

Board of Water Commissioners and Finance Committee

Meeting Agenda

Monday, March 10, 2025 @ 7:00 PM

**AGENDA**

- Comments from the public
- Approve minutes from the meeting of 2/10 and 2/24
- Appoint one Commissioner to sign warrants while conducting meetings virtually

OLD BUSINESS:

- Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)
- Current sample data, if available
- Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades
- MWRA MetroWest Expansion
- Annual District Meeting Presentation
- Warrant Article Assignments

NEW BUSINESS:

- Recent Water Main Breaks

Present at Tonight's Meeting:

Commissioners: Barry Rosen (Chair), Erika Amir Lin, Stephen Stuntz

Finance Committee: Ron Parenti, John Petersen, Bill Guthlein

District Manager: Matt Mostoller

District Treasurer/Collector: Christine McCarthy

Moderator: William Mullin

Members of the Public: Corey Godfrey, Kim Kastens, Alissa Nicol

## **START OF MINUTES**

Mr. Rosen opened the meeting of the Acton Water District Board of Commissioners at 7:00 pm.

Mr. Petersen opened the meeting of the Acton Water District Finance Committee with members Ron Parenti, Bill Guthlein, and John Petersen present at 7:01 pm.

Before starting the agenda, Mr. Mostoller introduced Corey Godfrey who has accepted the position of Deputy District Manager. Mr. Godfrey introduced himself to the board, he worked most recently with the Littleton Water Department as Superintendent of Water and Sewer for about 10 years. Prior to that he was the Water Quality manager, he has 8 years of consulting experience, and spent 2 years in the Peace Corps. The Board welcomed Mr. Godfrey, and Mr. Mostoller noted his first day will be April 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Comments from the public**

None at this time.

### **Approve minutes from the meeting of 2/10 and 2/24**

Mr. Stuntz motioned to approve the minutes of 2/10/25. Ms. Amir Lin seconded, and it was unanimously approved via a roll call vote, Mr. Stuntz, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Rosen.

Mr. Stuntz motioned to approve the minutes of 2/24/25. Ms. Amir Lin seconded, and it was unanimously approved via a roll call vote, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Stuntz, Mr. Rosen.

Mr. Parenti motioned to approve the minutes of 2/10/25 and 2/24/25 meetings. Mr. Guthlein seconded, and it was unanimously approved via a roll call vote, Mr. Guthlein, Mr. Parenti, Mr. Petersen.

### **Appoint one Commissioner to sign warrants while conducting meetings virtually**

Mr. Rosen motioned to appoint Ms. Amir Lin to sign warrants until the next regularly scheduled meeting. Mr. Stuntz seconded, and it was unanimously approved via a roll call vote, Mr. Stuntz, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Rosen.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

#### **Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)**

##### **Current sample data, if available**

Mr. Mostoller provided the board with the February sample data. Center Acton remained offline for the entire month of February. South Acton sampled at 14.3 ppt, and North Acton remains at non-detect. North Acton does have some j-values which are estimated

numbers that do not count towards compliance. North Acton is beginning to show signs of breakthrough, so Mr. Mostoller has begun coordinating with Veolia for a media change. Mr. Mostoller plans to shut North Acton down until annual maintenance and the media change out are completed. All three plants are in use at the moment.

Mr. Rosen asked about plans for flushing. Mr. Mostoller responded that flushing usually happens in the second week of April, but they are contemplating either suspending or doing a targeted truncated flushing schedule. This would depend on their ability to accommodate flushing with maintenance, construction, and MassDEP requirements.

### **Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades**

Mr. Mostoller reported that he is working with the vessel manufacturer to establish a firm delivery date. Mr. Rosen asked if this delay has impacted the construction progress, to which Mr. Mostoller affirmed that both are on pause until the delivery date is settled. Mr. Mostoller is working with the engineers and attorneys to come up with a plan.

### **MWRA MetroWest Expansion**

Mr. Mostoller had no new news on the communities participating in the study. They are hoping to finalize the Inter-Municipal Agreement at the end of the week and get the request for qualifications out. They are specifically looking for a consultant who can kick off in May, with a 4–6 month window of work.

Mr. Rosen asked if Maynard is in a good position, which Mr. Mostoller confirmed they are internally working through some final details.

### **Annual District Meeting Presentation**

Mr. Mostoller shared the Finance Committee's presentation and Mr. Petersen went through the presentation. The presentation went over the FY 26 Budget, expenses and trends, background on warrant articles, free cash, water supply volume, and drivers of the budget. The presentation took just under 7.5 minutes. Mr. Petersen and Mr. Mostoller reviewed several alternate slides at the end of the presentation, one of which was based off a chart used in the previous year.

The board then opened a discussion of the presentation. Mr. Rosen commented that he would like additional information about expenses and revenue trends, and the differences between the two. Ms. Amir Lin commented that she believes the presentation has too much information and recommended reducing the information either on the slide or what is said. Regarding the alternative chart options, Ms. Amir Lin favored the chart used in the previous year's presentation.

The board then had a brief discussion on the budget drivers slide, and the supply versus distribution slide. Mr. Guthlein commented that he is happy with the presentation and would maybe reconsider if the debt service slide is necessary. Mr. Parenti commented that he disagrees with Ms. Amir Lin and Mr. Rosen about the amount of information, he thought it was the right amount and maybe the presentation could be improved by slowing down.

Mr. Mullin commented that he was very happy with the presentation, and it made good use of using words, numbers, and pictures. He did share some concern about the collaboration between the finance committee and the board of commissioners, as he thought it was important for the finance committee to assert their independence in their messaging.

Ms. Kim Kastens commented that she agreed with Mr. Mullin, and suggested that one bullet point regarding meter replacement, which showed a steep increase, could be improved with some additional information. Mr. Petersen clarified that this bullet point refers to a specific warrant article.

Ms. Alissa Nicol commented that the voters appreciated the presentation and the information on the warrant articles last year. She commented that anything written on the slides should be referenced verbally. She added that it is a little confusing that the finance committee is presenting rather than the commissioners as on the district website they have no other responsibilities than to recommend the budget. By comparison, at the Acton town meeting, the selectboard shares the budget and the finance committee make a statement. She agreed that the slides have too much information and mentioned a town resource guide for presentations that include typographical guidelines. Lastly Ms. Nicol added that the graphs or presentation could be printed and given to the voters, and Acton TV could help create a video with additional information that voters could watch before the meeting.

Mr. Mostoller thanked Ms. Nicol for her comments and responded to a comment from Mr. Mullin about the role of the finance committee. The finance committee is in an advisory position to the commissioners, providing advice on short- and long-term financial health of the district. They technically are not an independent body because they're in an advisory role and expected to work with the commissioners. Mr. Mullin commented that if the finance committee is not independent, that makes it more difficult to recruit people for the committee.

Mr. Mostoller suggested that he, Mr. Petersen, Mr. Rosen, and Ms. McCarthy meet offline to parse through this feedback and strike a balance between this feedback. Mr. Mostoller

and the board thanked Mr. Petersen for his work on creating this presentation and applying the various pieces of feedback throughout the process.

Mr. Petersen shared a few thoughts in response to specific feedback on several slides and asked for a final decision for which alternative slide with the graph option people preferred. The consensus seemed to support the additional slide Mr. Mostoller provided based on the previous year's presentation.

Ms. Kastens commented that because it is an information heavy presentation, printing out the presentation and providing it to voters would allow them to take notes and keep it for reference.

The board thanked everyone for their input and closed discussion on this topic.

### **Warrant Article Assignments**

Mr. Mostoller shared the Warrant Articles and their assignments on screen, and went through all of them, asking the commissioners and finance committee if they had any questions on their Article Assignments. On Article 5 Mr. Parenti had a question as to how Articles 5 and 6 are linked, which Mr. Mostoller reviewed. Mr. Mostoller explained the reauthorization of these funds is for Mass General Law compliance, and the limits may be altered later on if needed. The Mitigation fund was established in 2018, and the New Service Meter Installation fund was established in 2023.

For Article 11 Ms. Amir Lin asked for the referenced 2011 Warrant Article for the specific language.

For Article 12 Mr. Rosen asked for clarification that there is an existing tower on the site, which Mr. Mostoller affirmed there is a mono pole onsite. Mr. Mostoller reviewed the background of that warrant article.

Mr. Mostoller finished the review of the Warrant Articles.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **Recent Water Main Breaks**

Mr. Mostoller shared with the board a recent pattern of water main breaks. This began with a break on New Year's Day, then another break on the Route 2 on ramp, followed by a break on Main Street, one on Huron Road, and one on Alcott Street. Additionally, we have had two or three smaller leaks to repair which have been under similar circumstances. These have been a particularly challenging two months for staff to deal with these breaks. Because it has been very cold, there have been equipment failures, and conflicts with other utilities, many of these have taken twice as long to repair. They have run into issues

particularly with stormwater infrastructure as at least half of these breaks had direct issues with the stormwater infrastructure.

Mr. Mostoller brings this up because these breaks have drained the appropriation for emergency water main breaks. They can use funds from the O&M budget lien item to help cover ongoing costs.

The other piece is how these breaks have affected customer expectations. Mr. Mostoller then reviewed the District's protocol for water main breaks. The first priority is to identify the break and shut it down, communication is secondary. This is because addressing the break quickly will limit the extent of damage. The District has added a water main break FAQ on the website to address questions. The website, pre-recorded voice mail message, and social media are where breaks will be communicated. The District will not use a reverse 911 call unless the break is widespread or meets other thresholds necessitating this level of notice. Mr. Mostoller also noted that unless the District explicitly says otherwise, customers may presume the water to be safe for consumption, bathing, and other activities. Mr. Mostoller noted that people close to the break may lose water, while those further away may have color or pressure issues. Mr. Mostoller also noted that they are seeing higher paving costs from this pattern of breaks. Currently the overtime budget is doing ok but paving has gotten more expensive.

Lastly, Mr. Mostoller reminded the board they are not funding a water main project for this upcoming fiscal year. H noted once PFAS treatment is complete, we will be renewing our interest in investing in water mains and storage tanks.

Mr. Petersen asked if they have metrics for water main breaks similar to what power companies do during an outage, that way they can know the scale and impact of the break.

Mr. Mostoller explained that they don't have a system capable of producing that data, as electricity meters can be better automated to provide that data. The other issue is that impact is varied, some customers may have no water, low pressure, discolored water, or some combination of effects. Mr. Petersen then advocated for a system that would assess those impacts to better understand impacts. Mr. Mostoller explained what impacts would trigger DEP regulations, and that we have guidelines on categories of emergency events in the system and expected response level.

Mr. Parenti motioned to adjourn the meeting of the finance committee. Mr. Guthlein seconded, and it was unanimously approved via a roll call vote, Mr. Parenti, Mr. Guthlein, Mr. Petersen.

Mr. Stuntz motioned to adjourn the meeting of the commissioners. Ms. Amir Lin seconded, and it was unanimously approved via a roll call vote, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Stuntz, Mr. Rosen.

**Meeting closed at 8:28 pm.**