



Established
1996

SPRINGFIELD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION

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Minutes of Meeting

April 23, 2026

The Springfield Water and Sewer Commission held a public meeting on April 23, 2026, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025.

Chairwoman Otero called the meeting to order at 2:03 PM 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
Anthony Wilson, Incoming Commission Counsel
Joshua Schimmel, Executive Director
Domenic Pellegrino, Director of Finance
Theo Theocles, Director of Legal Services
Christopher Geraghty, 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
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 March 20, 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 the minutes of the meeting held on March 20, 2026 as presented.

2. Approve the minutes of the meeting held on March 26, 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 meeting held on March 26, 2026 as presented.

3. Approve the minutes of the executive session held on March 26, 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 session held on March 26, 2026 as presented.

New Business

4. Financial Update: Report by Comptroller.

Comptroller Christopher Geraghty reported on March financials. There was an ending cash balance of \$142 million, which represents a \$1 million positive year-to-date cash flow balance.

There is a projected negative revenue variance of \$2.9 million in FY26. This is due to a decrease in water/sewer usage from the original estimate. This has improved by approximately \$600,000 since February. Revenue from power generation has added some positive cash flow in the past month.

The operating budget was projected to be 97% expended by year-end. There is \$3 million positive balance of appropriated operational funds 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 \$79.7 million, with water supply/transmission accounting for \$57.3 million (72%) due to the new treatment plant project. There is \$119.4 million in capital spending planned for this year.

There was \$142 million in cash at the end of March, of which \$24.2 million (17%) was unrestricted. There was \$118 (83%) million in restricted cash.

There was a receivables balance of \$7.7 million, of which \$2.6 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. The total assets in the OPEB Trust Fund as of March is \$10.9 million.

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

Director of Finance Domenic Pellegrino reported net billings of \$9 million, payments of \$10.6 million, for an accounts receivable balance of \$6.7 million.

There were 6,642 accounts with balances over 60 days old totaling \$2.6 million. There were 242 active payment plans, 210 defaulted payment plans, and 303 invalid payment plans (offered but never signed).

There were 124 credits issued for a total of \$26,308.40.

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 \$26,308.40.

6. Consideration of CIP Amendment 2026-15: Report by Director of Finance.

Mr. Pellegrino reported on a CIP amendment that closes the process of accepting the \$4.6 million grant from EPA for the new water treatment plant project.

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

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to approve CIP Amendment 2026-15.

7. Consideration of CIP Amendment 2026-16: Report by Director of Finance.

Mr. Pellegrino reported on a CIP amendment that closes out the SCADA data center rebuild project. The remaining funds will be transferred to the CIP reserve account.

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

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to approve CIP Amendment 2026-16.

8. Consideration of Acceptance of Mass Gen. Laws Chapter 32 B in accordance with MIIA Health Benefits Trust Agreement: Report by Commission Counsel.

Commission Counsel Norm Guz reported that the MIIA health insurance plan is effective July 1. Acceptance of Chapter 32B is necessary to meet section 10 of MIIA's agreement.

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

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to approve acceptance of Chapter 32B except sections seven A, eight A, nine A, nine C, nine D, nine E, nine F, eleven A, eleven B, eleven D, eleven E, eleven F and sixteen to provide a plan of contributory group life insurance, group accidental death and dismemberment insurance, and group general or blanket hospital, surgical, medical, dental and other health insurance for certain persons in the service of the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission.

9. Update on new West Parish Water Treatment Plant: Report by the Executive Director.

Executive Director Josh Schimmel reported on progress of the new West Parish Water Treatment Plant project. Updates from last month include that the sampling plan for one of the four off-campus fill sites has been approved; there has been concurrence on the corridor sampling on-site to determine clean and contaminated areas; there has been approval of the draft beneficial use determination plan, which determines what can be done with clean materials; there has been a concurrence on the demolition and disposal of regulator houses; and Walsh had been released to start demolition on slow sand filters 7-10. Widespread sampling will also start soon.

Commissioner Rodriguez noted that it is premature to know what the financial cost of PCB remediation will be. Mr. Schimmel agreed, and added that approximately 1,000 samples will be taken at multiple depths across campus to determine how much material is contaminated and at what level. The process will be complex, but is important in order to maintain a wide range of options for ultimate disposal/remediation plans so that the most cost-effective and schedule-sensitive solution can be determined.

10. Water and Sewer Updates: Report by Executive Director.

Director of Engineering Darleen Buttrick requested authorization for the Executive Director to sign a change order and authorize additional contingency for the rehabilitation of beams, columns, and concrete at the Colton Street Operations Center. Additional columns in poor condition were found. The change order is for up to \$133,740, which includes current PCOs received yesterday to date.

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 sign the change order as presented.

Director of Legal Affairs Theo Theocles reported on a contract with Joe Wagner Strategies to provide strategic legislative communications and priorities. The contract is for 12 months and not to exceed \$60,000.

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

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to approve the contract with Joe Wagner Strategies as presented.

Mr. Schimmel reported that the Commission is addressing concerns about truck traffic near West Parish Filters. Staff are meeting with Westfield staff and creating signage to address the increased trucking activity due to construction.

Educational Outreach Manager Katie Shea reported that there were 100 applications and 50 interviews conducted for the Pipeline Program.

Director of Human Resources Jen Boulais reported that the MIIA transition is going smoothly, and not many concerns have arisen from employees.

Mr. Pellegrino reported that that work continues on the FY27 budget, and customer service representatives are actively working with customers on payment plans.

Mr. Geraghty reported that work was starting on the FY26 closeout and the internal audit process.

Ms. Buttrick reported that Walsh was preparing for the demolition of slow sand filters 7-10. The water quality monitoring station project at Provin was ongoing. Several items are out to bid for the CMHS project. Restoration at Birnie Avenue and FY25 sewer improvement projects were ongoing. Water main replacement is taking place at the X and Westford Avenue.

Director of Water Operations Christina Jones reported that water quality and treatment remain steady. Cobble Mountain Reservoir is almost full. The water quality buoy is back in the reservoir for the season.

Director of Legal Affairs Theo Theocles reported that work is progressing on the closeout of the York Street Pump Station project.

Director of Wastewater Operations Steve Frederick reported that operations at the plant are running smoothly. Fuel surcharges are starting to impact biosolids transport costs. A PFAS-destruction pilot program with MassDEP just finished, which may support utilities across the state. The grit project is moving along.

Director of Field Services Ryan Wingerter reported that water main replacement work in Ludlow is ongoing, and his crews are assisting with Engineering's capital project work.

11. Presentation of Draft FY27 Budget, Draft FY27 Capital Improvement Plan, and Draft 3-year Capital Improvement Plan FY27-29: Report by the Executive Director.

Mr. Schimmel provided a presentation on the proposed FY27 budget. New challenges this year include health insurance and reduced industrial consumption. Any costs associated with PCB remediation will not impact the FY27 budget.

Mr. Geraghty reported that the O&M budget is proposed to increase 7.7%, with fringe benefits and debt service as large drivers. Other categories saw minimal increases or decreases. There was also an 11% increase in biosolids disposal costs, in part due to fuel surcharges.

Commissioner Otero asked what was moving the biosolids costs. Mr. Schimmel responded it was recently re-bid as the previous contract was expiring, and that aside from hauling/fuel costs increasing, the number of disposal locations is shrinking due to regulatory concerns with "forever chemicals" (PFAS), further driving up costs.

Mr. Pellegrino reported on \$15.8 million in capital work to be appropriated in the coming year.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked why that amount was so low. Mr. Pellegrino responded that large projects have already been appropriated in previous years, so this amount does not reflect those appropriations.

Mr. Schimmel reported that \$1.4 million in budget reductions were made during the budgeting process, after reviewing 1,100 line items. Mr. Geraghty added that 76% of the budget stayed within \$20,000 of the original request despite escalating prices.

Mr. Pellegrino noted that out of 48,000 meters, approximately 25,000 of them are smart meters, which means customers are managing their water consumption better. The Infrastructure Renewal Charge (IRC) has brought more stability to revenues as consumption declines.

Mr. Pellegrino continued that the IRC is lower than last year's projections due to more SRF loan forgiveness than expected. The Commission has received close to \$50 million in debt forgiveness from the SRF so far. Less borrowing translates into less reserve requirement, which lowers the revenue forecast.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked when the Commission could count on regular production from the CMHS. Ms. Buttrick replied that production will be impacted as the project construction begins.

Mr. Schimmel reviewed the potential budget scenarios, including no rate increase, 5% rate increases, and 7.5% combined rate increase. The first two scenarios put the debt coverage ratio in jeopardy, and also produced issues with the operating fund and total fund position .

Commissioner Rodriguez noted that the Commission plans very far out into the future, and that the current infrastructure renewal could not be built without rate increases.

Mr. Schimmel continued that for the average household, the increase will equate to approximately \$10.94 per month, or \$131.28 more in costs per year. Avoiding rate spikes and providing rate stability is imperative. The Commission also has several customer assistance programs to assist households with the increases.

**AT 3:18 PM, UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN AND
SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to adjourn.

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

None considered.

Submitted By:



Jaimye Bartak, Secretary

Exhibits

March Financial Report FY26

2026 March Finance Director Report

Amendment 2026-15

Amendment 2026-16

Executed Contracts Under Threshold Monthly Report

Cobble Mountain Reservoir levels

Letter from MassDEP Concerning Drinking Water Awards Day