

Joint Hingham Advisory Committee and Weir River Water System Board of Water Commissioners Public Hearing

Wednesday, January 28, 2026, at 6:00 PM

Town Hall, 210 Central Street, Second Floor, Central Meeting Room

In Attendance for the Advisory Committee: Carol Tully, Chair, Kevin Freytag, Vice Chair, Ted Ciolkosz, Secretary, Brenda Black, Ben Burnham, Tina Sherwood, John Germain, Jerry Seelen, Steve Pohl, Brian Stack, David Leiphart, Elaine Cusker, Michael Herde, Mary Power, Alan Macdonald

1. Board of the Water Commissioners Chair, William Ramsey, called the meeting to order and read the following statement, which was also adopted by the Advisory Committee Chair, Carol Tully. This meeting is being held remotely/or in person as an alternate means of public access pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025 and all other applicable laws temporarily amending 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. Mr. David Anderson, Chair of the Weir River Water System Citizens Advisory Board (<https://weirriverwater.com/913/Weir-River-Water-System-Citizen-Advisory>) then also adopted the previously read language and convened his committee.
2. Joint public hearing of the Board of Water Commissioners and Hingham Advisory Committee relating to the proposed 2027 rate increase by the Weir River Water System. This meeting is available for viewing at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8IHEKcWUCc>
3. Weir River Water System Letter to customers is available at <https://www.hingham-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/27275/WRWS-Rate-Increase-Letter-2026>
4. The meeting began with the Weir River Water System Managing Director and Superintendent Russell Tierney making a detailed presentation which may be found at: <https://www.hingham-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/27274/WRWS-Rate-Increase-Presentation-January-2026>

Superintendent Russ Tierney began by reviewing the Town's purchase of the water company in 2019 with the full takeover of daily operations on 08/01/2020, noting it's a self-supporting entity, including debt, in charge of water treatment, distribution, maintenance, billing, customer service, capital improvements and water conservation efforts with recent annual revenue at about \$14,260,000 and \$14,200,253 in total expenses.

Also provided updates about the 2.7mm received from a PFAS class action settlement to be used toward further Weir River Water System PFAS water treatment upgrades with a target completion date in the year 2031. Additionally, the water company recently received grants; One in the amount of 750k for a lead service line inventory and another 250k from the Commonwealth's Bureau of Geographic Information (GIS) to be spent toward asset identification and management.

Key initiatives are a focus on water quality by continuously reviewing and improving preventative maintenance programs, annual water main replacement projects and water treatment plant upgrades, update and improve GPS Coordinates and GIS Mapping by June of 2026, finalize a new meter reading system in March of 2026 with a focus on accuracy and conservation, have utilization of GIS System for asset management available by January 2027, revise capital study report by December of 2027 and in Spring of 2028 have a new water storage tank and booster station complete in Hull, MA.

Financial stability, water quality, the water distribution system and maintenance/repairs, annual flushing of the system and treatment plant were addressed prior to a continued presentation regarding future plans and capital improvements.

More specifically, the need for a new water storage tank within the WRWS distribution system was priority number one in the Master Plan developed October of 2022. In conjunction a full hydraulic analysis and report was submitted in January 2024 supporting the argument a new tank would provide significant benefits to the water system. As review of the updated hydraulic model continued it became clear in order to install a tank on Strawberry Hill and have it function properly a booster pump station would also be needed to ensure the system realizes all the benefits of the tank and creating a new pressure zone. A potential side benefit would be a reduction in needed chlorine levels at the plant and improvement to taste, odor and discoloration. Other projects such as Hingham Route 3A Rotary / Summer Street, Manomet Ave / Samoset Ave. in Hull, new intake at Accord Pond, etc. were also reviewed.

Russ Tierny then concluded the presentation, stating that to continue with the needed improvements, upgrades, and operation and maintenance of the Weir River Water System the following rate increases are proposed which if approved would take effect on July 1, 2026:

- **3%** - Rate Increase (this would include water usage, prorated service charge and other system surcharges)

- **\$ 65.00 / year** - Capital Debt Service Assessment (CDSA) – for Single Family Residential customers.

CDSA is directly related to the new water storage tank, booster station and rehabilitation of the existing Turkey Hill tank. Multi residential, industrial, commercial and municipal / government customers will also contribute to the capital debt service. The anticipated water bill will increase will be approximately eight percent (8%).

Also of note, the WRWS and HMLP (Hingham Municipal Lighting Plant) combined billing system should be up and running by 07/01/2026, creating efficiencies and savings for rate payers

5. WRWS Citizens Advisory Board Chair Dave Anderson stated his committee has reviewed the data and approves the proposed rate increase.
6. Comments from the public – Hingham residents spoke and raised concerns about monitoring water usage during water restrictions and Hull residents also spoke, complimenting communication from WRWS to date with Hull resident David Irwin suggested the WRWS consider a desalinization system vs. MWRA connection for additional water in the future, etc.
7. Motion to adjourn – A committee majority consisting of Ted Ciolkosz, Brenda Black, Ben Burnham, Tina Sherwood, John Germain, Jerry Seelen, Brian Stack, David Leiphart, Elaine Cusker, Michael Herde and Mary Power voted to adjourn (David Leiphart and Steve Pohl left early to attend a Capital Outlay Committee meeting, and Alan Macdonald, Jerry Seelen, Kevin Freytag and Elaine Cusker were either absent or had left the zoom call prior to adjournment).

Respectfully submitted by Theodore D. Ciolkosz, Jr., Secretary