

Board of Water Commissioners

January 28, 2026

Present:

- Board of Water Commissioners: Mr. Bill Ramsey Chair, Ms. Liz Klein, and Ms. Julie Strehle
- Mr. Tom Mayo, Town Administrator
- Mr. Art Robert, Assistant Town Administrator for Operations
- Mr. Russell Tierney, Weir River Water System Superintendent

6:00 PM: Call to order

Mr. Ramsey called the meeting to order and read the following statement:

“This meeting is being held in person and/or remotely as an alternate means of public access pursuant to an Order issued by the Governor of Massachusetts dated March 12, 2025 Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify the chair at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the chair may inform all other participants of said recording. “

No one indicated that they were recording.

Carol Tully, Chair of the Advisory Committee called the Advisory Committee to order adopting the language previously read by the chair.

Dave Anderson, chair of the WRWS Citizen Advisory Board also called CAB to order adopting the language previously read by the chair.

Joint meeting with the Advisory Committee: Water System Presentation regarding the proposed FY27 Rate Increase

Mr. Tierney explained that the meeting was held in accordance with regulations requiring public notice when water rates are proposed to increase. It was noted that in 2019, Hingham voters approved the purchase of the water system at Town Meeting with a 79.4% vote. The Town finalized the transaction the following year, secured financing, and assumed daily operations on August 1, 2020.

Mr. Tierney added that the water system operates as an enterprise fund, meaning revenues from customer and related fees support operating costs, debt service, and infrastructure maintenance. This structure separates the system’s finances from the Town’s general tax revenues and municipal debt, ensuring funds are reinvested in the water system.

Mr. Tierney continued with information about WRWS including initiatives, goals, budget and future improvements.

Mr. Tierney noted that in July 2021 (FY22), the WRWS implemented a 10% rate increase, consistent with projections made at the time of the system’s acquisition. He explained that operational and maintenance costs have risen significantly since then, including chemicals, water meters, meter radios, brass materials, pipe and duct fittings, and well testing and rehabilitation. Despite these increases, the proposed rate adjustment remains within the anticipated range of approximately 10% every three years, reflecting the system’s continued efficient and responsible management.

Mr. Tierney outlined the proposed July 1, 2026 changes: a 3% rate increase and a \$65 annual capital debt service assessment for single-family residents to fund the Turkey Hill tank and booster station. Multi-residential, commercial, industrial, and municipal customers will contribute at higher rates. With

the CDSA, the average water bill is expected to rise about 8%. The \$65 charge will last only 30 years, until the bond is paid off.

Dave Anderson, 31 Old Colony Rd, Citizens Advisory Board, added that the Citizens Advisory Board reviewed the proposed rates and recommended them to the Board of Water Commissioners. He explained that rising operating costs and important capital needs, including the Turkey Hill tank, booster station, and rehab work, support the proposal. The increases align with projections made at the time of the water system acquisition.

There were some questions regarding the WRWS and rates posed by the Advisory Committee.

John Struzziery, WRWS Citizens Advisory Board, asked a question regarding lead and galvanized services and the Strawberry Hill Water Tank.

David Irwin, 3 Town Way Hull, noted Hull previously studied desalination but discontinued it due to cost; he suggested Hingham Water revisit it as a potential option despite power and permitting challenges, and noted MWRA connection costs are also high.

Jerry Taverna, 6 7th Street Hull, noted ongoing infrastructure issues but expressed appreciation for staff responsiveness and increased confidence following the presentation, while noting resident concerns about the Strawberry Hill project.

Liza O'Reilly, 44 Floret Circle, praised monthly billing for faster leak detection and asked about separate meters and moisture-sensitive controls for irrigation systems.

Anne Murray, 1 Summit Ave Hull, expressed concern over Hull residents' lack of direct representation on the water board and asked what percentage of recent water main breaks occur in Hull versus other communities, and how repair funding is distributed.

Public Comment

No members of the public came forward.

Ms. Klein made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Strehle seconded. All were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:06 PM

Documents:

1. Rate Increase Presentation