

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 Monday, May 11, 2026. In attendance from staff were S. Firmin, D. Kane, G. Pellerin, C. Poulin, J. Wallace, E. Archibald, M. Clements, K. Jacobson, D. Katsiaficas, T. Quirk, and J. Jones. Peter Bennett, Craig Freshly, Julie Keim, and Allison Pesce attended from the public.

All trustees were in attendance, except Trustee Scontras. Trustee Shaughnessy attended remotely.

President Lunt convened the workshop meeting at 6:42 p.m.

**1. 2025 Auditor's Report**

Ms. Allison Pesce, Senior Manager, and Ms. Julie Keim, Principal from BerryDunn, informed the Board that they shared the results of the 2025 financial audit with the Administration and Finance Committee, and opened up for questions.

**2. Regional Biosolids Facility**

Staff presented the proposed regional biosolids facility concept and requested support to move forward with a \$2 million preliminary design phase to better evaluate the project's feasibility. Discussion focused on growing concerns surrounding biosolids disposal, including rising costs, PFAS-related regulations, limited disposal capacity, and uncertainty around long-term disposal options. Staff explained that the Biosolids Master Plan identified a regional facility as a potential long-term solution to improve cost stability, reliability, and environmental protection. The preliminary design phase would help answer key questions related to siting, permitting, governance, technology selection, regional partnerships, and overall project costs, while also creating a shovel-ready design that could position the district for future grant funding opportunities.

Financial impacts and funding options for both the \$2 million preliminary phase and the conceptual \$150 million full project were reviewed. Staff explained that the preliminary costs would initially be covered through operating cash or reserves, with the potential to later roll those costs into project bonding if the project moves forward. Several financing approaches were discussed, including bonding, reserves, grants, and tipping fees. Staff also clarified that wastewater debt is separate from water system debt and would not impact the district's water-side bonding capacity.

Board members asked questions regarding customer impacts, governance, regional participation, alternative financing models, ecoMaine coordination, and future technologies. Staff emphasized that no commitment is being made to construct the facility at this stage, and that the purpose of the preliminary design phase is to gather the information necessary to determine whether the project is viable. The anticipated timeline includes issuing an RFQ later this year and completing preliminary design work through 2027 before returning to the board for a future go/no-go decision. Board members generally expressed support for continuing the process and bringing the \$2 million request forward for formal consideration.

**3. EEWTF Design-Build Project Update**

Staff provided an update on the wastewater treatment plant improvement project being completed through a progressive design-build partnership with AECOM and R.H. White. The project includes major upgrades to the dewatering system, return activated sludge piping, HVAC and ventilation systems, headworks equipment, electrical infrastructure, and SCADA controls throughout the facility. Staff explained that many of the existing systems are aging, corroded,

undersized, or no longer operating reliably, making these upgrades necessary to improve plant performance, reliability, and long-term operations.

A major component of the project is replacing the existing rotary press dewatering equipment with centrifuges, which are expected to improve solids handling efficiency and reduce hauling and disposal costs by increasing solids content. Staff also discussed replacing undersized pumps, relocating deteriorated piping outside the tunnel system, and upgrading ventilation and electrical systems to address corrosion and reliability issues. The project is currently about 60% designed, and staff plans to bring the first Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP1) construction contract to the board next month for approval. Construction is anticipated to begin later this summer.

Board members asked questions about the balance between replacement and operational improvements. Staff noted that while much of the work replaces aging infrastructure, the project also addresses several plant bottlenecks and system deficiencies. Staff added that these upgrades will significantly improve plant reliability and operations, though ongoing capital improvements will continue to be needed at the facility in the future.

**4. General Manager's Comments**

Scott Firmin, General Manager, reminded the Board about the upcoming Southern Maine Regional Water Council annual meeting on June 3, 2026 in Sanford and invited them to attend.

The board also received a refresher on media and public communications protocols following recent increased press activity. Michelle Clements, Director of Communications and Public Relations, reviewed key points from prior media training, emphasizing that trustees should clearly distinguish personal opinions from official board positions, coordinate with Portland Water District public relations staff when needed, and focus on clear, accurate, and concise messaging when speaking with reporters.

Additionally, the Board was informed about the upcoming visioning workshop in June, facilitated by Craig Freshley of Good Group Decisions. The session will focus on identifying future challenges and priorities for the Portland Water District, with plans for continued quarterly strategic discussions over the next year.

**5. Other Business**

None.

**6. Executive Session**

Trustee McCann made a motion to go into executive session at 7:55 p.m., pursuant to 1 M.R.S. §405(6)(D), to discuss labor negotiations, seconded by President Lunt. All in favor.

Trustee Libby made a motion to come out of executive session, pursuant to 1 M.R.S., seconded by Trustee Crockett. All in favor.

**7. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

Submitted by,

*Kaitlin Tibbets*

Kaitlin Tibbets  
Assistant Clerk