



Minutes
June 5, 2026
Remote

Attendees:

WAC Members: **Kannan Vembu** (Chair), **Dan Winograd** (Vice Chair), **Adriana Cillo** (BWSC), **Craig Allen**, Wayne Chouinard (Belmont), George Atallah, **Dr. Karen Lachmayr**, **Martin Pillsbury** (MAPC), Taber Keally (NepRWA), **Alfredo Vargas** (Newton), **Christine Bennett** (Advisory Board), **Felina Silver** (LWV), **Zhenyu Tian** (Northeastern). (Members in attendance in **bold**).

MWRA Liaison: David Wu

Guests: Moussa Siri (WSCAC), Hillary Coolidge, Michael O'Keefe (MWRA), Suzy King (DEP), Eric Hove (MAPC), Matt Romero (AB)

Staff: Andreae Downs

VOTE: April Minutes

UPDATES:

WAC—Kannan: It was an exciting year with an excellent tour of Deer Island energy assets. The Annual Report summarizes WAC accomplishments nicely.

MWRA—David: Kaitlin Hunt has been promoted to Director of Process Management at Deer Island (we met her on the tour in May). Annual water quality report on the rivers will be available July 15. And Fred Laskey's job is now posted [here](#).

WSCAC—Moussa: Drought worsened in MA in May. Three communities are requesting to join the water system. WSCAC has a forestry tour coming June 9th.

Martin Pillsbury commended the directors (WSCAC, WAC, AB) for coordinating so well this last year, with joint meetings and each director attending each other's meetings.

LEADERSHIP FOR FY7

Andreae noted that when she started at WAC in 2011, Stephen Greene was chair and Taber was vice chair, and that they had been for more than a decade. After a few years, she suggested WAC rotate leadership—and this has been the case, with chairs being Taber, Craig, Karen, Wayne and now Kannan.

She opened the floor for nominations (including self-nominations) and thanked Kannan for his three years of engaged leadership.

She noted the job is mostly signing monthly financials and the annual contract—and that David Wu is taking on the job on the MWRA side after Sally Carrol's imminent retirement. She also consults leadership when an important decision is pending—both current and past.

Andreae also noted that she has been director for nearly 15 years now, longer than WAC directors past, and that retirement for her may come in the next 5 years, so having membership with deep knowledge of how WAC functions is particularly important.

Kannan nominated Dan Winograd, as he has served as vice-chair for the last 3 years. The committee elected Dan unanimously.

Alfredo volunteered to be vice chair. The committee elected him unanimously.

Highlights of FY26 and Planning for FY27

Andreae noted that the fiscal year was almost entirely given over to the CSO LCTP—including meetings that became CSO meetings, and a level of depth and discussion that rivaled that of the NPDES permit draft for Deer Island.

WAC's Wipes labeling language made it into the Environmental Bond Bill this year, and Andreae is hoping that allies on Beacon Hill can keep it in. If it's successful, the next logical step is to look at what constitutes flushable and working with the legislature to label a number of additional items that should not be flushed.

WAC also commented on the PFAS omnibus bill, especially on how to handle PFAS in sludges that are land-applied (this bill is not moving forward this session).

The comment period for the draft CSO plan ends Sept. 30, 2026, so WAC will not need another CSO meeting after that—leaving 6-7 meetings where WAC can talk about other topics.

IF the EPA returns a draft NPDES permit for Deer Island, then WAC will want to comment on that. If it returns a final permit, WAC's role will be to watch how MWRA implements that permit. Both seem unlikely at the moment.

Andreae showed the committee topics they had suggested last year but hadn't been scheduled. She opened the meeting for member suggestions.

Karen asked if Human Resources could come talk with WAC about staffing. Matt Romero said the Advisory Board would be willing to have a joint meeting on that.

Andreae noted that Taber thought WAC should highlight MWRA maintenance needs, perhaps on a tour, with a wider invitation to the public to attend.

He also suggested reaching out to other utilities or companies that are tackling emerging contaminants like microplastics, and again revisiting sea level rise.

Martin suggested looking again at inflow and infiltration. Notes how the upstream systems contribute to the downstream CSO, and would like an update on how the MWRA programs are working. The grants program is now run by Kristen Hall.

Matt Romero noted Kristen is coming to the next Advisory Board meeting.

Kannan asked about using AI and whether it might be useful for MWRA in answering some of the questions WAC has been tackling.

David Wu said current policy at MWRA is to not use AI. He sees two issues for discussion—would AI be useful for MWRA in some of its functions and also whether AI data centers are impacting MWRA systems.

Matt Romero said that senior staff has put a hold on all use of AI for now, but are looking into how they might use it in a controlled way that would not put any of the secure facilities or sensitive internal data at risk.

CSO LCTP comments

Andreae reviewed the WAC mission statement and some possible shared guidelines for comment—including water quality.

WAC's mission:

- The MWRA Board of Directors created WAC in 1990 to offer independent recommendations on wastewater policies and programs. WAC's mission is to be an independent public forum for holistic discussion of wastewater issues. Membership is designed to reflect the knowledge and interest of major affected constituencies:

engineering and construction, environmental advocacy, planning, academic research, and business

Andreae asked committee members to comment on the goals they feel are most important to WAC:

These four priorities are not controversial for WAC members:

- Water quality
- Continued protection of the region's investment in wastewater infrastructure and continued progress on I/I removal
- Wise investment of ratepayer funds (past—asked that bonds not outlive infrastructure)
- Climate planning & investment in mitigation/adaptation

Polling on the following points:

- Adding or maintaining parks near affected waterbodies?—Karen said it is important to WAC, but not as a main focus: other groups may take the lead.
- Affordability of water/sewer rates?—Karen and Martin think WAC should be interested in this—it is not just an AB concern.
- Martin wanted to add how all of this investment plays out for environmental justice and equity writ larger.
- Construction duration/traffic?—Not something for WAC until the MEPA process starts.

Possible comments:

The forward-vision, looking at 2050 storms, is something WAC members feel is non-controversial and should be praised as part of our comments.

Karen & Martin both agreed that the effect of the plan(s) on Deer Island and other sewer maintenance needs is important for WAC to bring forward, as other groups will not.

Karen asked about the longer-term impacts of the storage tanks—pumping, emissions, trucks, maintenance.

When will the Advisory Board make comments?

Matt: AB staff has created a dashboard for the CSO LCTP, and are doing a video. But the AB is not a monolith. They are putting the information before mayors and selectboards, including that the more extreme storm plans don't add any swimmable days. They'll take a vote on formal comments in September, based on the concerns of various communities.

The AB will also produce some letter templates for various comments that communities want to make.

Christine noted that the AB is still working on more detail on the maintenance needs of Deer Island and other parts of the sewer system and how the plan might impact those.

Matt: if mandated CSO spending is approved, some DI maintenance will be delayed. That is a huge concern.

Martin—I am here representing MAPC—101 cities and towns, so I can't take a position until their process [reviewing the draft plan] is complete.

Kannan—I need to know more real numbers about impacts on Deer Island and other sewer maintenance.

Andreae proposed tabling the *size of control plan* discussion until the September 24 meeting (joint with AB), when the Advisory Board will take its vote. The impact of the various plan costs should be clearer then, and the processes of Christine's and Martin's boards should be complete. Alfredo and Wayne will also need to have brought their mayor/selectboard into the discussion before they can vote—and this should be clearer after the summer.

Matt volunteered that his staff are doing outreach and would be happy to help any WAC members' groups with information as needed.

Next meeting is Thursday, Sept. 24, 10 am-12:30
jointly with the Advisory Board and WSCAC