



DEDHAM-WESTWOOD WATER DISTRICT General Business Meeting

Hybrid Meeting

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

Monday, March 17, 2025 | 6:30 PM

Announcement of the Audio and/or Video Recording

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

Attendance

Eric Merithew, Chair (remote)

Louis Kustwan, Vice-Chair (remote)

John Healy, Clerk (remote)

Jennifer Perkins, Member (remote)

Robert Lexander, Member

Mark Phillips, Member

Blake Lukis, Executive Director & Assistant Treasurer

Bob Marsh, Business Manager

Pauline Donoghue, Treasurer (remote)

Steve Locke, Operations Manager

Roll-Call Attendance

Mr. Merithew, Mr. Kustwan, Mr. Healy, Ms. Perkins, Mr. Lexander, and Mr. Phillips Present.
A quorum was confirmed.

Public Participation

No public participants were present to address the Board.

Approval of Minutes for February 12, 2025

Mr. Merithew requested a motion to approve the meeting minutes of February 12, 2025. A motion was made by Mr. Healy to approve the meeting minutes as reviewed for February 12, 2025; Mr. Phillips seconded the motion. With no discussion necessary, a roll-call vote was taken. Roll-Call: Mr. Merithew, Mr. Kustwan, Mr. Healy, Ms. Perkins, Mr. Lexander, and Mr. Phillips voted Aye.

Motion passed unanimously.

Financials and Warrant

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Donoghue confirmed the warrants were sent to the Commissioners - Warrants 13-22 for activity from February 13th to March 14th.

The unreconciled Treasurer's Monthly Cash Flow Report for February 2025, considered reconciled unless unaware of an in-transit deposit, was forwarded to the Commissioners.

- February cash report, decreased from January 2025;
- January cash report, decreased from December 2024 reconciled reports, mostly from BAN projects;
- Reconciled cash receipts and disbursements for year-end December 31, 2024;
- Reconciled cash receipts and disbursements for prior year-end December 31, 2023.

Notes are made at the bottom of some warrants.

Ms. Donoghue informed that Dedham Savings Bank's rate has dropped from a high rating of Green - three stars, to a lower rating of Yellow - two stars. Ms. Donoghue has contacted the bank and received an explanation as attributed to a one-time holding company expense. The holding company separately operates South Shore Bank. Inquiry will again be made if the March report shows the same rating. Ms. Donoghue confirmed she checks bank ratings monthly.

Ms. Donoghue also informed that Dedham Savings Bank increased the District's savings account rate from 3.76% to 4%, as of mid-February. South Shore Bank will match this rate.

Mr. Lexander asked about the bank's lowered rating, and Ms. Donoghue explained the one-time expense affect, noting the resulting rating is not bad because it is not Red. Another area bank was affected similarly from their one-time expense. Concern will rise if the lowered rating continues.

Business Manager Report

Business Operating Reports

Mr. Marsh referred to Mr. Lukis' shared screen to review:

- Online Privacy Policy Agreement, which is posted on the District website to inform how collected personal information is handled. As a best practice, it is recommended the Board review this policy annually. It is standard language, reviewed by the District's legal advisor. No changes have been made for 2025. Mr. Marsh reviewed some points within the policy.
- The NACHA guidelines highlight rule changes, to also be reviewed annually.
- The Personal Information Security Plan regarding Personal Identifiable Information (PII) protection is critical to be in place for every Massachusetts company. Mr. Marsh is the Data Security Coordinator to oversee employee training and testing. The Massachusetts Data Security Law is a yearly training document. The Security Policy Matrix is a responsibility for vendors, a due diligence to confirm policies are in place; audits are performed to confirm compliance, with any breach made public.

Mr. Merithew asked if there are any changes to be voted on; Mr. Marsh responded that only the date of review will change.

Mr. Kustwan asked about the District's liability if bank information is compromised; Mr. Marsh answered that the District's insurance policy covers cybersecurity.

Referring to Mr. Lukis' shared screen with the District's Profit & Loss Statement, Mr. Marsh highlighted excess revenue over expenses as a loss, yet commented on the year being good management-wise, with stable revenue all year. The MWRA usage cost was unfavorable. Bank balances are favorable. The result is the District in a good position.

Mr. Phillips asked if accounts receivable has been a challenge. Mr. Marsh confirmed that outstanding accounts are pursued a couple of times during the year, then passed onto the individual towns if necessary for collection; Mr. Lukis stated that, short of shutting water off after 90 days, town liens are useful. Mr. Marsh added that Customer Service has a letter-sending timetable to follow before this point.

The General and Workers Compensation Insurance Renewal form was displayed, showing that general coverage has increased 15%. This is bid every two to three years, with Travelers Insurance having rates close to the levels of a few years ago. The workers compensation July renewal looks to be less than past years'. The Board has already approved these budgeted amounts.

Regarding Mr. Kustwan's prior question, Mr. Marsh highlighted the cybersecurity plus umbrella coverage, explaining the categories.

Mr. Marsh confirmed the policies through the District's trusted agent are thoroughly reviewed, with rates based on good values.

Mr. Lukis informed that the new garage/storage facility will be covered by a construction at-risk policy included in the contractor contract, to transition to a District policy.

Mr. Marsh stated no Board action is necessary at tonight's meeting.

Mr. Merithew asked if the all-towns PFAS exclusion poses any risk; Mr. Lukis answered that no risk is posed as the towns are not generators of the PFAS. Mr. Phillips asked if this also pertains to the spent media as well; Mr. Lukis commented on the question being a good one to pose to the insurance agent.

Discussion was held regarding the sign-off and paperwork when transported to another facility.

Mr. Marsh referred to the District's health benefits, effective April '25 to April '26. BlueCross/BlueShield and Harvard Pilgrim have reported recent losses. The District pays the employee deductibles; how the deductibles affect rates was reviewed. Mr. Marsh recommends staying with the 14.2% increase and current deductibles, as the Board approved in the budget.

In answer to Ms. Perkins' inquiry, Mr. Lukis confirmed the District pays employee deductibles. Mr. Lukis referred to the GIC, the Group Insurance Commission, offered by the State for bargaining power, the largest private insurance group in Massachusetts; the rates offered by the GIC are still high.

Mr. Lukis confirmed for Mr. Merithew that no vote is required tonight, as no changes are presented.

Mr. Marsh added that the medical policies are reviewed with the Union, which is in agreement with the District's coverage.

Mr. Phillips asked if the policy cost increase has been equitably distributed; Mr. Lukis answered that the District/employee split is 75%/25%. Ms. Perkins asked if other municipalities utilize a similar distribution; Mr. Lukis responded that, last he knew, others had.

Mr. Healy asked about the GIC split, and Mr. Lukis answered that each employer is able to determine the split when join the group. Mr. Healy spoke about split details, and Mr. Marsh ensured that the Board will be updated during the year.

Operations Manager Report

Mr. Locke relayed:

Pumping and Operational Report

Pumpage – Last week, readings were 3.817, averaging .816, leveling off after significant February breaks, including one at Legacy Boulevard found in the afternoon and repaired at 11pm.

Update on New & Existing Projects

- Air Towers Media Replacement
 - Removed four dumpsters of 100 cubic feet, 5x20x5, offsite for disposal
 - Pressure washed
 - Internal repairs being completed
 - Adding media
 - Project going well

Mr. Merithew asked if the internal components are in good shape; Mr. Locke answered that only a couple of pinhole leaks have been found, and a second inspection was done today or will take place tomorrow.

- East Street Water Main Replacement
 - Second week evening crossing of MWRA, ten feet below
 - May take two weeks, with one issue to return to

- Greenwood Street, Dedham
The contractor is completing their last tie-in for that water main.
Some services will tie in for full project completion.
- Sensors
Twelve more were installed last week.
- Garage Construction
Starting Phase 1 of mobilization
Fencing up tomorrow
Wednesday-Friday, cutting down trees
Parking across the street, and at CVS with sidewalks and crosswalks between

Mr. Lukis explained that, with employee safety in mind, District vehicles will be stored across the street, to avoid personnel from having to cross busy Elm Street. Mr. Locke added that Customer Service and Distribution employees are able to bring vehicles home.

- Stoughton Road Water Storage Tank Drainage
Chemical washout cleaning, interior tank coating, and exterior work will take about five days, beginning March 31st by USG.
Fire Department and abutters have been notified.
- Pumpage
With pumpage at approximately 3.8, New England Water Distribution Services will begin April 1st to work to reduce.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) were discussed at the last meeting. Mr. Locke had discussions with Dedham and Westwood, finding that no changes are needed, just following the District Rules & Regulations. An attached ADU is allowed to connect to the main premises, with no additional meter; fees will be assessed. A non-attached ADU will have its own working water and sewer services; fees will be assessed.

Answering Mr. Merithew's question, Mr. Lukis stated the White Lodge bid documents will be made available this Wednesday. Only pre-qualified contractors are allowed to bid. Mr. Lukis will forward the pre-qualified contractor list to the Members. Some of the contractors are familiar, having worked on treatment plants.

Mr. Merithew referred to the well rehab bid documents, asking if the scope has changed to require an offsite contractor rather than the District engineer handling. Mr. Lukis answered that the scope has not changed but that the part-time District engineer will be working as the clerk of works for the Garage Project. Mr. Locke added that Tighe & Bond has successfully worked on a well rehab.

Ms. Perkins asked if anything remains outstanding for the garage abutters or if all has been resolved. Mr. Lukis answered that most has been resolved, with one abutter having an action item for tonight. All abutters have been met with. One abutter is accepting an offer to have a couple of trees placed on their property; that agreement is being finalized. No negative feedback was received from the notification sent to those on the distribution list.

Executive Director Report

Contracts Signed by ED

Mr. Lukus shared his screen to show the Fiscal Year – 2025 – Task Orders & Contracts Under \$100,000 Executed by the Executive Director. The second tab, 50 Elm Street Storage Facility Change Orders Under 5% of Contract Value Executed by the Executive Director, will be provided to the Board every month to detail ongoing and draft change orders.

One signed change order was for a sewer to pump station change, covering two filed plumbing and electric sub-bids for upgraded work.

Drainage changes for outfall, as described changed flow, and modification in retaining wall, as highlighted plan shows.

Other change orders are known and will be added.

Mr. Kustwan asked if any other pro-active change orders have been requested; Mr. Lukis answered that no additional change orders are planned as the submittal process is being worked through, and mentioned known orders.

Mr. Merithew asked if the delayed schedule majorly affected the process; Mr. Lukis responded that, to this point, the schedule has not been overly affected, noting a line item on hold to negotiate because of the permitting process delay. The building is anticipated to be up by the end of May, with finishes done in June/July.

Mr. Merithew asked if fabrication has been delayed; Mr. Lukis confirmed fabrication has not been delayed. The contractor believes the foundation and retaining wall will be completed before the building steel arrives onsite. The slab cannot be placed on grade beforehand - The building may be erected, then the slab on grade and finishes. Mr. Phillips asked if all orders, including the steel, have been placed; Mr. Lukis confirmed they have.

Ms. Perkins asked if this size project's change orders' general amount is an industry average; Mr. Lukis offered to inquire with the Project architect. Mr. Kustwan stated he feels 5% for project change orders is pretty standard; Mr. Merithew explained that the Board authorized the Executive Director to make decisions on change orders up to 5% of the Project total.

Discussion and Action on Easement for 30 Orchard Street

Referring to the same Garage Project diagram, Mr. Lukis informed that an abutter has a long driveway and stone wall, and requests a five-foot easement for greater vehicle mobility, turning radius, and their garage access. Mr. Lukis explained that the request is for an area at the back of the District garage being constructed. This area offers a 25-foot offset from the property line,

leaving 20 feet for access if the abutter's request is granted. The topography is a depression area for roof drainage into the driveway catch basin. The proposal is for the District to place a raised berm with fencing. The existing retaining wall does not touch the abutter's. The District will excavate the area.

Mr. Phillips asked what will be done with the resulting excavated fill; Mr. Lukis answered that it will be dealt with as for the rest of the site. Ms. Perkins asked if paving will be done; Mr. Lukis responded that paving will be done from the remaining gravel.

Mr. Lukis added that the abutters are interested in a permanent easement recorded at the Registry of Deeds, at some expense; or the District could provide a long-term access agreement.

Mr. Lexander asked if there would be any use to the property, as a setback; and if the abutters request a long-term agreement. Having detailed the remaining area would leave the District with a 20-foot property line offset, Mr. Lukis explained the abutter's initial interest is to be covered for the length of time they own the property.

Mr. Healy commented on the schematic showing that public safety vehicles could have easier access, suggesting a public emergency easement might be considered.

Mr. Merithew voiced concern with a formal easement possibly impacting the District's Special Status for property versus an access agreement. If the Board agrees with moving forward, Mr. Lukis will consult District counsel and respond to the abutter. Grading will take place next week. Mr. Merithew suggested using email or Basecamp to inform the Board of the outcome, and tabling the motion until a future meeting.

Mr. Lukis reminded that, under the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, hybrid meetings may be held through the end of March. He has received notification that the House has passed legislation to extend hybrid meetings two more years, to June 2027; the Senate will now vote on.

Old/New Business

No new Business was brought before the Board.

Next Meeting

The next District Board hybrid meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 16th, at 6:30pm.

Mr. Merithew asked if the office closure press release has been sent; Mr. Lukis confirmed it has, reminding that the Board was made aware before its publication. The office will be open by appointment, with six or seven office staff onsite, but with no available public parking.

Mr. Phillips asked how the cybersecurity session went, then realized it will be presented Wednesday by the MA DEP. Mr. Lexander offered that government agents could present a session to the District.

Mr. Phillips inquired about the Bridge Street evaluation, asking if it will be done by Weston & Sampson. Mr. Lukis informed that the evaluation is not within W&S's scope, leaving options of completing in-house or by a third party. Mr. Phillips suggested completing in-house to compare with a third party. Mr. Lukis commented on the decision being made by a third party as useful; he will seek contractor quotes. Mr. Merithew asked if the draft results were received; Mr. Lukis responded that the February sampling results have not yet been received. A meeting will be held at W&S in April; then the final report will be expected, with options and costs for plant upgrade. A financial analysis will then be performed. Mr. Merithew asked if the Board should attend the meeting; Mr. Lukis stated Members are invited, if a quorum is not present. The intent of the meeting is to brainstorm potential options.

Mr. Locke offered that Commissioners may attend the New England Water Works Conference April 2nd and 3rd; Messrs. Phillips and Lexander will attend.

Mr. Healy exited the meeting.

Mr. Merithew requested a meeting adjournment motion. Mr. Lexander motioned to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Mr. Phillips, and a roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Mr. Merithew, Mr. Kustwan, Ms. Perkins, Mr. Lexander, and Mr. Phillips voted Aye. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Travers Reynolds
Recording Secretary