

Joint Meeting of the Board of Water Commissioners and Finance Committee

Meeting Agenda

Friday, April 3, 2026 @ 3:00 PM

- Comments from the public

OLD BUSINESS:

- Discuss Special District Meeting
- Review Draft Budget for FY'27
- Discuss Rates and Fees

NEW BUSINESS:

- Approve Warrant for Special District Meeting

Present at Tonight's Meeting:

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

Finance Committee: John Petersen; Bill Guthlein

District Manager: Matt Mostoller

Deputy District Manager: Corey Godfrey

Treasurer/Collector: Ashley Pinard

District Counsel: Spencer Holland

District Clerk: Joe Robb

Members of the Public: Kim Kastens, Alissa Nicol, Ron Parenti

START OF MINUTES

Mr. Stuntz opened the meeting at 3:01 p.m. and ensured that everyone could hear and be heard. Mr. Guthlein opened the Finance Committee meeting at 3:02 p.m. under the same conditions as the Board meeting.

Comments from the public

There were no public comments at the outset of the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

Discuss Special District Meeting

Mr. Mostoller stated that the FY2027 budget article (*Article 4*) was not approved at the Annual District Meeting (3/18/26) and that a Special District Meeting would be required to reconsider the budget. Due to the inability to legally meet on March 30, 2026 to call an April 16, 2026 Special District Meeting, Mr. Mostoller recommended moving forward during school vacation week to avoid additional scheduling conflicts and delays. The Board discussed availability constraints, including travel schedules, Town Meeting, and school vacation week.

Following discussion, there was general agreement to schedule the Special District Meeting for **Wednesday, April 22, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.**

Mr. Mostoller stated that the warrant would include a single article to address the operating budget and would need to be closed at this meeting (4/3/2026) to meet the required two-week posting timeline.

During this discussion, Kim Kastens (Green Acton Water Committee) commented on the Annual District Meeting, noting that the language presented on the projection screen did not match the warrant article. She specifically referenced wording that suggested approval of the budget “as printed in the annual report,” which she stated may have led voters to believe they were approving the full detailed budget rather than a total appropriation. Ms. Kastens emphasized the importance of ensuring consistency between warrant language, presentation materials, and motions to avoid confusion.

The Board acknowledged this concern and noted that additional attention would be given to improving clarity in materials and presentation for the Special District Meeting.

Review Draft Budget for FY’27

Mr. Mostoller presented the draft FY2027 budget, including the previously proposed \$8.5 million operating budget.

Mr. Mostoller reported that additional infrastructure issues have been identified at the Kennedy Wells in North Acton. He explained that recent inspections during maintenance revealed that the condition of the wells has deteriorated beyond what was previously anticipated, and that earlier planned repairs may no longer be sufficient.

Mr. Mostoller stated that the District is evaluating options including repair, rehabilitation, or replacement, and that engineering analysis will be required to determine the appropriate course of action. He noted that one well may be structurally compromised.

Mr. Mostoller presented two options:

- Proceed with the previously proposed \$8.5 million budget, or
- Increase the budget by approximately \$1 million to address the well-related work and other emerging needs.

He stated that if the additional work is not included in the FY2027 budget, the District would need to return to voters at a future Special District Meeting to request funding.

Mr. Mostoller further noted that approximately \$200,000 to \$250,000 is already available for this work, but additional funds would be required.

During this discussion, Alissa Nicol asked about the uncertainty of the estimated costs, noting that the figures are based on planning-level estimates. Ms. Nicol suggested that it may be appropriate to return to voters at a later meeting with more refined cost information.

Mr. Mostoller responded that while the estimates are preliminary, delaying action would postpone revenue collection and could require larger rate increases later. He emphasized that the need for the work itself is not expected to change.

The Board and Finance Committee discussed the implications of both options, including operational risks, timing, and financial impacts. There was general agreement that the work is necessary and will need to be addressed.

Discuss Rates and Fees

Mr. Mostoller presented rate scenarios associated with the proposed budget options, including impacts to the median residential water bill.

Mr. Mostoller stated that incorporating the additional infrastructure work into the budget would result in an approximate \$100 increase in the annual median water bill under current assumptions.

Discussion focused on:

- Funding the increase through the volumetric (usage) rate
- Maintaining the balance between fixed and usage-based charges
- Concerns regarding the size of the increase

Finance Committee members expressed support for funding the additional expense through the usage rate. Discussion also included consideration of the W.R. Grace Fund as a potential source to offset the rate increase. Mr. Mostoller noted that use of the Grace Fund would require a separate vote and additional procedural steps. He also noted some funds were already being proposed to offset the increase in the operating budget.

Commissioners discussed the purpose of reserve funds and expressed concern about using them for short-term rate relief. It was noted that these funds are intended for long-term use and that using them now could reduce future financial flexibility. Relying on Special District meetings to cover emergencies is not a great operating model.

During this discussion, Ron Parenti asked whether the District would be able to present slides at the Special District Meeting and noted that clear visual presentation would be important given the need to explain the proposed changes.

Mr. Mostoller confirmed that presentation capability would be available and agreed on the importance of improving communication materials, including visual aids and written summaries. He is already preparing a similar document to the one used at the 2024 Special District Meeting.

Additional discussion included:

- The potential for increased funding of ongoing maintenance
- The importance of aligning rates with actual expenditures
- The need for clear and consistent communication with the public

Mr. Mostoller also noted that additional revenue adjustments may be considered, including changes to the fire protection fee and demand charges, and that these would be reviewed further. The Board agreed to continue discussion of both the budget and rate structure at the April 13, 2026 meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Approve Warrant for Special District Meeting

Mr. Mostoller presented the draft warrant for the Special District Meeting, which included a single article to raise and appropriate funds for district operations.

The Board took the following actions:

1. Call the Special District Meeting

Ms. Lin made a motion to call a Special District Meeting on Wednesday, April 22, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. at the Acton Water District offices. Mr. Stuntz seconded. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

2. Close the Warrant

Mr. Rosen made a motion to close the warrant. Ms. Lin seconded. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

3. Approve the Warrant

Mr. Rosen made a motion to approve the warrant. Ms. Lin seconded. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Mr. Mostoller and Mr. Robb will coordinate to have the warrant certified and posted in accordance with the required timelines.

The Board also discussed public outreach efforts, including preparation of explanatory materials and initiating communication with the public prior to the meeting. A motion was approved authorizing Mr. Mostoller to draft and submit to the *Acton Exchange* a public communication on behalf of the District.

The Finance Committee adjourned, followed by the Board of Commissioners.

The meeting closed at 4:43 p.m.

The next Board of Water Commissioners meeting is scheduled for April 13, 2026.