

Board of Water Commissioners

Meeting Agenda

Monday, August 11, 2025 @ 7:00 PM

- Comments from the public
- Approve minutes from the meeting of 7/21
- 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
- RFP for Nagog Hill Tank Cell Tower Lease

NEW BUSINESS:

- Discuss Customer Request for Eliminating Fixed Debt Fee
- AT&T Request for Reduced Rent at Great Hill Cell Tower
- Outdoor Water Use Restrictions Effective 7/26/25-8/8/25
- Annual Review of District Manager

Present at Tonight's Meeting:

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

Finance Committee: Ron Parenti

District Manager: Matt Mostoller

Treasurer/Collector: Christine McCarthy

District Counsel: Spencer Holland

Public: Bill Guthlein, Alissa Nicol, John Petersen

START OF MINUTES

Mr. Stuntz opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Stuntz ensured that all could hear and be heard.

Comments from the public

Mr. Ron Parenti commented that he tried to send an email to the Acton water address, but it bounced back twice each with a different error message. Mr. Mostoller thanked Mr. Parenti for bringing this to his attention, indicated he was not aware of an issue with our email system, and said he would follow up on this.

Approve minutes from the meeting of 7/21

Mr. Rosen motioned to approve the minutes of 7/21/25. Ms. Lin seconded, and it was unanimously approved via a roll call vote, Mr. Rosen, Ms. Lin, Mr. Stuntz.

Appoint one Commissioner to sign warrants while conducting meetings virtually

Mr. Rosen motioned to appoint Ms. 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, Mr. Rosen, Ms. Lin.

OLD BUSINESS:

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Current sample data, if available

Mr. Mostoller reported the July sample results. Center Acton was at 14.5 ppt, South Acton was at 18.6 ppt, and North Acton remained at non-detect. These results are higher than the June sampling, and Mr. Mostoller believes this is driven by drought conditions starting to take effect. Staff are waiting for the sample bottles to arrive to conduct August sampling.

Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades

Mr. Mostoller reported that on the South Acton project they have been working with the engineer and general contractor to refine the schedule and get firm dates for when they can run water through the facility. These discussions have gotten as far as coordinating the GAC delivery.

They are working to get the electrical and piping work finished in the new PFAS building so that they can focus on the connection to the existing building. This will require shutting down the plant for a few days, which they have begun to plan.

On the Center Acton Project, last week they powered up the two bedrock wells, completed testing, and worked through the communications. Two fiber optic lines need to be finalized but the well work is in good shape.

They are working to finalize the chlorination of the water main delivery, and they are continuing to work with MassDEP to get final approval on the well start up. Mr. Mostoller commented that barring any unforeseen circumstances it should take a few weeks to get the final approvals and ease those wells into production.

On the PFAS system they are working to finish painting and the electrical work as they wait for the siding contractor to arrive. Some final connections are dependent on siding panels being in place before the pipe penetration can be made.

Mr. Rosen asked if MassDEP will send someone to conduct a site visit before starting up the GAC. Mr. Mostoller affirmed that they likely will. Mr. Mostoller has continued to request that they approve the wells first as it may take 1-2 months before they can come back to the site.

Mr. Stuntz asked once treatment is done if everything will go through that plant even if it is below the 20 ppt limit. Mr. Mostoller confirmed that once they have treatment available, they will be able to turn up the wells. Pre-existing data suggests that the new wells should have a lower PFAS level, however Mr. Mostoller warned that this initial sampling data was conducted in the later winter/early spring but in the fall, they have seen a jump up to about 30 ppt in this area.

RFP for Nagog Hill Tank Cell Tower Lease

Mr. Mostoller directed the board to the packet where there is a final draft of the lease for the Nagog Hill Tank Tower with TowerCo. Mr. Mostoller stated that if the board has no questions or concerns regarding the draft lease, they can vote to approve so TowerCo can begin the permitting process.

Mr. Stuntz motioned to accept the lease as drafted.

Ms. Lin motioned to amend the motion to grant Mr. Mostoller signatory authority. Mr. Rosen seconded the amended motion, and the motion was unanimously approved via a roll call vote, Mr. Rosen, Ms. Lin, Mr. Stuntz.

NEW BUSINESS:

Discuss Customer Request for Eliminating Fixed Debt Fee

Mr. Stuntz noted that the customer making the presentation for eliminating the fixed debt fee, Mr. Zhengyu Huang, is not in attendance. As such the board moved on to the next item.

AT&T Request for Reduced Rent at Great Hill Cell Tower

Mr. Mostoller prefaced to the board that the District was in discussion with the owner of the Great Hill Cell Tower, Crown Castle, about renegotiating the terms of the lease, which is set to expire in 2-3 years. Recently, AT&T, which is a co-locator on the tower, has requested a 35% reduction in their rent on the tower. Mr. Mostoller has reached out to AT&T asking for more information but has not received a reply.

It is Mr. Mostoller's understanding that the master lease would dictate the terms for this reduction for AT&T. The request from AT&T did include language suggesting that if they did not receive the reduction, they would pursue other towers to co-locate on. Mr. Mostoller is currently unaware of any other towers that might provide similar coverage, so he is unable to discern the severity of their desire to co-locate elsewhere. Mr. Mostoller reported that at 35% rent reduction would amount to about \$10,000 per year.

Mr. Rosen asked if AT&T is the only co-lessee making this request. Mr. Mostoller reported that last year T-Mobile made a similar request, but they were informed that the District was in conversation with the tower owner regarding the language of the lease. After that there was no subsequent follow-up from T-Mobile.

Mr. Rosen shared his concern that lowering the rent for one entity would open the door to other requests. Mr. Stuntz commented that the District is not in the position to negotiate the rent with the co-lessee, as the District negotiates with the owner of the tower. Mr. Stuntz agreed with Mr. Rosen's previous point and stated he is not interested in reducing the rent.

Mr. Mostoller suggested the District continue their current path of discussions with the tower owner and see where that ends up.

Outdoor Water Use Restrictions Effective 7/26/25-8/8/25

Mr. Mostoller reported to the board that in accordance with their Water Management Act Permit they had to move to a 1-day a week restriction from 7/26/25 - 8/8/25. This was due to low flow conditions in Nashoba Brook, similar to last September. After the required 7-day period expired the District returned to the 2-day a week restriction and notified customers of the change.

Mr. Mostoller pointed out that this restriction is part of their permit conditions. Staff are reviewing data and looking towards the long-range forecast to determine if additional restrictions are needed to maintain our sources of supply and ability to meet demand.

Mr. Mostoller reported that even though the District moved from the 1-day a week back to the 2-day a week, there have been challenging conditions this week. The Contant 1 well experienced mechanical issues that were repaired, but the failure was driven by water quality and level issues. Mr. Mostoller stated that the District may move back to the 1-day a week restriction, but they will observe how the rest of this hot period will play out before coming to a decision. The state has rolled back the Acton area's drought designation, yet Mr. Mostoller noted that ground water has not fully recovered, and they are seeing precipitation deficits. Mr. Mostoller stated that they are keeping an eye on conditions, especially as the PFAS plants will begin to start up. Mr. Mostoller said that depending on conditions the outdoor restriction may change again come September.

Ms. Lin asked if it would be proactive to move to the 1-day restriction. Mr. Mostoller responded that he would be hesitant to do that due to customer feedback about the delayed notification when the District came out of the 1-day restriction in June. Mr. Mostoller said they are trying to manage the feedback they are receiving from customers. Mr. Mostoller explained the District's notification methods and customer feedback.

Mr. Stuntz commented that August usage used to be lower than July. Mr. Mostoller affirmed that was the historical norm that usage would decrease after the 4th of July holiday. However, in recent years as August has been hotter and drier many are trying to water their lawns despite their grass not responding. Mr. Mostoller added that when grass has gone dormant and yellow, watering won't change lawn conditions.

Mr. Parenti commented that he wrote an article recently published in the Acton Exchange about changes in water regulations. Mr. Mostoller thanked Mr. Parenti for his article and for spreading awareness.

Mr. John Petersen asked if the District's email subscriber list has multiple emails listed for a single customer address to ensure broader coverage of notifications, and if attempting to get 2 emails per account would be worth while. Mr. Mostoller explained that they try to remind customers that they can have multiple people of a household sign up for notifications, however it's unclear if certain accounts are targeted for messaging.

Ms. Lin asked how compliance with outdoor restrictions this year compares to the past. Mr. Mostoller reported they have not issued any fines and have only sent out half a dozen reminders or threats of fines. When in the field Mr. Mostoller has not observed any violations. Mr. Mostoller added that the District keeps track of the places and times where

violations are more likely to occur, but they haven't seen anything. The District has gotten feedback from customers anecdotally about non-compliance but staff has to observe the non-compliance to issue a fine.

Mr. Stuntz asked about the state of the revenue stream. Ms. McCarthy responded that they are reading monthly but will know what the billing for the summer is in September. Mr. Stuntz asked if they read the same day in the month or every 3-4 weeks. Ms. McCarthy responded generally they read around the 15th of the month. Mr. Mostoller commented that last quarter was decent and separately added that the state's drought management taskforce met last week and kept the Acton region at level zero for no drought.

Annual Review of District Manager

Mr. Stuntz opened this agenda item and stated that his primary question is how to do personnel reviews that don't just go by the numbers and rely on short term thinking. He stated the mandate to provide clean safe drinking water is clear, and that some measures of gallons of use or number of breaks do not fully measure that mandate. Mr. Stuntz stated that safety is determined by the District's compliance with state regulations. Mr. Stuntz stated that the budget acts as a short-term plan by which they can measure how well the District Manager did against that short term plan, however that does not capture work towards long-term planning like the MWRA connection.

Mr. Stuntz stated that a personnel review can better reflect the long-term thinking of the District Manager and that they should spend time on those issues. Mr. Stuntz also stated that the culture of the organization is also essential to review, as how well the employees are treated affects how they represent the District to the customers. Mr. Stuntz commented that he has received consistent feedback that District staff are very polite when at a customer's home, all of which is important to consider for this review.

Mr. Stuntz posed the question to the other commissioners, how to structure a review that captured the long-term issues that the District faces, especially since most short-term issues are already discussed in open meetings.

Mr. Stuntz invited comments from the board.

Mr. Rosen commented that some of the District's long-term goals are as much as 15 years in the future and are already being worked on now. As for short-term items, Mr. Rosen commented that many of the commissioners have spoken to Mr. Mostoller individually in on-going discussions on how to get and retain personnel, which has been happening. Mr. Rosen stated that some of those individual conversations have already been put into

public record. Mr. Rosen stated that details such as contract length, negotiation, and strategy are more suited for executive session.

Mr. Stuntz agreed with Mr. Rosen that the details of any contract are for executive session, however this open session does allow for a general public discussion about how satisfied the board is with the District Manager.

Ms. Lin shared her thoughts that there are short-, medium-, and long-term goals to be evaluated. Part of what the board needs to look at is whether the District is moving in the right direction for long-term goals under Mr. Mostoller's leadership by taking short- and medium-term actions to support long-term goals. Ms. Lin stated that the budget and annual reports are good measures that are discussed every year, of how those short- and medium-term plans support long-term plans.

Mr. Stuntz returned to the previous discussion of the culture of the organization and noted that sometime customer surveys are an unreliable measure as only people with something negative to say are inclined to comment, as is similar with concerns about water quality. Mr. Stuntz also acknowledged that during the recent Route 2 water main break, Mr. Mostoller was out in the field looking for the break himself instead of just sending one of the other staff members.

Mr. Petersen shared his thoughts, agreeing with Mr. Stuntz that the big picture issue is whether water is safe and available. Mr. Petersen expressed support for not letting small goals mislead from broader strategies, and for the commissioners to set priorities for their goals. Mr. Petersen shared for instance the Master Plan has not been addressed for the last 5 years and is not a top priority at the moment. This should be a part of the commissioner's discussion if prioritizing other projects above the Master Plan is a path the board is comfortable with. Mr. Petersen continued that it is the role of the board to set a goal as part of some process to establish some priority for the District and reflect on that decision. Mr. Petersen stated that having more detailed objectives, like Mr. Rosen's comment about recruitment, can set these priorities. Mr. Petersen added that metrics like number of water main breaks per year, and other trends can inform the direction they move. Mr. Petersen stated that he hoped the commissioners use this as an opportunity to improve the District through robust discussion that will be embedded in the review process.

Mr. Stuntz commented that in his view he does not see the role of the board to micromanage the District, and that many of the primary goals are set when the contract is written. Other factors like a vendor in Florida experiencing manufacturing issues are a detail that the commissioners do not need to get involved in, and it's the job of the District

Manager to make things happen. From his point of view, the board needs to give clear direction and support, not to micromanage and check metrics. Issues like breaks are already reported to the board and Mr. Stuntz expressed concern that more reporting generates more work that is more likely to affect the broader workload of the organization. Mr. Stuntz stated that often by the time the board hears about breaks they've already been repaired, and that it's important to think how metrics will actually help do a good job.

Mr. Mostoller responded to several points of the discussion. Regarding the slippage of the Master Plan, Mr. Mostoller clarified that this was an intentional readjustment of the priorities of the board. Under the tenure of his predecessor the board paused work on the Master Plan to allow them to directly address the PFAS issue. Secondly, Mr. Mostoller commented that it has been very helpful when the board is consistent with its prioritization as it allows the District to focus staff resources and Mr. Mostoller's time towards that priority. Mr. Mostoller added that having clear and consistent feedback in goals and knowing what direction the board wants rather than chasing intermittent and evolving goals has been very useful for Mr. Mostoller in exercising his duties as District Manager.

Mr. Stuntz thanked everyone for the conversation and confirmed there were no additional comments on this agenda item and no other new business.

Mr. Rosen motioned to adjourn the open meeting and move into executive session pursuant to General Law chapter 30A section 21 2 to conduct contract negotiations with non-union personnel.

Mr. Rosen motioned to amend his motion to adjourn the open meeting and move into executive session pursuant to General Law chapter 30A section 21 2 to conduct strategy preparation for contract negotiation for non-union personnel and to not reconvene in open session.

Ms. Lin seconded the amended motion, and it was unanimously approved via a roll call vote, Ms. Lin, Mr. Rosen, Mr. Stuntz.

Open meeting closed at 7:48 pm