

SOUTHWEST HARBOR WATER & SEWER DISTRICT

June, 2026

Meeting Minutes

Town Hall

3:56 PM.

Ralph Dunbar, Allan Willey, Ken Minnier, Lee Worcester, Karen Reddersen
District Manager Bennett Liscomb, Assistant District Manager Aaron Zurek

Convene Meeting;

Meeting called to Order: 4:00 PM by Lee Worcester

Guests to be Heard;

Meeting minutes Approval;

May 2026 Minutes. Ralph made a motion to accept the minutes as presented, Allan 2nd.
Unanimous.

Financials;

Ralph asked if the budget was in doing well overall. Bennett commented on the increases in fuel and electrical power, but otherwise the budget was in good health. Ralph made a motion to accept the financials as presented, Ken 2nd. Unanimous.

Warrants 124 & 124A

Motion to approve warrant 124 as presented by Ralph, Karen 2nd. Unanimous. Some discussion on 124A, Ralph asking if this was the last pay requisition for the WWTP, Bennett replying that there is a lag from actual work done to the requisition, warrant 124A was dated through 5/28. Ralph motioned to approve warrant 124A, Allan 2nd, Unanimous.

Payroll

Karen motioned to approve the water and sewer payroll, Ralph 2nd, Unanimous.

Updates;

WWTP project;

The frozen water line issue from last meeting seems resolved. Aaron Zurek and Jordan of Olvers hand dug and explored the insulation on the shallow part of the valve for the WWTP water line, and found it to be uninsulated. Apex then excavated the remainder of the line and reinsulated with 4" of foam board, with some sections having up to 6" of foam.

In addition, Landscaping has been largely finished, crushed stone was delivered, the site has been paved, and punch list items are being worked on, including SCADA issues. Sludge has filled the digester, and is in the process of being removed. The sludge pump has had a recurring problem going through shear pins and is being fine-tuned. A malfunctioning HVAC circulator

pump was replaced, and an AC module on the UV cabinet is being worked on. An experimental air intake silencer extension was installed to help mitigate noise from the blower.

Jim Vallette asked about Odor and Noise, and if there were any plans to redesign the plant further. Bennett Liscomb commented on the ongoing development of the treatment process and the engineering firm's continued work on seeking resolution to the concerns. Ralph Dunbar spoke on the initial engineering of the plant and the newness of the design, and Karen recognized several complaints about odor throughout the week and emphasized the district's commitment to pursuing a refined treatment process despite the challenge of a completely new process for treatment. Aaron Zurek commented that the plant was one of fewer than a dozen in the state to utilize the "batch" reactor process.

Amendment No. 4 for WWTP – Salary

Bennett presented the amendment to the board, citing a 27-day extension, after hours work and increased administration caused by the few change orders, as well as funding acquisition and assistance by Oliver's. Ralph moved to accept the amendment as presented, Allan 2nd. Unanimous.

WWTP Change Order 002

Bennett presented the change order for the Tidal Sluice Gate Control panel, explaining that it was inadvertently left off the original estimate and described its use within the treatment plant. Karen motioned to approve the change order as presented, Ralph 2nd, Unanimous.

EMR Subdivision Water Line

At this point, Lee Worcester recused himself from the discussion as a board member and requested that Vice Chair Ralph Dunbar conduct the meeting. Mr. Worcester provided a brief overview of the project, explaining that the original engineered design called for a 3-inch HDPE water line. He noted that the District had requested the line be upsized to 8 inches to provide fire protection and discussed the additional costs associated with that change.

Mr. Dunbar commented on the widespread use of HDPE water mains, citing neighboring districts that utilize the material extensively. Greg Johnson, project engineer, referenced applicable AWWA standards and stated that HDPE is an accepted material for water distribution systems. District Manager Bennett Liscomb agreed that HDPE is an accepted material, but noted that the question before the Board was whether it was the most appropriate material for this particular application. Mr. Liscomb inquired whether a Phase I or Phase II environmental assessment had been completed for the site. Discussion also included the potential benefits of increased water flow for fire protection along Marshall Brook. Mr. Johnson further noted that ductile iron pipe can be susceptible to accelerated corrosion in certain soil conditions.

Craig Kesselheim expressed concerns regarding environmental conditions associated with the EMR site, referencing what he characterized as ongoing pollution and potential impacts to the proposed subdivision. Jim Vallette raised concerns regarding negative easements, areas of known contamination, reported PFAS detections, and the need for greater transparency regarding environmental conditions at the site. Mr. Kesselheim asked what soils would be disturbed during installation of the proposed water line and requested a map showing the planned infrastructure. Mr. Johnson responded that the design was still being finalized and that selection of a pipe material would allow completion of the engineering design. He again cautioned that ductile iron

pipe may be susceptible to accelerated corrosion under certain conditions. Mr. Vallette noted that funding opportunities may exist to assist with environmental remediation efforts through cooperation with the Acadia Disposal District and again emphasized the importance of transparency regarding site conditions.

Following further spirited discussion between Vallette and Dunbar regarding the status of DEP review, environmental conditions associated with the EMR site, and the potential implications for the proposed subdivision, Vice Chair Dunbar requested that District Manager Bennett Liscomb gather additional information regarding the use of HDPE water mains and place the matter on the agenda for the next Board meeting.

Following the conclusion of this discussion, Lee resumed his spot as Chair of the meeting. Motion from Lee to adjourn the meeting at 4:45, 2nd from Ralph, unanimous.

Re-Convene Meeting;

Meeting reconvened and in session as of 4:55 by Lee Worcester

Harbor House Tennis Courts

Bennett informed the board that Ingrid Kachmar had reached out to discuss options for the repair of the tennis court at Harbor House. As they stand, they are over the district's sewer main. Bennett and Allan commented on the standing arrangement wherein if there were to be a leak or repairs needed to the main, the district would not be liable for repairs made to the tennis court. Karen offered that she had also spoken with Ms. Kachmar and discussed the options she might have, and Bennett relayed the conversation he had with Ingrid after a site visit with the water and wastewater crew where he recommended she not rebuild the court on top of the sewer infrastructure.

Lee motioned for the regular meeting to be adjourned, Karen 2nd, unanimous.

Public Hearing – Proposed Sewer Rate Increase

Chair Lee Worcester opened the public hearing on the proposed sewer rate increase at 5:02 p.m. Southwest Harbor resident Terry requested an explanation of the proposed rate increase. District Manager Bennett Liscomb explained that the District had implemented only one sewer rate increase since 2010, a 5% increase in 2021, while operating costs had increased substantially during that period. Mr. Liscomb noted that operational expenses had risen approximately 58% since 2017 and stated that the proposed increase was intended to help address rising costs and maintain the sewer system.

Melissa Berry asked who would be affected by the increase and by how much. Mr. Liscomb explained that the proposed increase would apply to all sewer customers and would result in an approximate 15% increase to both metered and flat-rate accounts.

Discussion followed regarding the structure of the District's sewer rates. Members of the public raised questions regarding minimum charges, impacts on low-volume users, and the method by which sewer rates are calculated. Ms. Berry suggested that the Board consider alternative rate structures, including adjustments to the balance between base rates and usage rates, as well as a gradual annual increase rather than larger periodic adjustments.

Ms. Berry also inquired how the District's sewer rates compared to those of other Maine communities. Aaron Zurek responded that he was uncertain of the District's exact ranking but believed rates were generally within the middle range compared to similar systems. Additional discussion took place regarding metered versus flat-rate billing practices and the factors used in establishing sewer rates.

Ms. Berry suggested that the Board consider combining utility bills with property tax bills. Board members discussed the concept and some of the practical considerations associated with utility billing, metering, and rate administration.

Ms. Berry further asked whether factors other than day-to-day operational expenses contributed to the need for the rate increase. Mr. Liscomb explained that sewer revenues support a variety of system costs, including operation and maintenance of the collection system, repair and adjustment of manholes and catch basins, camera inspection and cleaning of sewer mains, equipment maintenance, and other infrastructure-related expenses. Terry asked whether future sewer system expansion would help distribute system costs across a larger customer base. Mr. Worcester explained that a significant portion of the District's costs are fixed in nature and that additional customers can improve overall system efficiency by spreading those costs across a larger user base.

Additional discussion included the cost of utility infrastructure improvements, capital planning, maintenance of existing assets, municipal funding challenges, and historical discussions regarding future infrastructure projects within the community.

There being no further comments, Mr. Worcester motioned to adjourn the public hearing at 5:37 p.m. Ralph Dunbar 2nd the motion, unanimous

Mr. Worcester motioned to reconvene the regular meeting at 5:38 p.m. Ralph Dunbar 2nd the motion, unanimous.

Mr. Worcester motioned to adopt the proposed sewer rates for both metered and flat-rate customers as presented. Allan 2nd the motion. Unanimous.

Mr. Worcester motioned to adjourn the regular meeting at 5:41 p.m. Ralph Dunbar 2nd the motion. Unanimous.

Date of Next Meeting: July 16, 2026