

As voted by the Board of Trustees and in accordance with the notice of the meeting, the monthly Workshop Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Portland Water District was held in the Nixon Training Center at the general offices of the District, 225 Douglass Street, Portland, Maine, on Tuesday, October 14, 2025. In attendance from staff were D. Kane, S. Firmin, G. Pellerin, C. Poulin, J. Wallace, J. Jones, K. Jacobson, and D. Katsiaficas.

President Lunt convened the workshop meeting at 6:40 p.m.

1. East End Wastewater Treatment Facility Project Update

Joel Jones, Project Engineer, provided an overview of recent and ongoing infrastructure upgrades at the East End Wastewater Treatment Facility.

The presentation detailed the secondary clarifier replacement project, which was accelerated due to equipment failures. Through pre-procurement of materials and revised project sequencing, the schedule was shortened by approximately eight months. Three clarifiers were replaced with stainless-steel mechanisms, improving reliability and extending service life.

Additional upgrades included replacement of inlet gates and actuators, electrical motor control centers, and SCADA systems, improving operator efficiency, automation, and safety. Plant water and sludge pumping systems were also modernized, resolving leaks, corrosion, and outdated controls. The new equipment features electronic monitoring for early issue detection and more consistent operations.

The gravity thickener system was rebuilt to enhance performance and reduce manual interventions.

The presentation also introduced the next major project, a progressive design-build effort with AECOM, focusing on headworks and grit removal systems, return activated sludge (RAS) pumps and piping, HVAC replacements to mitigate corrosion, and sludge dewatering system upgrades, including a transition from rotary presses to centrifuges.

Joel noted that these improvements not only extend infrastructure life and efficiency but also improve working conditions for operators, making the facility more appealing for recruitment and retention by reducing manual labor, hazards, and 24/7 operational demands.

A copy of the presentation is attached as part of the minutes.

2. Other Business

Scott Firmin, General Manager, circulated a trustee contact list for review. Members were asked to confirm and update their contact information.

A proposed 2026 Board of Trustees meeting schedule was distributed. Trustees were asked to review the schedule—particularly the proposed December 28 meeting date—and provide feedback to President Lunt before finalization.

An update was provided on the Family Field cell tower project. Following discussions with the Town of Cape Elizabeth, it appears the Town is exploring alternative sites that do not involve the pump station property. PWD will await further communication from the town.

Greg Pellerin, Executive Director of Asset Management and Planning, provided an update on the Caleb Street water main project in response to concerns raised at the previous meeting. The project was publicly bid and awarded to Pratt & Sons. PWD provides inspection oversight focused primarily on ensuring proper installation of water mains and protecting public health, though staffing constraints have limited field presence at times.

The project began in July 2024 and is scheduled for completion by the end of October or early November. Per standard policy, customers were notified in advance.

A sewer service line at 70 Caleb Street was damaged during construction between September 5 and 8. The issue went undetected until September 12, when the resident reported a backup. PWD responded within 90 minutes, after hours, performing a temporary repair that evening. The contractor later made the permanent repair on September 15. A second backup occurred on September 18, later traced to a blockage under the customer's property, not at the original repair site.

PWD submitted a claim to the contractor for presentation to its insurer on September 22 and continues to follow up to ensure it is addressed. Delays have occurred due to the insurance adjuster's absence, but the contractor has confirmed the matter is being prioritized.

A separate traffic incident occurred the week following the prior board meeting, when inadequate traffic control allowed a vehicle to enter an open trench. No injuries occurred. PWD notified the contractor, expressed concern over safety lapses, and escalated the issue to the contractor's general manager. The contractor acknowledged the problem and has committed to improving safety protocols.

Staff confirmed that the contractor's insurance is responsible for any customer damages, and PWD has been assisting the resident through the claims process. Trustees discussed potential contract revisions to strengthen contractor obligations, especially regarding on-site responsiveness when issues are reported.

PWD plans to conduct a review at project completion to evaluate contractor performance, internal communication, safety practices, and contract terms and identify improvements for future projects.

The board discussed the limits of goodwill claims. It reaffirmed that while cleanup costs may be covered, property damage claims must follow insurance and contract procedures to preserve the District's legal protections. Staff committed to providing an update after the insurance review and contractor response are complete.

3. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Submitted by,
Donna M. Katsiaficas
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Clerk