



DEDHAM-WESTWOOD WATER DISTRICT General Business Meeting

Hybrid Meeting

In-person attendance: 50 Elm Street, Dedham, MA 02026

Monday, December 12, 2023 | 6:30 PM

Announcement of the Audio and/or Video Recording

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

Robert Lexander, Chair

Gary Yessaillian, Vice-Chair (remote)

Eric Merithew, Clerk (remote)

Mark Phillips, Member (remote)

John Healy, Member

Louis Kustwan, Member (remote)

Blake Lukis, Executive Director

Bob Marsh, Business Manager

Pauline Donoghue, Treasurer (remote)

Steve Locke, Operations Manager

Roll-Call Attendance

Messrs. Lexander, Yessaillian, Merithew, Healy, and Kustwan Present.

Mr. Lexander confirmed a quorum present.

Mr. Phillips joined later in the meeting.

Public Participation

Mr. Lexander confirmed no public attendees present.

Approval of Minutes of November 7, 2023 and November 27, 2023

Mr. Lexander called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes of November 7 and November 27, 2023. A motion was made by Mr. Merithew to approve the minutes as reviewed for both November 7 and November 27, 2023. Mr. Healy seconded the motion for the November 7, 2023 meeting minutes; Mr. Kustwan seconded the motion for the November 27, 2023 meeting minutes. With no additional discussion necessary, a roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Lexander, Yessaillian, Merithew, Healy, and Kustwan voted Aye.

Motion passed unanimously.

Financials and Warrant

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Donoghue presented Warrants 82-85, for November 27th to December 7th activity, and requested the Commissioners who have not approved the warrants on Baseline do so to keep the record clean for the auditors.

Business Manager Report

Mr. Marsh reported on the valuation of OPEB, Other Post-Employee Benefits, plan audited and evaluated by the actuaries based on December 2022 assets to confirm funding is on-plan. The previous evaluation, of December 2020 and presented in June 2021, determined that the account was fully funded. Mr. Marsh informed that the plan is described as a closed plan, with six past employees receiving benefits. Currently below fully funded, the actuary firm recommended no contribution be made this year; the plan will be monitored this year and next. Mr. Marsh stated the Rockland investment plan is in a great position and is reviewed during the year.

Discussion was held regarding the positives of the plan, its setup, the District's portion, and supplemental.

Mr. Lukis displayed the finances for Mr. Marsh to make some points important to the year-end wrap-up. Billed Water is ten months volume-based; Excess Revenue over Expenses versus Plan is below plan with Investment Income someone offsetting; MWRA water additional purchase; Depreciation the past year was not long-term and was corrected in 2024; a breakeven forecast could not be held, so a loss is anticipated.

Some discussion was held regarding additional purchase of MWRA water and the reasons. Mr. Marsh added that the Profit & Loss is still reasonable.

Mr. Marsh reported that 50% of Capital has been spent, with large projects being completed before rolling into next year, for a cash forecast in January/February.

Mr. Healy described the MWRA water additional purchase need as for the safety of customers' water quality, with fiscal discipline.

Operations Manager Report

Mr. Locke reported:

Pumping and Operational Report

- Pumpage – The past three weeks: 3.8 to 3.837 to 3.812 million gallons per day.
This past week was 3.744 million gallons per day, though three large breaks were found.

MWRA usage three weeks ago was 316 thousand gallons per day, then to 91 thousand gallons per day.

Attempting to reduce usage, unsatisfactory THMs are being monitored.

Staying in-compliance, usage this past week was .655 million gallons per day.

- Main & Service Lines
 - November 29 - 8-inch circular break at 259 Colburn Street in Dedham
1966 cast-iron pipe

- December 5 – 8-inch blowout at 315 Clapboardtree Street in Westwood
1954 AC – two blowouts
The area is being monitored.
- December 6 – 1-inch service line break at 38 Beech Street in Dedham
- December 7 – 8-inch circular break at 30 Porter Street in Westwood
1969 cast-iron pipe
Repaired in record-time

Answering Mr. Merithew’s inquiry, Mr. Lukis stated the THMs were high across the board, with Far Reach Road the highest. Mentioning other location readings, Mr. Lukis confirmed readings were higher than the October compliance samples.

Discussion was held regarding stagnancy, sample timing, Bridge Street reading, and the weather’s affect.

Update on New & Existing Projects

- Customer Service
 - 159 Meter installations, with two new technicians on staff
 - 115 Backflow tests
 Good numbers for November
- Brookfield/Beacon/Washington Street Water Main Replacement
 - Completed
 - Reviewing three estimates
Should be a reduction to projected Capital costs
- Sandy Valley Road
 - Engineer Ashley Dunn developed a comprehensive report on tank draining and refilling procedures to be archived for personnel usage.
- Distribution Supervisor
 - The preferred candidate did not accept the position.
 - Search will continue into January.
- White Lodge Treatment Plant
 - Verizon installation took one year
ATG will work on configuration
- Route 128 Easement Crossing Main Relocation
 - Piping quotes due tomorrow
Owner’s contractor submitted a quote

- School Master Lane
 - Water main extended another 200 feet
 - Donated Capital to District

- Dedham Country Polo Club
 - Renovating water main, eventually to Country Club Road

- Well 4
 - Specific capacity dropped 40%
 - Manganese plugging
 - Redeveloped November 2022
 - Scoping all wells to determine if need to redevelop ahead of five-year schedule

Mr. Lukis answered Mr. Merithew’s question regarding the method used.

Discussion took place regarding iron/manganese, caution developing scope, field & office staff, public safety, and detour. Mr. Locked informed that the backhoe flat tire had to be dealt with during this time, and issues were relayed to the residents by Communications Coordinator Allyssa Jewell.

Executive Director Report

Contracts Signed by Executive Director

Mr. Lukis informed that no contracts have been signed by the Executive Director.

Mr. Yessaillian left the meeting at 7:00.

Review and Approval of Social Media Policy

Mr. Lukis reported that Communications Coordinator Allyssa Jewell developed a social media policy for platforms to allow public comments, and how the interaction will be managed. Counsel has reviewed the policy.

Discussion was held regarding the policy details.

Mr. Lexander requested a motion for the Social Media Policy. A motion was made by Mr. Healy to accept the Social Media Policy; the motion was seconded by Mr. Kustwan. A roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Lexander, Merithew, Phillips, Healy, and Kustwan voted Aye. Motion passed unanimously.

Review and Action on 2024 Classification and Compensation Plan

Mr. Lukis reiterated that the Classification and Compensation Plan was implemented last year, to be updated yearly based on a market analysis. A 3% increase is recommended for 2024.

The merit-increase matrix shows an average of a 3% increase for non-union staff. The process will be gone through for each employee, for reporting to the Board, consistent with last-year's vote.

Mr. Lukis requested the Executive Director have authority to implement the policy for reporting to the Board. Mr. Lexander requested a motion relative to the request. Mr. Merithew read the motion:

The Dedham-Westwood Water Commissioners vote to approve the 2024 classification & compensation schedule and the merit-based increase matrix as presented. Further that the Executive Director be authorized to execute the plan as voted and report the results back to the Commissioners upon finalization.

Mr. Healy seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Lexander, Merithew, Phillips, Healy, and Kustwan voted Aye.

Motion passed unanimously.

Old/New Business*

No additional business was brought before the Board.

Next Meeting

Not listed on the agenda, Mr. Lukis requested discussion on the next meeting date, adding that the rate-increase presentation is planned for January 16th. Mr. Phillips asked if Tighe & Bond posts rate surveys; Mr. Lukis answered that he believes they still do, and that MWRA's rate information will be shared.

Mr. Lexander thanked the Commissioners for their service during his year of serving as Chairman of the Board.

Mr. Lexander requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Merithew to adjourn the meeting; this was seconded by Mr. Healy. A roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Lexander, Merithew, Healy, Phillips, and Kustwan voted Aye.

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Travers Reynolds
Recording Secretary