



Established

1996

SPRINGFIELD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION

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Minutes of Meeting

March 26, 2026

The Springfield Water and Sewer Commission held a public meeting on March 26, 2026, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025.

Chairwoman Otero called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM and announced the Commissioners that are participating. Secretary for the Commission Jaimye Bartak called the attendance roll:

Daniel Rodriguez, Present
Vanessa Otero, Present
Matthew Donnellan, Present

Also Present

Norm Guz, Commission Counsel
Joshua Schimmel, Executive Director
Domenic Pellegrino, Director of Finance
Theo Theocles, Director of Legal Services
Christopher Gaugherty, Comptroller
Darleen Buttrick, Director of Engineering
Steve Frederick, Director of Wastewater Operations
Jennifer Boulais, Director of Human Resources
Ryan Wingerter, Director of Field Services
Darleen Buttrick, Director of Engineering
Rick Gomez, Director of IT
Christina Jones, Director of Water Operations
Jaimye Bartak, Communications Manager/Secretary for the Commission

Participating Remotely

Nicole Sanford, Water Resources Manager
Raemarie Walker, Deputy Director of Finance
Nicole Boland, Billing and Collections Manager
Frank Zabaneh, Senior Engineer
Katie Shea, Educational Outreach Manager

Business Matters

1. Approve the minutes of the meeting held on February 19, 2026, without reading, because copies were furnished to each member of the Commission for their review.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER OTERO AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to approve as amended in item 7.

2. Approve the minutes of the executive sessions held on February 19, 2026, without reading, because copies were furnished to each member of the Commission for their review.

**UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN AND SECONDED BY
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to approve the minutes of the executive sessions held on February 19, 2026 as presented.

New Business

3. Financial Update: Report by Comptroller.

Comptroller Christopher Geraghty reported on February financials. There was an ending cash balance of \$143.4 million, which represents a \$2.4 million positive cash flow balance.

There was a projected negative revenue variance of \$3.5 million in FY26. This is due to a decrease in water/sewer usage from the original estimate.

The operating budget was projected to be 97% expended by year-end. There is \$3.5 million in excess appropriation that will help offset the revenue shortfall. This is a conservative approach that is being monitored.

The capital budget has been expended in the amount of \$72.8 million, with water supply/transmission accounting for \$52.5 million (72%) due to the new treatment plant. There is \$112.5 million in capital spending planned for this year.

There was \$143.4 million in cash at the end of February, of which \$25.6 million (18%) was unrestricted. There was \$118 million in restricted cash.

There was a receivables balance of \$9.6 million, of which \$2.7 million was over 60 days old.

There was \$1.1 billion in assets, and \$780 million in liabilities, which includes outstanding debt, pension, and OPEB liability. Based on the fiscal year's performance over the past eight months, it appears feasible to make the originally budgeted but delayed \$500,000 transfer into the OPEB Trust, in keeping with the Commission's financial policies.

Commissioner Otero asked if the deficit included the OPEB transfer. Mr. Geraghty responded that it did.

4. Consideration of Utility Billing Credit Summary and Summary of Accounts Receivable February 2026: Report by Director of Finance.

Mr. Pellegrino reported net billings of \$8.9 million, payments of \$7.9 million, for an accounts receivable balance of \$8.4 million.

There were 7,097 accounts with balances over 60 days old totaling \$2.7 million. There were 255 active payment plans, 158 defaulted payment plans, and 269 invalid payment plans (offered but never signed).

Shutoffs will begin next week.

There were 116 credits issued for a total of \$22,730.86.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to approve credits in the amount of \$22,730.86.

5. Consideration of CIP Amendment 2026-14: Report by Director of Finance.

Mr. Pellegrino reported on a CIP amendment that transfers funding from the St. James and Sumner Ave. project into a water main repair project at Westford Ave. and Gunn Square.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to approve CIP Amendment 2026-14.

6. Consideration to Accept EPA CDS Grant of \$4,642,000 for New Water Treatment Plant: Report by Director of Finance.

Mr. Pellegrino reported that a federal earmark applied for through Senators Markey and Warren in 2023 was authorized by Congress in 2024 for \$4,642,000, with a \$1.1 million match. The grant was announced at the new West Parish Filters groundbreaking. Administrative procedures with EPA have been completed and now an appropriation must be made to receive the funding.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to accept \$4,642,000 in FY24 Congressionally Directed Spending.

7. Consideration of IFB #26-34 Westford Ave & Gunn Sq Water Main Replacement: Report by Director of Engineering.

Director of Engineering Darleen Buttrick reported that on March 12th, the Commission received bids for the Westford Avenue and Gunn Square South Water Main Replacement project. The project includes approximately 2,500 linear feet of 8-inch and 6-inch ductile iron watermain replacement on Westford Avenue and Gunn Square South, including connections to side streets and service connections.

Seven bids were received ranging from \$1,313,450 to \$2,978,997.96. The engineer's estimate was \$1,810,000, not including contingency.

The Commission's consulting engineer determined that the low bidder's bid was not a responsible and eligible bid as the bidder did not demonstrate sufficient experience necessary to perform the work. The second lowest bid of \$1,526,115 was then reviewed, and it was determined that Baltazar Contractors, Inc. is the lowest responsible and responsive bidder.

Construction will begin in the spring, with substantial completion this year and completion of restoration work by the spring of 2027.

Commissioners Otero and Rodriguez requested to ensure that the 16 Acres neighborhood is informed and the street is well-repaired.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to authorize the execution of Contract No. 20260074 with Baltazar Contractors, Inc., pending receipt of acceptable bonds and insurance.

8. Consideration of Change Order 1 under SWSC Contract No. 20260014: Report by Director of Engineering.

Ms. Buttrick reported on Change Order No. 1 to Baltazar Contractors Inc. Contract No. 20260014 for the FY25 Sewer Infrastructure Improvements project.

The change order includes additions and deletions to the contract as a result of balancing contract quantities, as well as the work of several PCOs, including work to replace a segment of burst 18-inch sewer main, the replacement of deteriorated sewer main within Boston Road upstream of Springfield Crossing, and the reconstruction of a manhole at the intersection of Laurence St and Carew St. The change order value is \$609,007.82, which will result in a change in contract price from \$2,494,196.00 to \$3,103,203.82. The change order also includes a time extension of 138 calendar days, resulting in a new contract completion date of July 17, 2026.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to authorize the Executive Director to execute Change Order No. 1 to Contract 20260014 with Baltazar Contractors, Inc.

9. Consideration of Kleinfelder Task Order 70 – Roosevelt Ave and Burt Rd Siphons Improvements: Report by Director of Engineering.

Ms. Buttrick reported on Task order No. 70 with Kleinfelder Northeast, Inc. for design and bidding phase services for the Roosevelt Avenue and Burth Road Siphons Improvements.

The activities in this task order include preliminary design services including site survey, geotechnical borings, wetland flagging, flow monitoring and hydraulic modeling, feasibility evaluation of rehabilitation and rerouting alternatives; preparation of a basis of design report; development of 60, 90 and 100% design documents, permitting services, and bidding phase services.

The task order value is \$430,323.00. Bidding documents are expected by November 2026, with bidding anticipated in early 2027.

**UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN AND SECONDED BY
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to authorize the Executive Director to execute Task Order No. 70 with Kleinfelder.

10. Consideration of Consulting Contract with Jim Laurila: Report by Director of Legal Affairs.

Director of Legal Affairs Theo Theocles reported on a consultant agreement with former Director of Water Operations Jim Laurila to assist in water and water operations concerns. The one-year contract is not to exceed \$50,000.

**UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN AND SECONDED BY
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to approve the consulting contract with Jim Laurila.

11. Consideration of Retention Agreement with Trif & Modugno: Report by Director of Legal Affairs.

Atty. Theocles reported on a contract for Trif & Modugno to assist on construction litigation matters, which is not to exceed \$75,000.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to approve the Retention Agreement with Trif & Modugno.

12. Consideration of Commission participation in the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association Health Benefits Trust (MIIA): Report by the Executive Director.

Executive Director Josh Schimmel reported that the Commission explored new employee insurance programs due to last year's mid-year rate increase. A team of staff engaged with a broker and other public agency organizations to identify potential options. Any change to health insurance would require disengaging from Hampshire Group Insurance Trust (HGGIC) and bargaining with the unions.

Director of Human Resources Jen Boulais reported that the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) is an association that combines the buying power of municipalities in the state. MIIA exclusively provides Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS), just as with HCGIC. The union prefers BCBS and wants stability in health insurance. MIIA provided financial assurances that gave staff more confidence in its long-term viability. MIIA plans always increase by 2% to prevent large catch-up rate increases, and MIIA is vetted by external auditors. MIIA is also larger. MIIA provided the Commission with an offer. Ms. Boulais noted that the unions have been good partners throughout the process.

Commissioner Otero asked about the timing and percent increase over the present rates. Atty. Norm Guz responded that the Commission must give HCGIC a 90-day notice. Mr. Geraghty responded the increase is 13.5%.

Mr. Schimmel continued that acceptance in MIIA is not automatic. HCGIT requires a runoff reserve of \$450,000 to cover claims that come in the months following departure. If claims exceed that amount, there is a risk that another budget would have to cover their cost. MIIA does not have a runoff policy, though runoffs are not unusual.

Commissioner Donnellan asked how rates would compare. Ms. Boulais responded that HCGIC had to make some plan changes and rates would increase by 12.48%. MIIA has adopted similar plan changes and its rates will increase 13.5%. There was no option to keep the current plan with either organization, but the new plans at both organizations are extremely similar.

Commissioner Donnellan asked if \$450,000 was adequate. Mr. Geraghty responded that the runoff period is 18 months, but most claims come in within a few months.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

COMMISSIONER OTERO:

to authorize and empower the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission (Commission) to participate in the MIIA Health Benefits Trust; approving, and authorizing and directing the execution and delivery of, the MIIA Health Benefits Trust Agreement dated as of January 1, 2020 by and among the Trust and those governmental units participating in the Trust; authorizing and directing the Commission to take any and all action necessary or appropriate to effect the participation of the Commission in the Trust; making certain findings in connection with the participation of the Commission in the Trust; and generally relating to the participation of the Commission in the MIIA Health Benefits Trust.

1. Political subdivisions of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (collectively, "Governmental Units"), including the Commission, are authorized by M.G.L. c. 32B (the "Statute"), to pool together for the purpose of purchasing health insurance or self-insuring health risks.
2. Pursuant to the authority granted in the Statute, certain Governmental Units, including the Commission, have determined that it is necessary and desirable to pool together for the purpose of providing health benefits to their employees and their dependents, all for the public purpose of controlling the cost of providing health benefits to employees and their dependents.
3. The Commission has determined that it is in their best interest to participate in the MIIA Health Benefits Trust (the "Trust") and to adopt this resolution.

Now, therefore be it resolved by the governing body of the Commission:

SECTION 1. The participation of the Commission in the MIIA Health Benefits Trust is hereby approved.

SECTION 2. The Trust Agreement, in substantially the form attached hereto as Exhibit A, is hereby approved and Commission is hereby authorized and directed to execute and deliver to the Trust the Trust Agreement in substantially the form attached hereto as Exhibit A with such changes as Commission may

approve, such approval to be evidenced conclusively by the execution and delivery of the Trust Agreement.

SECTION 3. The Executive Director, Director of Human Resources, Director of Finance, or Comptroller of the Commission are hereby authorized and directed to take any and all action necessary or appropriate to affect the participation of the Commission in the Trust and to execute and deliver all documents, instruments, certificates, and opinions necessary or appropriate in connection therewith.

SECTION 4. The Recitals to this resolution are hereby declared to be, and shall at all times and for all purposes be deemed to be, the findings of the Commission in connection with its decision to participate in the Trust, to make premium payments, provided for in the Trust Agreement, and execute and deliver the Trust Agreement.

SECTION 5. This resolution shall become effective immediately upon its adoption.

13. Consideration of Memorandum of Agreement with SACE and SWSC Regarding MIIA: Report by the Executive Director.

Ms. Boulais reported that health insurance changes are subject to bargaining. The unions were great partners. The law allows municipalities to engage in an expedited process in cases where 20% savings would be realized, but this was not necessary.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER OTERO AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to approve the MOA with SACE and SWSC regarding MIIA.

14. Consideration of Notice of Termination of Participation in Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust: Report by the Executive Director.

Atty. Guz reported that the Commission is required to give HCGIC 90-day notice that it is terminating its agreement with them as of June 30, 2026.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER OTERO AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:

to approve termination of participation in
Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust.

15. Consideration of Acceptance of DEP Wastewater Gap Energy Grant for \$348,000: Report by the Executive Director.

Mr. Schimmel reported on a grant of \$348,000 that was awarded by the state for alternative energy projects, but the contract from the state is not currently in hand.

No action was taken, and the Commission will re-consider when the contract is received.

16. Water and Sewer Updates: Report by the Executive Director.

Mr. Schimmel reported on the PCB issue at the new West Parish Water Treatment Plant construction site. A beneficial use determination for filters 7-10 and the regulator house is under regulatory review, which is important to move forward with demolition. The contaminated areas can be separated from the active construction zones. Details on the sampling plan with DEP and EPA are currently under development. The costs of the mitigation alternatives are also being analyzed, and are dependent on the final sampling plans and results. Mr. Schimmel said there could be thousands of samples, and that it was important to strike a balance between the right amount of sampling while also keeping the construction schedule moving.

Mr. Schimmel reported there would be a meeting with the City Council Subcommittee on Sustainability and the Environment in the next few weeks.

Mr. Schimmel reported on the proposed budget schedule. The public hearing would be Wednesday, June 17 at 6 PM, followed by a Board vote on Wednesday, June 24 at 9 AM. The draft FY27 budget would be presented at the April 23 Board meeting. The Board meeting in May will be held on May 20 at 9 AM.

Ms. Boulais reported that work on health insurance was currently top priority.

Educational Outreach Manager Katie Shea reported that Pipeline Program applications would close on April 2 and on scholarship awards. Commissioner Otero asked the outcome of the scholarships. Ms. Shea reported that the Commission has hired approximately four scholarship recipients.

Mr. Pellegrino reported on activities related to budget preparation, and with an underwriter for the next bond for Unit 3 of the Cobble Mountain Hydroelectric Station in the fall.

Mr. Geraghty reported on working with Mr. Anthony Basile on knowledge transfer and the FY27 budget.

Director of Wastewater Operations Steve Frederick reported on completion of the final component of the electrical system upgrade ICI and closing out the project. The grit project is continuing. Flows are not as high through the plant this year due to snowfall with lower water content. The Commission is participating in a pilot project on PFAS destruction with DEP. Biosolids are running lower than the five-year average, which is good for processing, but there is a fuel surcharge coming. The biosolids budget is still stable.

Ms. Buttrick reported that the installation of the 60" and 72" raw water transmission mains and cutting cutting/capping utilities in preparation for demolition the slow sand filters were ongoing at West Parish. Final electrical, instrumentation, and final pipeline repairs because of the closeout inspection of the 42" pipeline, as well as startup preparation, were also ongoing. Electrical work and excavation of the building

foundation for the new water quality monitoring station at Provin Mountain was starting. The Birnie Ave/Riverside Road project was on schedule for completion in June, with testing and startup of the pipeline repairs. Sewer repairs at St. Michaels Cemetery/North Branch Sewer were complete with spring restoration and closeout documentation remaining. At Cobble Mountain Hydroelectric Station, the valves, crane, and penstock lining work went out to bid; the contractor pre-qualification process started for the turbine work; electrical repairs were at 60% design; and the generator was at 90% design. Contractors have been remobilized at the X to finish water main replacements through July. FY26 water improvements are starting, and FY26 sewer improvements are going to bid in April.

Director of Information Technology Rick Gomez reported on increased cybersecurity vigilance due to the conflict in Iran. The Commission is adopting the latest security patches and updates as they are released and following guidance from CISA and Water ISAC.

Director of Water Operations Christina Jones reported that water quality and treatment were steady. Cobble Mountain was 98.9% full, and might spill soon which could lead to higher turbidity, but that will be alleviated with the reactivation of the 42" and the new turbine in the coming years. Staff were helping with tours for STCC's Basic Treatment course, as well as with Smith College students on a culvert design project.

Mr. Theocles reported on supporting procurement for capital work; an upcoming meeting for Commission-approved contractors; and supporting customer service with shutoffs, housing court, and payment plans.

Director of Field Services Ryan Wingerter reported that there were 56 main breaks during the winter season, which is the most in eight years. Staff are currently working on repairing manholes damaged by plows, and a water main replacement project in Ludlow.

17. Consideration and/or action on any other matters that may come before the Commission at this meeting.

None considered.

Executive Session

AT 10:22 AM, UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to enter into executive session to discuss a potential land acquisition on Gibbs Road in Blandford. It was determined that discussion of such matters would have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Commission and that the Commission would not come back into public session.

18. Consideration of Purchase of Conservation Restriction in Blandford and DWSP Grant
Application: Report by Water Supply Manager.

Considered in executive session.

Submitted By:



Jaimye Bartak, Secretary

Exhibits

February Financial Report FY26

2026 February Finance Director Report

Amendment 2026-14 (Trans from 12B-2022 & 12B-2025 to 12B-2027)

EPA Award CG 00A01923-0

SWSC Bid No. 26-34

SWSC Contract No. 20260014 - Change Order No.1

R-21-01-Kleinfelder-TO70

Executed Contracts Under Threshold Monthly Report 02-13-2026 – 03-19-2026

Cobble Mountain Reservoir levels

Proposed Conservation Restriction Memo

Figure - CR Acquisition Hull Parcel 2

Appraisal Hull Forestlands, Gibbs Road

Subdivision appraisal, Hull Forestlands, Gibbs Road