



Minutes
June 6, 2025
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), **Stephen Greene**, Taber Keally (NepRWA), Alfredo Vargas (Newton), **Christine Bennett** (Advisory Board). (Members in attendance in **bold**).

Guests: David Wu (liaison) (MWRA), Moussa Siri (WSCAC), Juliette Simson (OMSAP), Zhenyu Tian (Northeastern), Felina Silver (Brookline LWV), David Stoff (Save the Alewife), Hampton Watkins (Plymouth Wastewater Groundwater Discharge CAC), Richard Raiche (AB & Somerville), Jonathan Smith (Somerville), Chris Mancini (Save the Harbor/Bay)

Staff: Andreae Downs

VOTES: Minutes of March and April

WSCAC Update—Moussa Siri: In-person Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee meeting Tuesday 6/10 in the watershed to look at forestry, invasive species, and carbon sequestration. Also about commenting on the Drought Taskforce legislation. Still in drought on the Cape & Islands.

MWRA Update—David Wu: Retirement of David Coppes, COO end of June. Kathy Murtaugh, director of tunnel redundancy, hired in his stead.

Advisory Board: Christine Bennett: Completed comments on the MWRA budget; did a workshop on private inflow last month; have new videos on the AB website

DIRECTOR'S REPORT—Andreae Downs:

Stephen Greene retirement—has been a member of WAC since at least 1992, and chair for over 20 years.

Stephen: Been involved for a long time, but can't remember quite when it started. He was with Digital Equipment Corp when it was in Roxbury. Moved then to Polaroid. Both discharged to MWRA, but Polaroid one of the largest—over 1mgd just from Waltham plant. His boss pushed him to be involved with the Facilities Planning Advisory Committee (predecessor to WAC). WAC was an excellent way to bring together different views, discuss, and come to consensus. Never a silver bullet, but often reasonable. Many long-time members: Martin Pillsbury, Taber Keally. WAC has gone through several issues. First one was starting to operate the DI plant. His focus has been maintaining the infrastructure at reasonable cost to the ratepayers. Harbor Cleanup—in the 1990s the joke was that you could walk across Boston Harbor, it was so polluted. Concern about the new outfall. CSO project underway—and realization that stormwater was conveying most of the pollutants into the Charles. Early on, EPA's John DeVillars pulled industries together and told them they were why the Charles was so polluted and they should stop. They said, well, we aren't perfect, but we aren't dumping into the river. And sure enough they weren't—the issue was then, as now, stormwater carrying pollution into the river. And new pollutants are an issue. Remembered when molybdenum was making the pellets unsaleable in Massachusetts—the chemical was coming from large a/c units being flushed out in the fall. They weren't regulated. But now worry about pharmaceuticals, PFAS... It's been an interesting time. Thanked Martin for helping WAC find a meeting spot; Taber for helping hire Andreae.

Martin: to MWRA's credit, it kept citizens advisory committees after the initial facilities planning and watershed planning process were over. Stephen is an example of the value of volunteer time and insight. Always came in with a bigger view, despite coming from an industry perspective. Sad moment to see you step down, but well-deserved.

Kannan also thanked Stephen.

Andreae recalled Stephen's hiring her—mentioned that WAC notes are incomplete for the time after Susan Redlich (WAC's first ED) moved on, noted that Mary Adelstein had alerted her to the job opening, and how essential her LWV perspective and insistence on equipment lifespans being shorter than the bond lifespan which paid for them.

Leadership: Kannan Vembu will stay another year as chair, Dan Winograd as vice chair, as Andreae needed some continuity this year.

DISCUSSION—

Review of the Annual Report—and highlights for the year

Wipes bill, lobbying, comments opposing a measure in the Housing Bond Bill creating a redundant water oversight body, comments on the EPA's draft risk assessment for biosolids.

Membership changes—Jim and Stephen stepping down, Wendy Leo stepping down, Jonathan Smith, Felina Silver, Zhenyu Tian stepping up.

Focus for next year—

Deer Island draft permit revisions (unlikely next year), combined sewers and the new LCTP, biosolids, river pollution sources, renewable energy production, maintenance, AI, Federal cuts and claw backs and their impact on MWRA (recent incidents of hacking attempts); personnel turnover/retirements/burnout;

Support for the personnel item.

Does AI have a role in relieving personnel burnout/doing more? Caution on using AI as a way to privatize more of MWRA's functions.

Changes in federal regulations and their effect on MWRA

How do contracts/privatization really affect the budgets—is it really cheaper to bond?

Wastewater senior debt discussion?

Tour options—Chelsea Creek Headworks & new renovations—climate adaptations there & maintenance equipment in action

--tour at Deer Island and discussion of energy and renewable energy portfolios and performance in reducing emissions (solar, wind, digester gas, hydro) – more interest in at least a presentation of this

David Stoff: Is stormwater entering the MWRA sewer system being properly priced? Wet weather flow drives the capacity of Deer Island. Avoiding that cost would benefit all communities in the sewer district.

Stormwater rules starting to impact the amount of infiltration? Stormwater regulations for CS communities? Or the newest stormwater regulations that communities are adopting?

CZM new initiative on resilient coasts—working under the auspices of that with MWRA infrastructure?

Endocrine disruptors in the water? Detergents, soap, tritozone in breastmilk. In stormwater, contaminants – can green infrastructure remove them? Also why are flounder becoming more feminized?

Andreae invited members to send her any new ideas for meeting topics via email or phone.

Members thanked Andreae for her hard work this year, especially around organizing meetings.

Next tour is the annual Advisory Board tour in August.

Next meeting is THURSDAY Sept. 18 at 10 am