Board of Water Commissioners

Meeting Agenda

Monday, August 10, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

- Comments from the public
- Appoint one Commissioner to sign warrants while conducting meetings virtually
- Approve Minutes from 7/13/26 meeting

OLD BUSINESS:

- Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)
  - Current sample data, if available
  - Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades
- Drought Status and Water Use Restrictions
- MWRA MetroWest Expansion

NEW BUSINESS:

- Recognition of Stephen Stuntz
- Personnel Update
- Warrant Signing Process
- Treasurer/Collector Review Process
- Finance Committee request to conduct financial resilience study

Present at Tonight's Meeting:

Commissioners: Erika Lin (Chair), Barry Rosen, John Petersen

Finance Committee: Bill Guthlein

District Manager: Matthew Mostoller

Deputy District Manager: Corey Godfrey

Treasurer/Collector: Ashley Pinard

Members of the Public: Alissa Nicol, Ron Parenti, Michael Miller, Kim Kastens, Steve Stuntz

START OF MINUTES

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

Comments from the public

No public comments were made at the start of the meeting.

Appoint one Commissioner to sign warrants while conducting meetings virtually

Mr. Rosen motioned to authorize Mr. Petersen 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. Petersen.

Approve Minutes from the meeting of 7/13/2026

Mr. Petersen moved to approve the minutes from the meeting of July 13, 2026, as presented in the packet. Mr. Rosen seconded, and it was unanimously approved via roll call vote: Mr. Rosen, Ms. Lin, and Mr. Petersen.

<u>OLD BUSINESS</u>:

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Current sample data, if available

Mr. Mostoller reported that the July PFAS sampling results remained favorable. Samples collected July 7 at the Central Acton and North Acton facilities were below detection limits, and the July 14 sample from South Acton was also below detection limits.

Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades

Mr. Mostoller reported continued incremental progress toward closing out the Central Acton and South Acton PFAS projects. A recent site walk at Central Acton was completed as part of closing the project's Order of Conditions, which would allow the construction silt fence to be removed. Staff, system integrators, engineers, and operators continued addressing programming issues at both sites. The District continued working with the building vendor and equipment provider on remaining contract items, with administrative closeout still in progress. Mr. Mostoller added that tank-provider settlement discussions were advancing with District counsel.

Drought Status and Water Use Restrictions

Mr. Mostoller reported that the State Drought Management Task Force noted improved conditions for the Northeast Region, which includes Acton, from Critical Drought to Significant Drought. The U.S. Drought Monitor also showed improvement, with Acton near the boundary between Moderate and Severe Drought. At the USGS Wetherbee Street location, the well level continued to decline but showed early signs of stabilizing. Other District wells showed some improvement, though conditions varied across the system. The state task force will review conditions on August 20 and continue meeting monthly while the drought persists.

The Board agreed to leave the current water-use restrictions unchanged pending clearer groundwater recovery. Mr. Mostoller explained that, although recent rainfall had been substantial, much of it fell too quickly to provide the greatest groundwater benefit. Staff had observed few flagrant violations and believed residents were generally complying with the restrictions. In response to a question about whether the District's rain barrel program had reduced peak water demand, Mr. Mostoller said the impact had not been estimated because the District does not know where all sold barrels are ultimately used, some leave Acton, and rain-barrel use typically replaces smaller-scale watering rather than lawn irrigation, which is the larger demand.

MWRA MetroWest Expansion

Mr. Mostoller reported that the cost-allocation study presentation to local stakeholders, previously expected in August, had been postponed until approximately mid- to late September. The consultant had completed much of the work but was still preparing a draft for project-team review. Mr. Rosen, who has been participating in the project meetings, said the group had narrowed the analysis to several workable models. He emphasized that the study would begin, rather than conclude, the next phase of work: explaining likely costs to each community, evaluating the differing costs and benefits among communities, and addressing the political and funding questions.

Mr. Mostoller clarified that the September event would be a stakeholder meeting for invited representatives from all participating communities, not a meeting for the general public. Those representatives would then continue conversations within their respective communities. Staff were developing the broader outreach steps expected for Acton in the fall and anticipated providing more information at a future meeting.

<u>NEW BUSINESS</u>:

Recognition of Stephen Stuntz

The Board and staff recognized former Commissioner Stephen Stuntz for more than 40 years of service to the Water Supply District of Acton. Mr. Stuntz received an engraved chair bearing the District seal and a Massachusetts Senate citation signed by Senate President Karen E. Spilka, Senate Clerk Michael D. Hurley, and State Senator James V. Eldridge. Mr. Mostoller thanked Mr. Stuntz for his decades of service and for continuing to share his guidance and institutional knowledge with the Board and staff.

Mr. Stuntz reflected on the District's future, including the potential MWRA supply, the District's existing sources, staff development, infrastructure work, and the complexity of operating a 24-hour water system within changing community and roadway conditions. He stressed that continued success would depend on hard work, honest and fair evaluation, listening to one another, and maintaining the District's longstanding professional approach.

Personnel Update

Mr. Mostoller reported that recent front-office personnel changes had left the District with customer-service coverage only three days per week. Remaining staff members were covering multiple responsibilities, and work continued to be completed, although responses could be slower, and some calls might go to voicemail. The District had purchased a doorbell for possible use when the office was staffed by only one person who might be temporarily unavailable.

The District was actively recruiting one full-time replacement. Nearly 100 applications had been received, and approximately seven candidates were expected to be interviewed. Mr. Mostoller noted that the position attracted a broader applicant pool than more specialized District positions, but the customer-facing component was essential and reduced the number of suitable candidates. The Board thanked staff for maintaining operations and expressed encouragement about the applicant pool.

Warrant Signing Process

The Board discussed Mr. Petersen's suggestion to establish a six-month or annual rotating warrant-signing schedule instead of appointing a commissioner at each meeting. Counsel had advised that there was no legal impediment to a pre-established schedule. Mr. Petersen said one vote could replace approximately 24 individual votes each year and could identify both the assigned commissioner and a backup. Mr. Rosen preferred the existing simple rotation because meeting dates sometimes change, and commissioners can exchange assignments as needed. Ms. Lin preferred retaining a vote at each meeting for financial transparency and to ensure that each designation remains clearly documented. The Board reached consensus to continue its existing practice; no vote was taken.

Treasurer/Collector Review Process

Mr. Mostoller explained that Treasurer/Collector, Ashley Pinard, reports to the District Manager for day-to-day matters and to the Board in her role as the District's financial steward. Her six-month anniversary had occurred the previous day, marking the customary time for a performance review near the end of the initial probationary period. Ms. Pinard was also continuing the certification process for the position.

Mr. Petersen moved to designate District Manager Matthew Mostoller and Chair Erika Lin to conduct Ms. Pinard's six-month review on behalf of the Board of Commissioners, seconded by Mr. Rosen. There was no discussion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll-call vote: Mr. Petersen, aye; Mr. Rosen, aye; and Ms. Lin, aye.

Mr. Mostoller confirmed that he had received written input from Mr. Petersen and Mr. Rosen and would seek clarification if needed. He and Ms. Lin would coordinate the review after Ms. Pinard's scheduled training and vacation.

Finance Committee Request to Conduct Financial Resilience Study

Finance Committee Chair Bill Guthlein presented a proposed financial resiliency initiative. He explained that the fully staffed Finance Committee believed it had capacity to undertake projects beneficial to the District and sought the Commissioners' view on whether this proposal warranted the necessary resources. The project would examine the District's ability to obtain cash and other financial support following a major unexpected event, such as severe drought, contamination, a cyberattack, wildfire, or a supply-chain disruption. The initial phase would focus on the amount, availability, timing, legal requirements, and limitations of potential funding sources rather than planning the operational response to a specific emergency. A later phase addressing scenarios would require leadership from staff and others with operational expertise.

Mr. Guthlein said the objective was a plan answering most questions about emergency financing in advance, allowing management to focus on operational demands during a crisis. Topics could include borrowing in anticipation of revenue, short- and long-term borrowing capacity, conversion to bonds, available appropriated balances, other District accounts, the speed and approvals required to access each source, the potential need for a special District meeting, and the possibility that credit could be more difficult to obtain during a broader financial crisis. He noted that the proposal was preliminary: he had developed the list and discussed it with Finance Committee member Ron Parenti, while member Dan Groher had been unavailable.

Mr. Guthlein also identified possible future Finance Committee projects, including a three-year budget outlook, a more intuitive internal and public budget format, and clearer explanatory information accompanying warrant articles. Mr. Petersen was particularly interested in a multiyear budget as a tool for understanding the long-term use and replenishment of free cash. He suggested that the Finance Committee could develop a template showing the previous three years and a three-year projection, distinguishing relatively predictable items from uncertain ones. Mr. Guthlein said the Committee wanted to concentrate on work the Board considered useful. Ms. Nicol cautioned that finance staff, rather than volunteer Finance Committee members, ordinarily populate budget line items.

The Commissioners discussed the timing, scope, value, and personnel demands of the resiliency study. Ms. Lin expressed reservations about beginning a staff-intensive initiative while the front office was short-staffed; recruitment was underway, and summer schedules were concluding. Mr. Rosen remained neutral and requested a preliminary estimate of the staff, commissioner, and Finance Committee time required so the Board could assess the proposal's costs and benefits. Mr. Guthlein responded that even estimating the resources would require work and that the benefit was difficult to quantify because it would be realized only if the District faced a serious financial emergency.

The discussion distinguished routine operational issues from true catastrophic events. Mr. Mostoller explained that the $100,000 reserve line item is intended for unanticipated annual operating costs, such as higher energy or legal expenses, and is not a multimillion-dollar catastrophe fund. He noted that the District routinely handles equipment failures and pump replacements as part of normal operations, often without the Board learning the details until an invoice appears on a warrant. Some major projects proceed through an initial engineering phase followed by a larger appropriation, while other emergencies, such as a pump loss, lightning strike, or large-scale flooding may require immediate action. Funding can become secondary to performing urgent work. He urged the group to define carefully which circumstances represent business as usual, unusual but manageable events, and true catastrophes requiring advance financial planning.

Mr. Mostoller further advised that a comprehensive study would require more than direct staff time. It could involve District counsel, bond counsel, banking partners, the financial manager, and insurance providers, with much of the coordination falling to him and Ms. Pinard. He asked for a clearer description of the intended work product, its benefit, and the unmet need it would address. Ms. Lin also cautioned that the work must remain focused on catastrophe planning and not become an operational review, which would fall outside the Finance Committee's and Board's proper roles.

Mr. Petersen offered to work with the Finance Committee on an initial concept, but the Board did not authorize a project team or other immediate action. The consensus was that the Finance Committee could revisit the proposal after Labor Day, when all of its members, including Mr. Groher, could participate; provide more detail about the proposed work product, benefits, and anticipated resource requirements; and allow the Board to reassess staff capacity at that time. Mr. Guthlein said the discussion had been useful and that the Finance Committee understood the Board's caution.

Ms. Nicol added that a financial-resiliency initiative involving both bodies could engender public trust and confidence but suggested that any collaborative work might be better conducted through joint public meetings rather than through a single commissioner or sub-quorum. She also asked the Board to preserve the Finance Committee's independent financial oversight or "watchdog" role and recognize that some members of the public could view a joint project as moving away from that function. She had not reached a conclusion because the initiative was not yet defined, but believed the concern was important to keep in mind.

With no other business, Mr. Rosen moved to adjourn, Mr. Petersen seconded, and the motion passed unanimously via a roll call vote, Mr. Rosen, Ms. Lin, and Mr. Petersen.

The meeting closed at 8:18 p.m.

The next Board of Water Commissioners meeting is scheduled for August 24, 2026.