

Board of Water Commissioners

Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, September 23, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

- Call to order
- Comments from the public
- Appoint one Commissioner to sign warrants while conducting meetings virtually
- Approve Minutes from 9/8/26 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:

- FY26 Financial Update
- Fall Flushing Program
- Aeration Treatment at South Acton Water Treatment Plant
- Adjourn Open Meeting

EXECUTIVE SESSION: *In accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, Section 21(a), Purpose 3, to discuss strategy with respect to potential litigation, as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the District.*

Present at Tonight's Meeting:

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

District Manager: Matthew Mostoller

Treasurer/Collector: Ashley Pinard

Environmental Analyst: Shawn Case

Members of the Public: Bill Guthlein, Alissa Nicol, Ron Parenti

START OF MINUTES

Ms. Lin opened the meeting at 7:01 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

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

Approve Minutes from the meeting of 9/8/2026

Mr. Petersen moved to approve the minutes from the meeting of September 8, 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.

OLD BUSINESS:

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Current sample data, if available

Mr. Mostoller reported that no new PFAS sampling results were available, and that September sampling was scheduled for that week and the following week.

Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades

Mr. Mostoller reported that the failed South Acton PFAS equalization basin transfer pump had been removed and returned to the manufacturer for evaluation. The manufacturer was investigating the cause of the premature failure and whether the pump could be repaired or required replacement.

The District's engineer had proposed purchasing an additional pump, bringing the total to three. Following discussions with Mr. Godfrey, Mr. Mostoller recommended delaying that purchase. The estimated lead time of 14 to 16 weeks would provide little immediate redundancy, and staff wanted to assess the remaining operating pump before purchasing another of the same model. If similar problems were found, staff might consider a different pump model.

Mr. Mostoller acknowledged that a later spare-pump purchase might not be eligible for previously approved State Revolving Fund funding. Staff nevertheless did not consider that sufficient reason to purchase another pump before understanding the failures. Commissioners expressed agreement with waiting for additional information.

Drought Status and Water Use Restrictions

Mr. Mostoller reported that the District had issued a notice continuing Level IV restrictions after the previous meeting. Subsequent rainfall had raised Nashoba Brook above the District's low-flow trigger, and the operational flow restriction at South Acton had been alleviated. Groundwater levels, however, remained well below normal and continued to decline.

Staff recommended moving to Level III restrictions, allowing nonessential water use one day per week. This would provide an opportunity for seasonal cleaning and lawn restoration before winter. Mr. Mostoller said staff believed the District could meet that limited additional demand.

Commissioners supported the recommendation while emphasizing that public notices should clearly explain the continued groundwater deficit. The Board discussed how rainfall, visible surface water, and greener lawns could create an impression that water supplies had recovered. Mr. Mostoller also explained that substantial snow depth did not necessarily indicate high moisture content. Recent rainfall and cooler evenings had generally benefited established lawns and landscaping.

A commissioner reported observing several instances of watering under the existing restrictions. Mr. Mostoller requested times and addresses for follow-up. The previously ordered sandwich-board signs had not yet arrived.

A motion was made and seconded to move the District to Level III restrictions and notify residents. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote: Mr. Petersen, Mr. Rosen, and Ms. Lin voted aye. Mr. Mostoller stated that more stringent restrictions would be reinstated if the change proved unsustainable.

NEW BUSINESS:

FY26 Financial Update

Ms. Pinard presented the FY2026 fourth-quarter financial update through June 30. Expenses totaled approximately \$7.7 million, with approximately \$389,000 unspent across expense accounts. Revenue totaled approximately \$8.4 million, about \$174,000 above projection.

Ms. Pinard confirmed that the previously approved \$100,000 reserve fund transfer for lights, power, and fuel had been completed, and the associated bills paid. She did not anticipate another transfer during the first quarter of FY2027. If costs continued at current

levels, the issue might return during the third quarter, although it was too early to determine whether another transfer would be necessary.

Mr. Petersen questioned a \$2.3 million expense variance displayed on one spreadsheet. Ms. Pinard directed the Board to the monthly budget-to-actual spreadsheet, which showed the correct unspent balance of approximately \$389,000. Approximately 96 percent of the expense budget had been used, and revenue was approximately 102 percent of projection. Mr. Petersen welcomed closer alignment between budgeted and actual figures compared with previous years.

Ms. Pinard explained that the reported paid-expense figures were not expected to change materially. The final trial balance remained subject to adjusting journal entries from the auditor.

In response to questions posed by the Board, staff explained that the approximately \$40,000 favorable engineering variance reflected engineering costs charged to specific projects rather than the general engineering account. The approximately \$27,000 favorable information reports variance reflected additional PFAS and lead and copper public notifications that had been budgeted but were not required. Much of the approximately \$33,000 favorable IT variance resulted from accounting software costs that were only partially paid before the fiscal year ended.

Mr. Petersen asked why rent and lease revenue was approximately \$149,000 against a projection of approximately \$115,000 and whether the higher amount should inform the next budget. The discussion clarified that this question concerned rent and lease revenue, rather than solar field revenue, which had been below projection. Ms. Pinard agreed to investigate and report back. Ms. Lin thanked her for the update.

Fall Flushing Program

Mr. Mostoller reported that fall flushing was expected to begin October 5 and continue through October, with work paused on October 12 for Indigenous Peoples' Day. Work would primarily cover West Acton, generally south of Route 2 and west of Main Street. The District would publish the schedule online and communicate progress through social media.

Additional flushing along Breezy Point and a fire flow test on Powder Mill Road were planned, with dates still to be determined. Flushing was expected to occur Monday through Thursday, beginning around 8:00 a.m. and potentially continuing until 8:00 p.m., depending on tank recovery. Staff would shorten workdays if necessary.

The goal was to complete a full West Acton flushing cycle. Mr. Mostoller explained that the District had not completed a full scheduled cycle during its spring or fall programs since PFAS was discovered in 2020.

In response to Mr. Petersen, Mr. Mostoller explained that West Acton represents roughly 25 percent of the system, although it may contain somewhat more piping than other quadrants. Depending on location, flushing water enters storm drainage or infiltrates directly into the ground. Total water use would be available after flushing was completed.

Aeration Treatment at South Acton Water Treatment Plant

Mr. Mostoller reported that both South Acton aeration towers had been removed from service following structural failures. The first tower had developed a problem around June and was subsequently taken offline for investigation. The redundant tower experienced a similar failure on its second day of use treating the full flow of the Assabet and School Street wells.

MassDEP had approved temporarily bypassing aeration. Staff were maintaining appropriate water pH and relying on the granular activated carbon, or GAC, for volatile organic compound removal. Mr. Mostoller explained that GAC had been the District's original treatment method for those contaminants. Sampling conducted to date produced favorable non-detect results.

August raw-water sampling showed the highest vinylidene chloride (VDC) concentration of 5.37 parts per billion at the Assabet 3 well. Mr. Mostoller reported that the state maximum contaminant level was seven parts per billion, and the District's own treatment goal was one part per billion. Blending reduced the incoming concentration to approximately 1.2 parts per billion, while the non-detect treated-water results met the District's treatment goal.

Mr. Mostoller had met with EPA that morning. EPA would encourage W. R. Grace to conduct additional sampling to help monitor potential changes in incoming contamination. An interim plan developed with MassDEP called for quarterly sampling of South Acton raw-water sources and monthly sampling at multiple points through the treatment process, including before and after GAC and as finished water entered distribution.

Staff were working with Calgon Carbon to evaluate the useful life of the existing GAC when used for both PFAS and volatile organic compound removal. The tower manufacturer was scheduled to inspect the equipment the following day. The District might retain its own engineers to review repair or replacement recommendations.

If replacement were necessary, the Board may need to consider whether to retain aeration or rely on GAC alone. Permanently removing aeration would require engineering, MassDEP review and permitting, and further evaluation comparable to a pilot study. It would also eliminate one of the District's two methods for removing volatile organic compounds. Mr. Mostoller noted that bypassing GAC under the conditions discussed would leave VDC below the state limit but above the District's own action level.

In response to the Board's questions, Mr. Mostoller explained that aeration normally provides mineral oxidation, volatile organic compound removal, and pH adjustment. Operating without it had increased potassium hydroxide and potassium permanganate use. Staff planned modifications to the potassium hydroxide feed system to provide additional reserve capacity. They were also monitoring possible membrane fouling and solids accumulation in the GAC and the recycle system.

Mr. Parenti asked about the nature and age of the failures. Mr. Mostoller explained that internal support brackets appeared to have failed, allowing supported media to fall. The first failure had been relatively subtle; the second was catastrophic, with material exiting through the air inlet. The underlying cause remained uncertain. The South Acton towers entered service in 2015, while a similar tower installed in North Acton in 2009 had not shown comparable problems.

Current costs were being managed through the W. R. Grace maintenance and operations appropriation and the regular maintenance and operations budget. Mr. Mostoller hoped repairs could be covered with existing funds. Replacement would require additional financial discussion. Further updates would follow the manufacturer's assessment.

Additional New Business and Commissioner Recognition

Mr. Mostoller and Ms. Pinard identified no additional new business.

Mr. Petersen thanked Mr. Mostoller for arranging his registration for the NEWWA fall meeting, which he attended for a day and a half. He said the meeting helped deepen his understanding of water issues, provided useful introductions, and demonstrated the respect held for the District within the broader water community.

Mr. Petersen also recognized the District's support of a residential water-use study and its contributions to regional MWRA work. He noted that Maynard's DPW manager had acknowledged substantial contributions from Acton and Concord. Mr. Mostoller thanked him and clarified that the water-use study had previously been discussed publicly and circulated to the Board in the spring or early summer.

With no other business, a motion was made and seconded to close the open session. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote: Mr. Rosen, Mr. Petersen, and Ms. Lin voted aye.

The open meeting closed at 7:50 p.m.

Executive Session

Ms. Lin moved to enter executive session pursuant to *M.G.L. c. 30A, Section 21(a), Purpose 3*, to discuss strategy with respect to potential litigation because an open meeting could have a detrimental effect on the District's litigating position, and not to reconvene in open session.

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by roll call vote: Mr. Rosen, Mr. Petersen, and Ms. Lin voted aye.

The next Board of Water Commissioners meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 5, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.