



## DEDHAM-WESTWOOD WATER DISTRICT

### General Business Meeting

#### Hybrid Meeting

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

**Tuesday, December 9, 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

Louis Kustwan, Vice-Chair

John Healy, Clerk

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

#### **Also in Attendance**

DWWD Accounting Supervisor Elissa Cohen

#### **Roll-Call Attendance**

Mr. Kustwan, Mr. Phillips, Mr. Healy, Mr. Lexander, Mr. Merithew, and Ms. Perkins Present.

A quorum was confirmed.

#### **Public Participation**

No public attendees were present to address the Board.

#### **Approval of Minutes for November 12, 2025**

Mr. Merithew requested a motion to approve the meeting minutes of November 12, 2025. A motion was made by Mr. Healy to approve the meeting minutes as reviewed for November 12, 2025; Mr. Phillips seconded the motion. With no discussion necessary, a roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call Vote: Mr. Kustwan, Mr. Phillips, Mr. Healy, Mr. Lexander, Ms. Perkins, and Mr. Merithew voted Aye.

Motion passed unanimously.

#### **Review and Action on 2026 Operating Budget**

Review 2026 Operating budget as reviewed and modified by the Operating Budget Subcommittee in their public meetings held on November 18, 2025 and December 9, 2025. Revised version recommended to be brought forward to full Board of Water Commissioners for action.

Mr. Lukis confirmed the motion regarding the 2026 Operating Budget and the full Budget book has been posted, and a paper bound copy will be provided this year. The Operating Board Subcommittee met twice, on November 18<sup>th</sup> and December 9<sup>th</sup>. The Committee recommends bringing a full Budget forward for motion.

Mr. Lukis reviewed highlights of the 2026 Operating Budget:

The Budget necessitates a 5.5% rate increase to all tiers and charges.  
The long-range plan, Section 3, Page 202, of Operating Expenses significant changes:  
Increased MWRA water purchase by funds reallocations,  
with the long-term goal of reducing purchased water to reverse allocations  
Increased Information Technology costs  
Increased Lab Costs as more testing and regular monitoring of TTHMs & PFAS,  
sodium, etc.

Personnel Budget:

Union - Incorporates the newly negotiated contract - All steps up 3%  
and step advancements including stagnates for longevity and CDL licensure  
Management/non-management/non-union - Incorporated average of 3% merit increase  
as reviewed and per Operating Budget Subcommittee, adding funding for potential  
changes based on salary survey.

Mr. Marsh commented that the benefits are in middle-range, with plans out to bid.

Mr. Phillips asked about MWRA's project cost; Mr. Lukis informed that an over-budget amount will be offset with cash.

Mr. Marsh relayed that a Year 1 impact of the bond is being seen, with no borrowing planned for 2026.

Mr. Merithew labeled the service number to overall Budget as still fair.

Mr. Merithew read the motion: The Dedham-Westwood Water Commissioners vote to approve the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Operating, Maintenance, and Debt Services Budget as reviewed and recommended by the Operating Budget Subcommittee in their publicly held meetings of November 18, 2025 and December 9, 2025, in the amount of \$14,646,274.

Mr. Healy moved to approve the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Operating, Maintenance, and Debt Services Budget; Mr. Phillips seconded the motion. With no discussion necessary, a roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call Vote: Mr. Kustwan, Mr. Phillips, Mr. Healy, Mr. Lexander, Ms. Perkins, and Mr. Merithew voted Aye.

Motion passed unanimously.

### **Review and Action on 2025 Capital Budget**

Review 2026 Capital budget as reviewed and modified by Capital Budget Subcommittee in their public meeting held on November 24, 2025 and recommended to be brought forward to full Board of Water Commissioners for action.

Mr. Lukis informed that the Capital Budget Subcommittee met on November 24<sup>th</sup> to review the Budget; very minor changes were made.

Mr. Lukis reviewed highlights of the 2026 Capital Budget:

Planned funding for water main projects:

Riverside Drive in Dedham - Construction phase

Whiting Avenue in Dedham - Design phase, construction for 2027

School Master Lane in Dedham - Looping project to improve water quality –

Redundancy will ensure prison is not again without water

Other budgets are programmatic, funded yearly.

Vehicles - Planned changes

Mr. Merithew asked if any information has been provided on the 128 campus project; Mr. Lukis answered that he has not been approached, and Mr. Locke relayed he heard all went well. Messrs. Lukis and Locke described the project, including water main sizes.

The Burgess Avenue Pump Station was funded in 2022

Considering inflationary costs, the Project is now fully funded

Mr. Phillips asked about the Dover project, and Mr. Lukis informed that the topic will be addressed at the February town meeting.

Water Service Line Inventory/Replacement Project –

Previously budgeted for - Gave next phase points, with a probable two-year allocation –

Some grants/loans will be sought

Total, three large projects

Mr. Merithew asked Mr. Lukis to address appropriation versus forecast. Mr. Lukis referred to the Operating Budget book's last two pages' yellow section for Appropriations and the second page for Capital spending - The best estimate of spending is recorded - The long-range plan shows Capital spend, not Appropriation.

Mr. Merithew read the motion: The Dedham-Westwood Water Commissioners vote to approve the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Capital Budget as reviewed and recommended by the Capital Budget Subcommittee in their publicly held meeting of November 24, 2025, in the amount of \$8,686,187.

Mr. Healy moved to approve the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Capital Budget; Mr. Phillips seconded the motion. With no discussion necessary, a roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call Vote: Mr. Phillips, Mr. Healy, Mr. Kustwan, Mr. Lexander, Ms. Perkins, and Mr. Merithew voted Aye.

Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Cohen exited the meeting.

## **Financials and Warrant**

### Treasurer's Report

Ms. Donoghue has forwarded to the Commissioners for review and approval, Warrants 89-95 for activity from November 3<sup>rd</sup> to December 4<sup>th</sup>. As agreed, Warrants 89-93 were sent December 3<sup>rd</sup>, giving time for review. The monthly cash report graph was sent today, as the reconciliations are in-process. The Operating Funds balance at the end of November is mostly operating funds, with the rest BAN funds or the bond premium from 2025 issuance. The August-September Operating Funds increase is because of the PFAS settlement funds received.

Mr. Merithew asked if the remaining BAN funds have to be spent by year's end; Mr. Lukis clarified that the funds are technically from a bond, and Ms. Donoghue added that some funds are accumulated interest. Mr. Lukis stated the District has several checking and savings accounts, describing how the accounts are used and explaining bond anticipation.

Mr. Kustwan asked if any calls have been received regarding the settlement funds; Mr. Merithew informed that the settlement was mentioned at the Dedham Select Board Meeting. Mr. Lukis noted that the settlement funds receipt presented at the Town Meeting was offset by the greater expense of the planned Project.

Discussion was held.

Mr. Merithew reiterated that no funding is expected in 2026, so there will be no BAN.

### Approval of Warrants

Mr. Lukis recommended voting all Warrants now, so there is no confusion and the vote is always recorded in District meeting minutes. For Mr. Merithew, Ms. Donoghue clarified Warrants 89-95 are to be voted on.

Mr. Merithew motioned for the Commissioners to vote on approval of Warrants 89-95. Mr. Healy motioned to accept Warrants 89-95; Mr. Phillips seconded the motion.

Roll-Call Vote: Mr. Kustwan, Mr. Phillips, Mr. Healy, Mr. Lexander, Ms. Perkins, and Mr. Merithew voted Aye.

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting warrant-voting process was clarified.

## **Business Manager Report**

### Business Operating Reports

Mr. Marsh stated that the budget review was his meeting portion. Closing is being worked on to report actuals and forecast at the next meeting.

Mr. Merithew voiced his appreciation of the budget schedule allowing for the rate vote so implementation takes place early in the new year.

## **Operations Manager Report**

### Pumpage and Operational Report

Pumpage – Fairly consistent

Main & Service Line – Main break at 322 Oak Street in Westwood last Wednesday night –  
Increases and decreases after; increased Sunday

### Completing Projects

- Burgess Avenue Booster Station
  - Reviewing design
- Bridge Street
  - Contractor finishing last well
- White Lodge
  - Sewer demolition and installation beginning in front of the facility at end of week

Last night, Mr. Locke attended the Westwood Select Board with Weston & Sampson Engineer Nicole Lewis for a fuel storage public hearing, to raise District concerns regarding Zone 1. In answer to Mr. Phillips' inquiry, Mr. Locke informed that lithium battery storage containment encased in cement is being installed; the installation company has a good safety record. Mr. Phillips asked about the underground storage tank; Mr. Locke relayed that discussion was limited to fuel storage for spillage and a nitrogen exterior tank. Mr. Lukis added that the above-ground fuel storage and over-spill containment is built into the concrete of the loading dock so the drainage system will not be affected. Mr. Locke mentioned the alarms, floats, and it being a large container as positives to the setup.

Discussion was held.

Mr. Lexander asked if the White Lodge hydrant gate was found. Mr. Locke informed that the hydrant is being relocated and that the gate is probably in the street; in the median strip, as Mr. Lexander added.

Additional discussion took place.

Mr. Merithew asked if the Muni-Link implementation/changeover resulted in customer impact/feedback. Mr. Lukis answered that public calls were received regarding the account number change needed for the online portal account. A two-hour meeting with Muni-Link covered the paperless billing cloud, CSGI bill printing/postage/mailing, and minor issues. ACH customer autopay with a custom-made program was corrected early. Mr. Kustwan questioned the number of complaints; Mr. Lukis ensured no complaints were received. Mr. Marsh reviewed customers' prior and current payment processes.

Discussion was held.

Mr. Lukis described the new billing process which has worked well with Customer Service Representatives, versus the prior system.

Additional discussion took place.

### **Executive Director Report**

#### Contracts Signed By ED

Mr. Lukis shared his screen with the change orders and contracts spreadsheet for the Garage Building Project. A meeting had been held to review the end-of-Project change orders. Two unanticipated orders were signed, for the change orders total now at 5% of the Project; the orders were detailed. Two final outstanding items, which will come forward to the Board, were described; another item was cancelled. If the remaining items are at full price, the orders will total 6.9% over the Project initial contract, where 6% or less would be ideal.

The White Lodge Treatment Plant Upgrade Project spreadsheet was shared, detailing one approved change order.

#### Review and Action on Task Order 160 Bridge Street PFAS Pilot Study

The Bridge Street Treatment Plant next-phase pilot testing was described. Messrs. Merithew and Phillips asked for further clarification regarding treatment processes and filters, which Mr. Lukis provided.

Mr. Lukis read the motion for Task Order 160 – BSTP PFAS Pilot Study: The Dedham-Westwood Water Commissioners vote to approve Task Order No. 160 for the Professional Engineering Services Agreement for the PFAS Piloting at Bridge Street Water Treatment Plant between Weston & Sampson Engineers, Inc. and the Dedham-Westwood Water District for the price of \$410,800. Further, that the Executive Director be authorized to sign the agreement.

Mr. Merithew reiterated that this order is why the Raftelis review was performed; the pilot will take place.

Discussion was held.

Mr. Lukis informed that the Bridge Street Treatment Plant was previously included in the budget. For Mr. Phillips, Mr. Lukis confirmed Weston & Sampson worked on the first pilot study. Mr. Locke commented on there being a small delay, through the DEP. Mr. Lukis outlined timing, with about one year to budget for design.

Additional discussion took place.

Mr. Healy moved the motion, and Mr. Lexander seconded.

Roll-Call Vote: Mr. Kustwan, Mr. Phillips, Mr. Healy, Mr. Lexander, Ms. Perkins, and Mr. Merithew voted Aye.

Motion passed unanimously.

### Action on Authorization for Executive Director to Sign Contracts and Change Orders

Mr. Lukis stated that the motion is from a recommendation of three or four years ago. Mr. Merithew commented on the transparency of the provided tracking, to continue at the same percentage. Agreement was voiced.

Mr. Merithew read the motion: The Dedham-Westwood Water Commissioners vote to provide the Executive Director with the authority to sign contracts, task orders and Change Orders that have already been approved through the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget process. The signature authority shall only be for contracts and/or Task Orders that are within the approved budget amount and that are of a total amount of \$100,000 or less, up to \$1,000,000 in aggregate. The signature authority shall only be for change orders that do not exceed 5% total or in aggregate of the original contract amount. Any change order greater than 5%, or contract greater than \$100,000, above the approved budgeted amount, or a new unbudgeted item shall require approval of the Board for execution.

The motion was moved by Mr. Healy and seconded by Mr. Lexander. Mr. Lukis noted one change: to 'in-aggregate of 5%,' so not otherwise construed. Mr. Merithew added that the modification would be for change orders in-aggregate up to 5% of the original contract amount, and Mr. Lukis clarified as up to or in-aggregate of 5% of the original contract value.

Mr. Healy moved to include the noted change, and Mr. Lexander seconded the changed motion. Roll-Call Vote: Mr. Kustwan, Mr. Phillips, Mr. Healy, Mr. Lexander, Ms. Perkins, and Mr. Merithew voted Aye.

Motion passed unanimously.

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

Mr. Lukis informed that the DuPont Settlement will be made in multiple payments and put into savings to accrue interest. Mr. Merithew asked about additional settlements; Mr. Lukis answered that two more companies' and the DuPont and 3M - special needs settlements are expected for funds already spent.

Mr. Healy inquired about the caller in the public forum being asked to identify themselves; Mr. Lukis confirmed the Board has the right to ask who the caller is and if they intend to make a public comment - There was no response to Mr. Lukis asking the caller if they wish to unmute to make a public comment.

Mr. Locke invited the Commissioners to the District Holiday Party; Mr. Lukis will forward the invitation.

Discussion took place.

### **Next Meeting**

The next Board meeting will be held Thursday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 6:30pm. The rate vote will be an agenda item.

Mr. Merithew requested a meeting adjournment motion for the Board to meet in Executive Session and to then possibly return to open meeting.

Ms. Donoghue exited the meeting.

All voiced approval of adjourning to Executive Session.

Pursuant to MGL c.30A Sec. 21(a) Exemption 3 - To discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares.

Upon return to open meeting, Mr. Merithew read the On-Call Pay motion: The Dedham-Westwood Water Commissioners vote to adjust the on-call pay by \$75/week and have the Executive Director work with Counsel to draft a Memorandum of Understanding to include language that on-call pay will further be adjusted, up or down, based on number FTE's.

Mr. Healy moved the motion forward, and Mr. Lexander seconded.

Roll-Call Vote: Mr. Kustwan, Mr. Phillips, Mr. Healy, Mr. Lexander, Ms. Perkins, and Mr. Merithew voted Aye.

Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Merithew requested a meeting adjournment motion. Mr. Lexander motioned to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Mr. Healy.

Roll-Call Vote: Mr. Kustwan, Mr. Phillips, Mr. Healy, Mr. Lexander, Ms. Perkins, and Mr. Merithew voted Aye.

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kathy Travers Reynolds  
Recording Secretary