

**DISTRICT COMMITTEE- GREATER NEW BEDFORD
REGIONAL REFUSE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT MEETING**

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 9, 2025

The Greater New Bedford Regional Refuse Management District Committee held a publicly posted meeting on Thursday, January 9, 2025, at 8:00 AM at the Dartmouth Town Hall - Room 309, 400 Slocum Road, Dartmouth, MA 02747.

District Committee Members in attendance: Chairperson John Beauregard, Daniel Patten, Kelley Cabral-Mosher, Caroline Conzatti, and Michael Gagne.

Also in attendance: Anthony Novelli, Executive Director; Lee Ferreira, Executive Assistant, and Matthew J. Thomas, District Counsel (entered at 8:04 a.m.)

1. Call to order / Salute the flag

Chairperson Beauregard called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and led the pledge of allegiance.

2. Legal notices

Chairperson Beauregard read the following statement:

“Pursuant to the Open Meeting Law, any person may make an audio or video recording of this public meeting, or may transmit the meeting through any medium. Attendees are therefore advised that such recordings and transmissions are being made, whether perceived or unperceived, by those present, and are deemed acknowledged and permissible. All legal notices of the meeting were posted in Dartmouth and New Bedford more than 48 hours prior to the meeting.”

3. Roll call of members

Chairperson John Beauregard: yes
Daniel Patten: yes
Kelley Cabral-Mosher: yes
Michael Gagne: yes
Caroline Conzatti: yes
Christine LeBlanc: absent

4. Approval of Minutes

a. Draft Minutes of December 19, 2024 meeting, Regular session

MOTION to approve the Draft Minutes of December 19, 2024 meeting, Regular session made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. Conzatti. All voted in favor. Motion passed 5- 0.

b. Draft Meeting Minutes of December 19, 2024, Executive Session

MOTION to approve the Draft Meeting Minutes of December 19, 2024 Executive Session made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. Conzatti. All voted in favor. Motion passed 5- 0.

5. Warrant Report and Ratification

a. Warrant 12-25 dated 12/26/2024

MOTION to ratify Warrant 12-25 dated December 26, 2024 made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. Conzatti. All voted in favor. Motion passed 5-0.

6. New Business

a. Draft FY2026 Budget

MOTION to consider the draft fiscal year 2026 budget made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. Conzatti.

Mr. Novelli reminded the Committee that the annual budget is approved by January 21 of each year. The Personnel Subcommittee met on November 20, 2024 to review the salaries and wages budget, and the budget subcommittee met on December 19, 2024 to review the full draft budget. Their recommendations are incorporated into the draft FY2026 budget.

Attorney Thomas entered the meeting at 8:04 a.m.

Mr. Novelli reviewed the memo, highlighting key changes from the previous budget. Overall, the projected revenue increased from FY25 to FY26. He mentioned that the amount of waste being accepted is expected to be similar, but the tipping fees had increased since the FY25 budget had been drafted. He noted that the District continues to minimize the acceptance of non-member waste to preserve landfill capacity for the member communities and often denies requests to dispose of additional waste at Crapo Hill. The budget used the guaranteed minimum revenue from each customer, and each customer has an acceptable range of tonnage to be delivered, so actual revenue from tipping fees is likely to be higher. Contracts with the haulers have not been executed yet.

Chairperson Beauregard mentioned that projecting revenue in this budget was relatively straightforward, since the District expects to continue its exiting arrangements, but in future years it may be more challenging as the District continues to reduce the total tonnage accepted. Mr. Novelli agreed that a decrease in non-member tonnage, and therefore revenue, can be expected for the following (FY2027) budget. The assessment to the member communities will increase by 6% in FY2026, He noted that the increase is relatively minor, and the members continue to enjoy disposal costs that are approximately 75% less than the market rate.

Mr. Novelli mentioned that the existing agreement with the Town of Freetown will expire at the end of the year. He asked what tipping fee should be charged to Freetown. They receive a discounted rate as a neighboring municipality to the landfill. Chairperson Beauregard suggested that their tip fee increase consistent with the member communities (6%) to \$86/ton. The Committee agreed.

Chairperson Beauregard highlighted that the projected revenue from landfill gas has decreased compared to previous years. Mr. Novelli explained that the total landfill gas production has decreased significantly over the past year, and that a conservative estimate was used for revenue projection. He believes that the landfill gas collection system is functioning properly, but less gas is being generated in the landfill. There are many factors that could lead to this decline in gas production, and District staff continue to communicate with CNBE about

potential causes and resolutions (Commonwealth New Bedford Energy, the gas plant owners/operators). The group discussed potential causes for the decline in gas production and the District's agreement with CNBE. CNBE has expressed serious concern with the decreased gas production and the plant's ongoing feasibility. If CNBE were to terminate the contract due to financial infeasibility (at their sole discretion), the District would need to flare the gas at an increased operational expense. CNBE has identified the pH of leachate (and therefore within the landfill) as a potential cause, with the pH likely being impacted by the acceptance of processed bottom ash as a cover material. Stopping acceptance of ash could lead to reduced revenue for the District, unless other cover materials that generate similar revenue are sourced. Additional gas collected from the landfill would increase revenue to the District from CNBE, and if the District accepted other cover materials at a lower tip fee instead of ash, the hope would be that the difference in revenue is offset by increasing revenue from the landfill gas. Mr. Gagne requested a copy of CNBE's income and expenses.

Mr. Novelli mentioned that the reused materials line is for cover materials. The District receives revenue for accepting alternative cover materials, such as street sweepings and processed bottom ash. Additional cover materials are being explored to potentially replace the processed bottom ash. The District has accepted other materials in the past, but there were operational challenges associated.

Mr. Novelli reviewed the salaries and wages budget and mentioned that a 3% Cost-of-Living adjustment had been included in the salary schedule for all employees. There are two currently vacant positions- a project manager and one in landfill operations. There are 4 part-time employees budgeted. Three are former full-time employees and one is in waste reduction.

Mr. Novelli mentioned that for health insurance, Mayflower Municipal Health Group recommends budgeting for a 10% increase, as rates are not finalized until February or March. He explained that the actual increase that MMHG passes to the members is usually much less (4% in the previous year).

The District's insurance package is through MIIA, and MIIA also recommends budgeting for a 10% increase, as rates have not yet been finalized.

An additional expense to pave the landfill access road is budgeted in the site maintenance line. This was initially included in the budget from FY23 but never completed.

A large expense is included in the leachate and landfill gas line. The installation of 15 vertical gas collection wells is anticipated towards the end of FY26, but may not actually happen until FY27. This is a permit requirement and part of the approved landfill gas management plan and will be the largest installation of vertical wells at one time to date.

Mr. Novelli reviewed the equipment expenses. Mr. Gagne asked if the District has a long-term capital plan for equipment. It would be helpful to know when the different pieces of equipment will need to be replaced or repaired. Mr. Novelli responded that they are aware of expected maintenance for the near future, and he will work on getting a more long-term schedule together.

Mr. Gagne highlighted the expected revenue from Fall River, noting that it is a city similar in size to New Bedford, but their payments for waste disposal are significantly higher, in addition to hauling costs. Fall River is currently paying \$116/ton, and if New Bedford paid \$116/ton for the waste delivered in FY24, it would have cost the City around \$3.6 million instead of the \$768K paid to the District. He encouraged Mr. Novelli to communicate these savings to the member communities.

There were no further questions on the draft budget.

MOTION to adopt the FY2026 budget as presented by the Executive Director made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. Cabral-Mosher. All voted in favor. Motion passed 5-0.

b. Vote to Update the Salary Schedule

MOTION to consider an update to the District's Salary Schedule made by Ms. Conzatti, seconded by Mr. Patten.

Mr. Novelli mentioned that the District's salary schedule is reviewed annually. The personnel subcommittee met on November 20, 2024 and had recommended a 3% cost of living adjustment (COLA) to all positions in the salary schedule for FY2026. This increase was included in the draft budget.

Mr. Gagne asked how much the step increases were worth within the salary schedule. Mr. Novelli responded that each step increase is 2.5% and that the plan approved by the Committee when it adopted the salary schedule was that employees advance one step in the salary schedule each year, assuming satisfactory performance.

Chairperson Beauregard added that the COLA adjusted each step within the schedule, so employees advancing steps would earn a 5.5% increase. Mr. Novelli confirmed and mentioned that the District has numerous employees that are currently at the top step in the salary schedule. Those employees receive the COLA increase, but not a step increase.

MOTION to adopt the updated salary schedule effective July 1, 2025 as recommended by the Personnel Subcommittee made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. Cabral-Mosher. All voted in favor. Motion passed 5-0.

c. Staff Report

MOTION to receive the staff report made by Ms. Conzatti, seconded by Mr. Patten.

Mr. Novelli highlighted that the District has not received any odor complaints recently. This is evidence that the landfill gas collection system is functioning correctly, and he credited the operations team for doing a great job.

He will be meeting with Brown and Caldwell in the coming weeks on-site to discuss the design of the next landfill cell.

He mentioned that he has been working with Brown and Caldwell and the EPA to address permit exceedances related to the low pH of stormwater being tested at the site. Low pH is consistent in surface water testing data from the site before the landfill opened. The stormwater sampling locations are also within cedar swamp wetlands, which are known to be acidic, and are a considerable distance from the landfill at the perimeter of the property. The pH of stormwater leaving the stormwater basin (and the landfill slopes) has been tested and is normal/within the permitted range, but the stormwater becomes acidic after traveling through the on-site wetlands before reaching the sampling location at the property boundary. The District worked with Brown and Caldwell to submit a detailed report backing this explanation and conducted additional monitoring data to support that the low pH at these locations is consistent with the historical baseline (before the landfill was constructed) and that the landfill operation is not adversely impacting the pH of the stormwater. The EPA recently approved the

District's request to move these sampling locations.

Chairperson Beauregard called attention to the fact that these permit violations are available to the public on the EPA's website, and it shows that the District is in violation of the Clean Water Act because of this. The EPA will not likely remove the previous violations, but the updated sampling locations should stop the District from receiving additional violations. The District now has some comprehensive monitoring data to explain the violations if it ever comes up.

Mr. Gagne asked how Mr. Novelli petitioned to move the sampling locations. Mr. Novelli explained that when there is an exceedance of a permitted limit in the stormwater permit, the District is required to submit an exceedance report to the EPA explaining what happened and proposing corrective actions. Mr. Novelli submitted an explanation with some testing data that the pH leaving the landfill's stormwater basin was within the permitted range, but the pH was being impacted by the wetlands on-site before reaching the sampling location. He proposed new sampling locations as a corrective action. After submitting the explanation, the EPA requested more information (past monitoring data) and that the District conduct additional monitoring to demonstrate this. The District submitted a comprehensive report that demonstrated that the low pH was consistent with the historical baseline results and that the on-site wetlands were impacting the pH of the stormwater. The EPA approved the District's request in November. The District submitted a change NOI form to the EPA to implement these changes and is awaiting EPA approval of the change NOI before it is official. Mr. Gagne suggested that Mr. Novelli contact Representative Keating and have his staff put a call in to the EPA to accelerate the approval process.

Chairperson Beauregard commented that the Dartmouth Transfer Station is always extremely busy on Saturday mornings and asked if New Bedford's was the same way. Mr. Novelli responded that it is not, and the location and setup of the recycling center is not very inviting to residents, noting that it feels like you are trespassing when you drive back there. A few committee members agreed and the Committee requested that better signage be placed out front. Mr. Novelli responded that he has already been in communication with the City's DFFM about this and they are working on it.

There was no further discussion.

MOTION to accept the staff report and place on file made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. Conzatti. All voted in favor. Motion passed 6-0.

7. Executive Session

Chairperson Beauregard requested a MOTION that the District Committee go into Executive Session pursuant to General Law Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(7) and General Law chapter 4, Section 7, Clause Twenty-Sixth(d) to discuss inter-agency or intra-agency memoranda or letters relating to policy positions being developed by the District and then reconvene in Open Session. The minutes of this Executive Session will become public once the policy positions being developed by the District have been fully developed. MOTION made by Mr. Gagne, seconded by Ms. Conzatti. All voted in favor, motion passed 5-0.

The Committee entered into Executive session at 8:53 a.m.
The Committee returned to open session at 9:08 a.m.

8. Items That Could Not Be Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours In Advance

There were none.

9. Set Meeting Schedule

The next meeting is scheduled for February 13, 2025. The following meeting was scheduled for March 20, 2025.

10. Adjourn

MOTION to adjourn the meeting made by Mr. Gagne, seconded by Ms. Conzatti. All voted in favor. Motion carried 6-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 a.m.

MEMOS

6A. Draft FY2026 Budget

Attachment: GNBRRMD Draft Fiscal Year 2026 Budget

Attachment: Income Statement- Budget and Actual, as of January 2, 2025

Attachment: FY2026 Draft COLA increase

6B. Vote to Update the Salary Schedule

Attachment: FY2026 Draft COLA increase

6C. Staff Report

Attachment: Tonnage Graph July 2023 – December 2024

Attachment: Income Statement as of January 9, 2025

Approved by vote of the District Committee on February 13, 2025.



Anthony Novelli, Executive Director