitation and temperatures, hoping restrictions might be eased, taking a look at MWRA usage. Restrictions violations resulted in 144 ‘door knockers’ and 4-5 fines, showing most have adhered to the restrictions and the public has reacted well.

#### Update on New & Existing Projects

Main and Service Breaks Report – Two main breaks were reported in Dedham. Four service breaks were reported in Westwood and two in Dedham. These incidences contributed to payroll overtime since were in high-traffic areas. YTD breaks have totaled 22, with 23 service breaks - above average.

Discussion was held regarding truck weight issues on roads and if the town DPW was performing any weight studies. It was noted that the installation of new asphalt, which requires sub-level gravel compacting (pounding) is a greater issue when it comes to water pipe breaks, especially in areas with older infrastructure. Breaks are tracked in asset the management program, which in time may provide an algorithm to predict break likelihood. Mr. Merithew recommended working with the towns to assess their I/I program and whether any correlations could be drawn to main breaks.

Water Main Bid – The result of August 31 bid opening for replacing Westwood’s Beverly Lane and Hillcrest Place water mains resulted in CJP & Sons Construction as the responsible party. To expedite the project so no supply chain delays, all pipe has been pre-purchased. The Weston & Sampson vetting process has been completed, and the District has a positive history with CJP & Sons.

Prior to the following discussion Mr. Merithew stated he would be recusing himself from participating in the conversation.

Mr. Locke explained that Veolia was the responsible bidder from July 14<sup>th</sup> THM Reduction System Request for Proposals, but contract language and defined miscommunication areas resulted in a much higher proposal than anticipated. Work scope was narrowed to be more realistic to plan with areas of savings identified to be more in-tune to budget.

Designs - Motor Controller Center Design for next year is 60% completed.

- The Treatment Plan study will be completed by end of month September.
- The new-year budget for High Rock to Burgess Avenue interconnection for the spring is a top priority, noting reasons for connection.

#### **Executive Director Report**

Mr. Lukis introduced Communication Coordinator Allyssa Jewell. Onboard since August 8, Ms. Jewell has updated the District’s website and social media presence. The Board Members welcomed Ms. Jewell.

#### Contracts Executed by Executive Director

Mr. Lukis reported two within-budget vehicle orders have been submitted, for arrival by 2023. He explained the Capital Budget allowed for four vehicles, but due to cost increases only 3 will be purchased within the budgeted amount.

#### Continued Discussion and Action on Revisions to Non-Union Vacation Policy

Mr. Lukis reminded the Board of a memo he circulated for the July 12 meeting regarding non-union vacation policy changes based on the union contract. From discussions with the human resources consulting firm, he learned the current trend is towards PTO - lumping all time off together - and for a minimum of three weeks' vacation for incoming non-union staff since new-hires request more vacation. Sharing his screen, Mr. Lukis contrasted the current vacation plan with the proposed 3-4-5 week plan: Three weeks' vacation time given to new employees, increased to four weeks after 5 years of employment and to five weeks at 15 years of employment. No year-to-year rollover would be authorized, but could include one week of carryover. Discussion was held regarding the reasons for no cumulative rollover.

Mr. Fox called for a motion to approve the revisions to the non-union vacation policy. A motion was made by Mr. Lexander to approve the revised vacation policy providing 3 weeks upon employment, 4 weeks at five years and 5 weeks at fifteen years with one allowed week of carryover vacation policy; the motion was seconded by Mr. Merithew. With no additional discussion necessary, a roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Fox, Lexander, Kara, Merithew, and Yessaillian all voted Aye.  
Motion passes unanimously.

Mr. Lukis confirmed this change impacts few employees, will not be a significant change to the majority of the staff.

#### Action of Signing onto PFAS Litigation

Referring to the information forwarded in July, Mr. Lukis explained that Attorney Sandman, who had previously represented the District, contacted him with offer of representation with no upfront fees, just a contingency fee. It was decided Mr. Lukis would research PFAS issues with other impacted water systems and see if they are in any litigation suits. Discussion took place regarding litigation. Mr. Lukis will report his findings at the next meeting.

#### Update on Security Project

Mr. Lukis explained last fall's bid was cancelled because of issues on the bids. Project was rebid in July, with two electrical firms attending the walk through and asked questions, but stated they had no time for such a project and no bids were ultimately received. Now rebidding as a repackaged smaller project, bids are due September 22.

#### **Old/New Business\***

##### PFAS

Sharing his screen, Mr. Lukis stated he is using a reformatted calendar-year graph, showing Well 5 for the current year with the lowest PFAS, anticipating the sample would be down. Compliance is based on quarters and compliance results show the third quarter is acceptable, adding that last July saw rain and this July saw drought conditions. Mr. Lukis detailed the reading and tracking of compliance, voice question of how other communities stay in compliance.

#### Basecamp Alternatives

Mr. Lukis presented two Basecamp alternatives he has researched:

- Basecamp Version 3 is more intuitive with project folders for organization and search capability, along with a message board to email for response and the ability to provide public information, with sorting by name and drag/drop aspects.
- SmartFile offers similar folder organization to send individual files; all would require a log-in, and there is no communication capability.

At Mr. Lexander's question regarding cost, Mr. Lukis responded both would be an increased cost from the current Basecamp used. He informed that all current information would be moved to the chosen plan.

#### Mr. Lukis' performance Evaluation

Mr. Yessaillian reminded the Board of the outstanding performance review given Mr. Lukis in July. He recommends Mr. Lukis receive a retroactive to his start date 5% base salary increase plus a delayed sign-on bonus of \$7,000. Mr. Fox added his positive thoughts on Mr. Lukis' performance.

Mr. Yessaillian called for a motion to approve Mr. Lukis' retroactive base-salary increase and sign-on bonus; the motion was seconded by Mr. Lexander. With no additional discussion necessary, a roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Fox, Lexander, Kara, Merithew, and Yessaillian all voted Aye.

Motion passes unanimously.

Thanks were given to Mr. Lukis for his outstanding performance.

Mr. Fox requested a motion for adjournment. A motion was made by Mr. Kara to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Lexander seconded it. A roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Fox, Lexander, Kara, Merithew, and Yessaillian all voted Aye.

Motion passes unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:39 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kathy Travers Reynolds  
Recording Secretary