

Board of Water Commissioners

Meeting Agenda

Monday, March 23, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

- Comments from the public
- 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
 - Bottled Water Rebate Update
- MassDEP Emergency Declaration

NEW BUSINESS:

- Kennedy Well Improvements
- Review Annual District Meeting
- Discuss Rates and Fees
- Discuss Special District Meeting

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- To conduct strategy sessions for contract negotiations with nonunion personnel.

Present at Tonight's Meeting:

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

District Manager: Matt Mostoller

Deputy District Manager: Corey Godfrey

Treasurer/Collector: Ashley Pinard

District Moderator: Bill Mullin

District Clerk: Joe Robb

Members of the Public: Alissa Nicol, John Petersen, Ron Parenti, Kim Kastens, Tom Wolf
Brewster Conant, Jr.; Bernadette Conant

START OF MINUTES

Mr. Stuntz opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and ensured that everyone could hear and be heard.

Comments from the public

Alissa Nicol commented that she had difficulty locating the Annual District Meeting warrant articles online. She suggested that warrant materials be more prominently displayed and clearly identified. Ms. Nicol further commented that the warrant lacks sufficient detail for voters, specifically noting that appropriation amounts are not included directly and instead require reference to additional documents. She expressed that voters should be able to review complete financial information within the warrant itself.

Ms. Nicol also provided comments regarding Article 4 and the current rate structure. She suggested that the District consider revisiting its approach to debt service and explore the use of settlement funds to provide relief to current ratepayers, particularly those funding PFAS-related capital improvements. She also referenced the concept of generational equity and suggested evaluating whether costs should be distributed differently between current and future users.

Appoint one Commissioner to sign warrants while conducting meetings virtually

Mr. Stuntz motioned to authorize Commissioner Rosen to sign warrants while meetings are conducted virtually, through the next regularly scheduled meeting. Ms. Lin seconded, and it was unanimously approved via roll call vote: Mr. Rosen, Ms. Lin, and Mr. Stuntz.

OLD BUSINESS:

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Current sample data, if available

Mr. Mostoller reported that there was no new PFAS sample data available at this time, as March sampling had only recently begun.

Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades

Mr. Mostoller reported that the South Acton PFAS treatment facility has been fully operational for several weeks. He noted that the facility experienced some operational challenges, including a period where the plant needed to run to waste while adjustments were made. He explained that while the facility is approved for operation, staff are still gaining operational experience and addressing initial system issues.

Mr. Mostoller further stated that the Center Acton facility has not yet been fully brought online. Based on recent experience in South Acton, staff are proceeding cautiously to avoid potential system disruptions, particularly while North Acton is taken offline for annual maintenance and media change out.

Bottled Water Rebate Update

Mr. Mostoller recommended extending the bottled water rebate program through April 2026 due to delays in fully integrating the Center Acton PFAS system.

Ms. Lin made a motion to extend the Bottled Water Rebate Program through April 2026. Mr. Stuntz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

MassDEP Emergency Declaration

Mr. Mostoller reported that the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) formally terminated the water emergency declaration on March 11, 2026.

Despite this, the District will maintain a Level IV water use restriction due to ongoing operational constraints associated with PFAS system startup and delayed annual maintenance.

Mr. Rosen made a motion to authorize sending letters of appreciation to the Towns of Concord and Littleton for their assistance during the emergency. Ms. Lin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

NEW BUSINESS:

Kennedy Well Improvements

Mr. Godfrey provided an overview of ongoing work at the Kennedy Well field in North Acton. While recent redevelopment efforts have improved well capacity, inspections revealed significant deterioration of infrastructure due to corrosive groundwater conditions.

Mr. Godfrey explained that many steel components are at risk of failure, and that replacement costs may exceed \$150,000. He noted that repairs could take approximately two months and may impact operations during peak summer demand.

Mr. Mostoller added that the District is evaluating both short-term rehabilitation and long-term replacement options in consultation with hydrogeologists and engineers. Construction is anticipated for fall or early winter 2026.

In the interim, the wells will remain in service, with contingency plans in place to address potential failures during the summer.

Review Annual District Meeting

Mr. Stuntz expressed disappointment that the FY2027 budget was not approved at the Annual District Meeting. He also noted that the meeting venue was undersized for attendance and may not be suitable for future meetings.

Mr. Rosen and Ms. Lin discussed feedback received from residents following the meeting. Several individuals expressed confusion regarding Article 4, with some believing they were voting on water rates rather than the operating budget.

Ms. Lin stated that the discussion at the Annual Meeting was marked by confusion and emphasized the need for clearer communication moving forward. She noted that the Board must ensure that voters understand what the budget article represents and what they are being asked to approve.

Mr. Rosen agreed and emphasized the importance of clearly distinguishing between budget approval and rate-setting.

Discuss Rates and Fees

Mr. Mostoller provided an overview of the District's rate structure philosophy, including the use of fixed fees to support debt service and ensure revenue stability. He explained that approximately 90% of water utility costs are fixed and that the current structure supports bond ratings and financial predictability.

Mr. Mostoller also outlined existing customer assistance measures, including lifeline usage thresholds, senior discounts, payment plans, and a policy of not shutting off water service.

He addressed the status of a proposed rate study, noting that while planning has begun, the effort has been delayed due to ongoing PFAS projects and other priorities.

Mr. Mostoller discussed potential upcoming adjustments, including:

- Implementation of the proposed debt fee increase ("85.25")
- Review and potential increases to connection fees and fire service fees
- Consideration of long-term structural balance between fixed and usage-based charges

Commissioners discussed the importance of timing and the need to ensure adequate revenue collection early in the fiscal year.

Public comment emphasized the need for a comprehensive rate study, improved communication of rate-setting philosophy, and consideration of conservation incentives and equity impacts.

Discuss Special District Meeting

Mr. Mostoller emphasized the urgency of approving a budget prior to July 1, 2026, noting that failure to do so would prevent the District from operating and may require notification to MassDEP that could have negative consequences.

He reported progress on reconciling financial accounts related to free cash certification, though submission to the Department of Revenue (DOR) is still pending.

Mr. Mostoller recommended scheduling a Special District Meeting to reconsider the budget and, if necessary, holding additional meetings until approval is obtained.

Commissioners discussed potential meeting dates in April and the importance of avoiding conflicts such as school vacation week.

Discussion also focused on improving communication ahead of the Special Meeting, including:

- Providing clearer explanations of the budget
- Enhancing warrant materials
- Considering a presentation to guide voters through the article

Public comment reinforced the importance of clarity, transparency, and documenting the District's decision-making philosophy to improve understanding and build public trust.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Mr. Rosen made a motion to adjourn the public meeting and enter an executive session to conduct strategy sessions for contract negotiations with non-union personnel, and that the Board will not reconvene in open session. Ms. Lin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

The meeting closed at 8:22 p.m.

A joint meeting of the Board of Water Commissioners and Finance Committee is scheduled for March 30, 2026.