



**WESTFORD WATER DEPARTMENT
BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

DATE: January 7, 2026
TIME: 9:00 AM
PLACE: Westford Water Department
60 Forge Village Road

PRESENT:

Hugh C. Maguire, Chairperson
Titus A. Palmer, Vice-Chairperson
Chauncey Chu, Secretary
Tim Hall, Alternate
Mark Warren, Superintendent of Water Department
Gulshan Kumar, Business Manager
Marielys Velez, GIS Coordinator
Douglas Yargeau, Environmental Compliance Manager
Mike Edwards, Assistant Town Manager
Tom Mahanna, Tighe and Bond

Documents Reviewed:

-n/a

Maguire called the Open Session meeting to order at 9:03 AM. The Order of Business Conducted Was as Follows:

Open Forum

-n/a

219 Littleton Rd Water System Impact Study Discussion

The proposed project would demolish existing buildings and rebuild new structures. The plan includes rain gardens, a pool, and a private well for irrigation. A Water System Impact Study application has already been submitted. The applicant estimates average daily water use at approximately 28,000 gallons, with a maximum daily demand of about 57,000 gallons. Historical water use averaged approximately 17,000–20,000 gallons per day prior to covid, declined to about 3,000 gallons per day in 2021, and has recently increased to roughly 5,000–10,000 gallons per day.

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The Town of Westford Water Department expects its available capacity to be reduced by the state, though the amount and timing are still unknown. There are concerns about enforcing the anticipated two-day outdoor watering restrictions, sustained irrigation on allowed days, and potential impacts on system pressure. Multiple participants agreed that summer capacity, particularly in June and July, will likely be insufficient to meet the proposed demand.

Questions were raised about how the applicant calculated their water demand. The estimates are assumed to be based on per-fixture methodology, but the large variability and overall volume need clearer justification, especially given that a pool alone does not explain the difference between the estimated daily use and maximum daily use.

The group discussed technical, fiduciary, and political considerations, including the obligation to protect existing customers, particularly in Forge Village. Potential mitigation measures were discussed such as exploring gray water systems.

Additional information will be requested from the applicant, including the number of bedrooms, fixtures, and devices, site layout, detailed consumption methodology, and proposed mitigation techniques they would adopt.

Further modeling may be requested to simulate worse-case summer conditions, including reduced tank levels and well outages. A comparison of historic versus projected demand, along with modeled gray water reductions, was also requested.

Prospect Hill - Cell Antennae Request

Verizon resubmitted their request to install a cell antenna at Prospect Hill under a proposed lease of \$3,500 per month with a 3% annual escalator. In reviewing the proposal, Warren referenced the existing 2006 lease, which began at \$3,000 per month with a 3% annual escalator, which is set to terminate this year.

A motion was made by Palmer, seconded by Chu and approved unanimously (3-0-0) to reject the proposal made by Verizon. **3-0-0 Maguire: Yes, Palmer: Yes, Chu: Yes.**

87 Oak Hill Rd Abatement Request

A customer requested bill relief due to a leaking toilet that caused excessive water use. The customer has since repaired the issue but does not have a receipt. An abatement of \$335 was proposed.

A motion was made by Palmer, seconded by Hall, and approved (2-1-0), to approve the abatement, contingent upon Warren verifying the purchase. **2-1-0 Maguire: Yes, Palmer: Yes, Chu: No**

MIT Water Connection

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Warren stated that MIT wants five separate meters installed at the five buildings on-site. Warren noted that MIT estimates that only 1500 gallons of water per day will be used.

Warren proposed to the Water Commissioners that the Water Department could offer to charge MIT, a System Development Charge (SDC) of 12k for five 5/8-inch meters rather than a 40k SDC for a 4-inch meter. Maguire stated that he would be in favor of that proposal.

PFAS Update

The Board discussed PFAS funding sources, including an SRF loan and MDL settlement awards.

Mark proposed requesting Selectboard approval to allocate a limited portion of the settlement funds to private well owners, with the majority retained by the Water Department noting that the awards will not cover the Westford Water Department's full PFAS-related costs. Partial homeowner cost-sharing was discussed to extend assistance to more residents.

Chauncey agreed with this approach. Allocation scenarios were discussed, with 90/10 or 95/5 splits viewed as defensible, while a 75/25 split was considered difficult to justify.

Recycling Containers – 63 Forge Village Rd

Edwards briefed the Board on the Town's transition to a Pay-As-You-Throw program, driven by the need to address the unsustainable costs of the current solid waste model. The Recycling Board's primary goal is to increase recycling participation through expanded programs and events, though staffing constraints remain a challenge.

Mike proposed 63 Forge Village Road as a potential location for a textile recycling bin and a pilot food waste drop-off bin, noting that other sites (DPW and Beacon Street) present operational or access challenges. The food waste pilot would be limited in scale (approximately 20–35 households using a 65-gallon container) and closely monitored, with the program discontinued if overflow or operational issues occur.

Board members discussed operational, security, and public health concerns, including pickup frequency, illegal dumping, wildlife, odors, and impacts to Water Department operations. Edwards will be renegotiating and enforcing stricter vendor contracts, ensuring timely pickups, coordinating with Police on enforcement (including fines), and providing the ability to terminate the program if it becomes unmanageable.

Edwards and Warren proposed to the Board of Water Commissioners to move forward with additional research and to return with a formal proposal. The proposal will include a detailed plan, site review, and feedback from other municipalities with similar programs. If approved, the bins would be installed by July 1.

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A motion was made by Chu, Seconded by Palmer and approved unanimously **(3-0-0)**, to move forward with additional research and a future proposal. **3-0-0 Maguire: Yes Palmer: Yes, Chu: Yes**

Old/New Business

Water Department Draft Budget FY2027

Chu asked Warren and Kumar several questions relating to the Water Department budget for FY2027. Some of the topics discussed were salary allocations for the Business Manager and DPW Director, Comp Reserve, Direct Costs, Electricity, Engineering, and the Emergency Reserve.

Review and Approve Outstanding Minutes

It was moved by Hall, seconded by Maguire, and approved unanimously **(2-0-0)** to approve the minutes of November 25, 2025, Open Session Meeting. **2-0-0 Maguire: Yes, Hall: Yes**

Schedule Next Meeting

The next Board of Water Commissioners Meetings was scheduled for Wednesday, January 28, 2026, at 9:00 AM.

Meeting Adjourn

It was moved by Chu, seconded by Hall, and approved unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 12:23 PM. **3-0-0 Maguire: Yes Chu: Yes, Hall: Yes**

Approved by _____

The Board of Water Commissioners

Date Approved _____