



**WATER SUPPLY CITIZENS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
to the Mass. Water Resources Authority

485 Ware Road
Belchertown MA 01007
(413) 213-0454
fax: (413) 213-0537
email: info@wscac.org

WSCAC Joint Virtual Meeting with the Advisory Board and WAC
Date: Thursday, September 24, 2026
Time: 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
WSCAC Business section

WSCAC Members in Attendance in Bold:

- **Christine Bennett**, MWRA Advisory Board
- **William Copithorne**, Town of Arlington
- Steven Daunais, Tata & Howard
- Bill Fadden, OARS
- Bill Kiley, BWSC
- **Paul Lauenstein**, Neponset (Chair)
- **Paul Rybicki**, Partially Supplied Community
- **Martin Pillsbury**, MAPC
- **Janet Rothrock**, League of Women Voters
- **Bill Merriam**, Framingham resident, Foss Reservoir abutter
- **Erin Bonney Casey**, Ipswich River Watershed Association
- **Warren Kimball**, Nashua River Watershed Association
- **Lydia Olson**, Mass Rivers Alliance
- Evan Pesut, Trout Unlimited
- **Nina Gordon-Kirsch**, CT River Conservancy
- Christopher Dreher, Educational Institute

Non-Members in Attendance:

- Steve Estes-Smargiassi, MWRA
- Tom Durkin, MWRA
- Kathy Baskin, MWRA
- Jennifer Pederson, NEWWA
- Moussa Siri, WSCAC
- Check the Advisory Board attending list of the Sept. 24, 2026, meeting minutes for the full list.

I. Attendance check and updates

a. Introduction and attendance check

Moussa Siri asked Paul Lauenstein to check attendance before proceeding with the minutes vote. Paul Lauenstein said a roll call had already been taken and there had been 10 members. Moussa Siri said he had checked just before and believed eight remained. Paul Lauenstein indicated that only six are needed for the quorum and that a quorum was reached.

b. Updates and plans

Moussa Siri asked Steve Estes-Smargiassi to introduce Kathleen Baskin, whom he identified as Steve's replacement. Steve Estes-Smargiassi confirmed that Kathy Baskin is his replacement and added that Kathy had most recently been at DEP and had experience in consulting, other governmental agencies, and the Charles River watershed. He said she is bringing a wide range of interests and experience to the role of Director of Planning and Sustainability and that he is happy that she applied.

Paul Lauenstein welcomed Kathy Baskin and said their connection went back at least 50 years, to a hardware store in Orleans on the Cape. He recalled her chairing the Water Resources Commission and said he was thrilled to see her take this role. Moussa Siri asked whether she would take over the liaison role between WSCAC and MWRA. Steve Estes-Smargiassi said this was likely, although the liaison assignment was still being worked on.

II. Votes on Meeting Minutes and MWRA 20 MGD Request Comments

a. Votes on Meeting Minutes

Paul Lauenstein asked for a motion to approve the June 9 meeting minutes. Warren Kimball made a motion to approve the minutes. Bill Merriam seconded the motion. Moussa Siri asked whether there was any discussion or amendment. With no discussion or amendments, Paul Lauenstein asked if all WSCAC attendees were in favor. Members unanimously approved the June 9 meeting minutes, with no opposition or further discussion or amendments.

Paul Lauenstein, then, asked for a motion to approve the August 25 meeting minutes. Warren Kimball made a motion to approve the minutes, and Bill Merriam seconded the motion. Paul Lauenstein asked whether there was any further discussion. Hearing none, Paul Lauenstein asked if all members approved the minutes. Members unanimously approved the August 25 meeting minutes.

b. MWRA 20 MGD Rate Increase Request Comments discussion

Moussa Siri reported that the Executive Committee had invited members' ideas for comments on MWRA's 20 million gallon request. He used these responses to prepare a draft and, because of the timeframe, sought Executive Committee feedback before a full committee vote. Four

members responded, three supporting the first draft with corrections. Several members had not responded, including prospective Executive Committee member Christine Bennett. He would circulate the unfinished draft after the meeting for further input. He explained that the MWRA request for 20 MGD is meant to cover multiple additions rather than one applicant, avoiding repeated donor review for each application, and referred to Erin's email and section 4.10. He offered to share the earlier ITA meeting recording with members wishing to review it.

Christine Bennett clarified that she had commented verbally. She considered the receiving community review the appropriate point for WSCAC's comments because it aligned with the committee's water conservation interest and working group. In her view, the donor side was not a WSCAC priority.

Moussa Siri replied that WSCAC, as an advisory committee to MWRA and a public representative, should comment even if it would not oppose the request.

Paul Lauenstein said he opposed the 20 million gallon donor allocation. He indicated that 200 million gallons are for people and 100 million gallons for the environment. He wanted to maintain that balance, citing the billions of dollars in ecosystem services described in *Losing Ground at What Cost*. He said drought reduced water availability for the environment while increasing landscaping and agricultural irrigation demand. He proposed a total withdrawal threshold for avoiding donor review: for example, 190 million gallons plus five million would remain below a 200 million gallon limit, while demand above the chosen threshold would require review of the total impact. He identified climate-related drought, population growth from what he described as a \$5 billion state housing effort, and AI data centers as uncertainties. He urged MWRA to create capacity through conservation while holding average demand near 200 million gallons per day, and to consider sustainable yield, ecosystem services, and tradeoffs before increasing demand to 220 million gallons without further review. He acknowledged his minority position and would accept the majority's decision while continuing to defend ecosystem services.

Steve Estes-Smargiassi said Paul Lauenstein was confusing yield with safe yield. He estimated total watershed yield at 360 million gallons per day and said safe yield calculations maintained minimum river releases regardless of drought. Finite reservoir capacity prevented capture of all yield; outside reviewers had previously asked about increasing storage to capture more wet-weather yield. He described the human-environment split as closer to half and half. He said withdrawals did not affect ecosystem services within the 400-square-mile watershed, while protected land investment supported those services. He added that downstream services depended primarily on releases maintained under all conditions. Since Bedford joined in 1993, MWRA had demonstrated to the Water Resources Commission that environmental benefits could be maintained at different withdrawal levels. He agreed on the value of ecosystem services but disputed Paul Lauenstein's accounting. He said Commission staff had encouraged

separate donor review to show the full potential impact rather than incremental impacts. Both donor and receiving reviews had to be completed before any transfer. He considered the process efficient, transparent, and comprehensive and urged WSCAC to help balance less factual comments using its knowledge of MWRA's history and management. He noted that he was speaking as a nonmember.

Paul Lauenstein thanked Steve Estes-Smargiassi and asked about defining a total amount exempt from donor review rather than adding 20 million gallons to a varying existing amount.

Steve Estes-Smargiassi explained that the law and regulations required review of the change in demand. He considered Paul Lauenstein's questions legitimate matters for long-term planning. Steve Estes-Smargiassi then noted that MWRA demand had fallen as communities joined since 1993, although he expected some short-term increases. He explained that efficiency gains continued to offset new communities and population growth, but savings were slower because the system was tighter and the easy savings had already been achieved. He cited renovations, including replacement of older restroom fixtures, as opportunities for further water savings.

Moussa Siri said his first draft reflected the possibility that stronger conservation could keep demand below 220 million gallons even with more communities. Agreement with the request should remind MWRA to track whether joining communities met membership requirements.

Steve Estes-Smargiassi reported an estimated regional residential use of 47 gallons per person, noting the difficulty of determining an exact figure. Paul Lauenstein reported 25 for his own use. Steve Estes-Smargiassi described regional use as efficient as and lower than in some watershed communities. He suggested including MWRA's five-year average withdrawal or customer sales chart in the comments. He noted that Boston used less water than in 1900 and that newspapers had not published the charts despite his efforts.

Moussa said he had declined a newsletter interview but instead shared MWRA's water history and conservation links, which the recipient found helpful. He had also declined radio comment to avoid making an incorrect statement. Addressing Christine Bennett, he said WSCAC should express its position and remind MWRA of its concerns rather than remain silent as an advisory committee. He added that the goal behind the earlier MWRA_WSCAC ITA meeting was to help prepare the comments.

Christine Bennett reiterated that the earlier meeting addressed donor basin analysis and that conservation was relevant to receiving basin review. Moussa Siri agreed and said WSCAC should prepare to write comments on the recipient side as well.

Moussa Siri asked whether to share one draft or both. Paul Lauenstein explained that he and Moussa would work together to prepare a new draft over the next day or two and submit it to members. He believed most Executive Committee members supported the proposal. The

combined draft should state WSCAC's position first, then discuss conservation, and could go to the Executive Committee for approval before sending it to the full committee.

Moussa Siri agreed, emphasizing that WSCAC's donor-side comments should remind MWRA to conserve water even if the 20 million gallons were granted.

Addressing Tom Durkin, Paul Lauenstein reported a 10-year Treasury rate of 5.14 before the meeting, compared with 5% the previous week, and 5.16 during the meeting. He followed the rate each morning and considered its sharp rise significant for the matter under discussion.

III Meeting Adjournment

Moussa Siri thanked Tom Durkin, Jennifer Pederson, and the others for staying, mentioning that they met regularly with Jennifer at the Drought Management Task Force. Jennifer thanked Moussa for letting her listen in. Moussa Siri passed the meeting to Paul Lauenstein for closing remarks and adjournment. Paul Lauenstein asked whether anyone had new business. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to adjourn.

Warren Kimball moved to adjourn the meeting. Bill Merriam seconded the motion. All in favor, and the meeting adjourned around 12:30 pm.

Next meeting: October 13, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. on Zoom, as listed in the agenda.