

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

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

The Greater New Bedford Regional Refuse Management District Committee held a publicly posted meeting on Wednesday, December 17, 2025, at 8:00 A.M. at the Dartmouth Town Hall, Room 309, 400 Slocum Road, Dartmouth, MA.

District Committee Members in attendance: Chairperson John Beauregard; Caroline Conzatti, Daniel Patten, Michael Gagne, Kelley Cabral-Mosher, & Ed Iacaponi

Also in attendance: Anthony Novelli, Executive Director; Leonor Ferreira, Secretary; Raphael Wechsler, Project Manager, & Matthew J. Thomas, District Counsel (arrived 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 a salute to the flag.

2. Legal notices

Mr. Beauregard noted that legal notices of the meeting were posted in Dartmouth and New Bedford more than 48 hours prior to the meeting.

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.”

3. Roll call of members

Chairperson John Beauregard, yes

Caroline Conzatti, yes

Daniel Patten, yes

Michael Gagne, yes

Ed Iacaponi: yes

Kelley Cabral-Mosher: yes

4. Approval of Minutes

- a. Draft Minutes of November 12, 2025, Regular Session

Chairperson Beauregard asked for a motion to approve the draft minutes of the November 12, 2025 meeting, regular session. MOTION made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. Conzatti. All voted in favor. MOTION passed 6 - 0.

- b. Draft Minutes of November 12, 2025 Meeting, Executive Session

Chairperson Beauregard asked for a motion to approve the draft minutes of the November 12, 2025 meeting, executive session. MOTION made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. Conzatti. All voted in favor. MOTION passed 6 - 0.

5. Warrant Report and Ratification

- a. Warrant 9-26, 10-26 and 11-26 ratification

Chairperson Beauregard asked for a MOTION to ratify warrant No. 9- 26 dated November 7, 2025, warrant 10-26 dated November 26, 2025, and warrant 11-26 dated December 5, 2025. MOTION made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. Conzatti. All voted in favor. MOTION passed 6-0.

6. New Business

- a. Temporary Labor Services Contract

Chairperson Beauregard asked for a MOTION to discuss the Temporary Labor Services Contract MOTION made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. Conzatti.

Mr. Novelli mentioned that the current contract with B.J's Service Company expires on December 31, 2025 with an option to renew. Any price increase in the renewal period would be tied to minimum wage, which has not increased and is not expected to. Mr. Novelli briefly discussed services performed, hours worked, and their high quality of work. Chairperson Beauregard requested to review their insurance coverages ahead of executing the renewal. Mr. Novelli agreed.

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

Chairperson Beauregard asked for a MOTION to authorize the Executive Director to execute a 1-year renewal to the Agreement to Supply Temporary Labor services with BJ Service Company. MOTION made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Mr. Gagne. All voted in favor. MOTION passed 6-0.

- b. Consulting & Engineering Contract

Chairperson Beauregard asked for a MOTION to discuss the consulting and engineering agreement. MOTION made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. Conzatti.

Mr. Novelli discussed details of the existing contract with Brown and Caldwell, including some required reporting a budget for general consulting & engineering services. A detailed reporting requirement from the EPA triggered a significant level on unexpected effort from Brown and Caldwell, and approximately \$40,000 of this \$50,000 budget line has been spent thus far. Brown and Caldwell provides a variety of ongoing services throughout the fiscal year, and he requested that the Committee authorize an additional \$20,000 to the general engineering line in the existing contract with Brown and Caldwell.

Chairperson Beauregard asked for a MOTION to authorize an additional \$20,000 to the general engineering budget for the fiscal year 2026 contract with Brown and Caldwell.

Mr. Iacaponi had a question regarding the term of the contract and Mr. Novelli described how the contract with Brown and Caldwell aligns with the fiscal year.

MOTION made by Mr. Patten, seconded by Ms. Conzatti. All voted in favor. MOTION passed 6-0.

c. Feasibility Study- Regional Solid Waste Transfer Station

Chairperson Beauregard asked for a MOTION to discuss a Feasibility Study for a Regional Solid Waste Transfer Station. MOTION made by Ms. Conzatti, seconded by Ms. Cabral Mosher.

Mr. Novelli discussed how the District has an executed agreement with the City of New Bedford to evaluate potential rail transfer station options for long-term waste disposal and desires to get started. One of the first steps is the need for a dedicated subcommittee of the District Committee to oversee the solicitation for consultants and the completion of the study. At least one Dartmouth member and one New Bedford member of the Committee is required. There will be technical advisors from the City and the Town involved in this process as well to ensure both parties have input.

Mr. Novelli explained that the existing waste transfer station on Shawmut Ave (not currently functional) is a primary focus of this study, as well as another City-owned parcel close to rail access. The study will evaluate the potential to use these properties to transfer solid waste by rail to disposal facilities in other states after the landfill closes.

Chairperson Beauregard volunteered for this subcommittee and request two additional volunteers. Mr. Patten and Mr. Gagne agreed to join.

Mr. Patten expressed preference for meeting on Fridays. Attorney Thomas explained that since this is an official subcommittee of the District, the meetings will be public.

d. FY2027 Budgeting Discussion

Chairperson Beauregard asked for a MOTION to discuss the FY 2027 Budget. MOTION made by Ms. Conzatti, seconded by Ms. Cabral Mosher.

Mr. Novelli discussed how the personnel subcommittee comprised of Ms. Cabral-Mosher and Mr Gagne, as well as Mr. Wechsler and himself had met a couple of times to discuss a proposed salaries and wages budget for FY2027. Mr. Novelli highlighted some issues with the current 'Step System', specifically regarding pay for senior staff members at the top step of their respective grade. Mr. Gagne had discussed how the City of New Bedford encountered a similar issue a few years ago, which resulted in departures and other issues, and the committee was trying to prevent a similar problem. Mr. Novelli stated that the subcommittee recommended increasing the number of steps from 8 to 14 and to reorganize the schedule to phase out outdated steps.

Mr. Patten referred to the 2021 Collins Center compensation study completed by the District, which recommended 10 steps. The Committee decided to eliminate the first two steps, which led to the existing 8 step system. Mr. Patten explained that the top step pay at that time was calculated based on a study of comparable positions in Dartmouth, Bourne, Attleboro, and some other nearby towns. It has been adjusted over the years by cost-of-living increases. The goal was to have the District's pay at the top step be comparable or higher than those studied to ensure that the District remains a competitive and attractive employer.

Mr. Gagne asked Mr. Patten to clarify what happens after an employee reached step 10 and Mr. Patten responded that they would only receive COLA increases at that point. The thought process was that if others in comparable positions were making \$40/hour (for example) and District employees were paid \$32/hour to start, over the course of X number of years they would hit the 10th step and earn \$40 an hour. Employees were placed at steps within grades based on previous hourly rates when the system was adopted.

Mr. Gagne mentioned that some people have worked at the District for 20+ years and asked how long they have stayed at the top step. Mr. Novelli said there have been some staff at the top step for 3-4 years now, since this system was adopted in 2021. Mr. Patten added that longevity payments provide additional pay related to years of service. Mr. Patten asked if staff members are complaining and Mr. Novelli confirmed, noting that there is frustration that the cost of living increases alone are not keeping up with actual costs incurred and that pay is falling behind.

Attorney Thomas offered that this was the 3rd consecutive year of this discussion regarding the step system and offered that perhaps the step system should be changed to a different structure so that it does not need to be continually adjusted. The District wants to be equitable to its employees, but has a small staff compared to a municipality and could consider alternatives to this structure. Mr. Beauregard believes that the District's process has become overly complicated and agreed that Attorney Thomas's approach. He noted that there should be annual reviews in place, especially for management positions, and that the District could have employment contracts for these positions instead of the step system. Mr. Patten agreed, noting that this was missed in the Collins study

Mr. Gagne explained that the rationale for the proposed 14-step system was that; in the City of New Bedford there were senior employees who had been ‘dead ended’ at the top step for extended periods of time. This caused them to leave the City for better opportunities. The City lost good employees, which is why they changed to a 12 step system. Mr. Gagne added support for Mr. Thomas’ recommendation to move away from the step system and adopt contracts for management positions.

Mr. Beauregard highlighted the recent loss of a qualified mechanic candidate due to making \$55 per hour at FedEx. The District usually can’t compete with scenarios like this, but this reflects the current job market conditions. The current step system does not allow for much flexibility to get closer to a competing rate. He asked for recommendations on how to proceed.

Attorney Thomas acknowledged that the budget needs to be drafted for the next meeting and not all issues would be resolved by then. He suggested that the personnel subcommittee revisit the compensation system as a whole and the items discussed and report back to the Committee. Mr. Gagne agreed that it is worthwhile for the District to create a system that is not governed by steps. He added that while a traditional COLA might have been appropriate, in today’s world municipal health insurance costs are increasing by over 10% per year. Even with a 25% employee funding rate (which is a great benefit) and a 3% COLA applied, these health insurance increases are causing employee take home pay to actually decrease, which sends a very negative message. He urged that the COLA and pay increases awarded take into consideration what the expected health insurance increases will be so that the take home pay is actually increasing, not decreasing.

Mr. Patten suggested that to resolve the situation ahead of the budget, the budget reflect what employees would have received with a step increase (2.5%) and 3% COLA (in line with recent CPI), regardless of anyone being at the top step. The Committee agreed that this was a fair approach. The personnel subcommittee will continue to meet and discuss this in the coming months- going forward, reviews for each position are expected to be done individually in the absence of a step system.

Mr. Patten made a MOTION to support this approach for the FY2027 budget, and Mr. Gagne seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION passed 6-0.

Mr. Gagne mentioned that the personnel subcommittee currently only has 2 members, and a 3rd is needed. **Ms. Conzatti volunteered to join the personnel subcommittee.**

Mr. Gagne emphasized the need for performance evaluations of management employees and to pursue employment contracts with them ahead of the start of FY2027. Committee members should be charged to negotiate these contracts and come back with a recommendation to the Committee. Mr. Patten agreed.

Mr. Gagne made a MOTION that the Committee pursue employment contracts and annual performance evaluations with the Executive Director, Operations Manager, and Project Manager ahead of the start of FY2027. The salaries included in the FY2027 budget

are estimates as a placeholder. Ms. Conzatti seconded the MOTION. All voted in favor. MOTION passed 6-0.

Mr. Gagne, Mr. Iacaponi, and Mr. Beauregard plan to meet with these individuals, with Attorney Thomas providing legal support, as needed.

Mr. Novelli continued the budgeting discussion and gave a summary of projected revenue needed to cover estimated expenses. The District's primary sources of revenue are its assessments to the members and non-member tipping fees. The Committee continues to prioritize keeping the assessments low to its members and has considered appropriating some funds from reserves to help mitigate any increase to the assessments.

He explained that the District accepts a range of waste tonnage from non-member customers and therefore could receive a range of potential revenue within its contracts. The guaranteed minimum tonnage to be delivered is used for budget projections, knowing that actual revenue is likely to exceed this estimate. He then described a potential scenario for FY2027 with a range of 22,000- 27,000 total non-member tons to be accepted. He clarified that the District would need to source some additional tonnage to get to this amount after the contract with Fall River expires, but that this is still well below the FY25 total of over 35,000 tons and the expected FY26 total, demonstrating a continued commitment to preserving landfill capacity for District members.

In summary, this scenario requires approximately \$400,000 more than the 9% assessment planned, which could come from District reserves instead of being added to the assessment and charged to the members. This scenario is expected to extend the landfill's lifespan by approximately 1.5 years over the current pace of filling. He reiterated that projecting landfill lifespan is an estimate and has variables associated. Also, that the District may not need to use this much from reserves if revenue projections are exceeded- this is expected to be the max appropriation from reserves. The goal with this scenario is to try to "break even" with the budget, which is tricky due to the nature of the District's contracts with customers.

Mr. Beauregard highlighted how the increase to New Bedford was relatively small given the City's budget, and this still results in over \$3 million in estimated savings. Mr. Gagne highlighted that the most important takeaway in his opinion was the increase in expected landfill lifespan for the members. The Committee plans to continue a phased annual increase of the assessments in the coming years. They highlighted the importance of communicating the expected increases with the members.

Attorney Thomas suggested that the Committee have conversations with key financial staff on both sides regarding projected assessments in the coming years. He stated that both sides need to start paying closer to 50% of the market rate to prevent sticker shock when the landfill closes. Mr. Novelli added that in this scenario, the members are expected to pay an average of \$28/ton, which is still approximately 20-25% of current market rates. Fall River's upcoming solicitation for waste disposal will give a good indicator of where the market rate for tip fees currently stands.

Mr. Iacaponi asked to clarify the scope of the feasibility study discussed earlier. Mr. Novelli replied that the full scope had yet to be determined and required further discussion. Attorney Thomas added that the Shawmut Ave facility was initially designed as a transfer facility to receive waste that would then be transported to Crapo Hill, and that the District could utilize it for its initially intended use once Crapo Hill closes.

Mr. Beauregard asked if the committee was ok the proposed approach and potential \$400K subsidy to the members. Mr. Novelli reiterated that he believes this is a maximum potential amount, and that the actual subsidy required will be less. He also highlighted that the assessment total would increase by approximately \$90K, but the members are still expected to save over \$3.3 million compared to if they had to pay a market rate of \$113/ton. The total cost to the members would be around \$4.5 million for waste disposal alone at this rate, aside from collection costs, compared to this proposed \$1.08 million assessment. There were no objections.

Mr. Beauregard thanked Mr. Novelli and Mr. Wechsler for extensive budgetary work and analysis and for ensuring the Committee members were all comfortable with the approach. He emphasized how the assessment will need to continually increase in the coming years for the long-term benefit of the members, and that this will continue to be revisited annually. He also highlighted that he believes the District has done a great job over the past year in educating both member communities to truly understand how good of a deal they are currently enjoying at Crapo Hill.

Mr. Gagne referred to some of the initial Town Meetings when the landfill was being sited, where the alternative was to send waste to Covanta/SEMASS. Things have worked very favorably for Dartmouth and New Bedford due to the decision to move forward with Crapo Hill. Mr. Beauregard described a recent conversation with someone in Fairhaven, which was an original member of the District that withdrew before the landfill was built, who mentioned that they are currently paying \$85-90/ton at SEMASS. Mr. Gagne added context that Fairhaven's initial contract with SEMASS was for \$15/ton, but after that expired, costs increased significantly and now the District members have a much more favorable situation.

e. Staff Report

MOTION was made to receive the staff report. Ms. Conzatti made the MOTION, Mr. Patton seconded the MOTION.

Mr. Novelli stated that the Dartmouth Conservation Commission approved the District's application to relocate the existing stormwater basin into a wetland buffer zone as part of the Cell 7 construction process. He applauded Brown and Caldwell for doing a great job presenting the project and explaining the landfill's liner system in detail to the Commission members, and there was no public opposition. Mr. Beauregard agreed with this, noting that he learned a lot about the extent of the liner system during that presentation and he believed the Conservation members did as well. Mr. Patten asked if the permit was 100% complete. Mr. Novelli replied that there are certain conditions that need to be followed during construction, but that the District has everything it needs as of now.

Regarding the MassDEP permit, Mr. Novelli stated that the application is administratively complete and that DEP has moved into the technical review phase. A decision on approval or denial is expected towards the end of January, and then there will be a public comment period on the draft permit.

Mr. Gagne asked when the project would be put out to bid. Mr. Novelli expects that this will be advertised in late 2026 to give contractors ample time to prepare for expected construction in spring of 2027. Mr. Beauregard asked if there were a lot of contractors engaged in this work. Mr. Novelli replied that it is specialized work, and the District has typically received 2-3 bids for similar work in the past. He hopes that by advertising early, there may be more interest. The same contractor has performed the past few cell construction projects. Mr. Beauregard asked if the contract needed to be awarded to the lowest bidder, or if other factors would be considered. Mr. Novelli replied that the previous procurements used an Invitation for Bids, which sets strict performance requirements and the contract is awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, so as long as the lowest bidder meets all requirements. The District could mandate a certain level of experience with similar projects as a requirement.

Mr. Novelli highlighted how landfill gas output had increased meaningfully and how there had not been any odor complaint since the last meeting. Mr. Novelli also highlighted how the RFP for solar was being led by Mr. Wechsler and that there are significant ITC credits available if the project can get off the ground by a pending deadline. They hope to advertise the project soon to capture these credits and are interested in moving forward either way.

He informed the Committee that the heating system failed and needs replacement at a District residential property on Quanapoag road. The first quote he received to replace it was for \$27,000. A lot of additional work would be needed to make the property livable. There was a discussion over the possible use and improvement needs for the District residential properties. Given the extensive cost of work needed, an alternative may be to tear down the building, which is unfortunate. Mr. Thomas suggested that there may be another way to do this work in a cost-effective fashion, such as leasing to another entity. Mr. Gagne suggested that the plumbing department at the local vocational school could replace the heating system and potentially perform additional repairs.

Attorney Thomas noted that properties like this were purchased for buffer, and that the District does not want to be landlords. They could knock it down and keep it as buffer, or find someone else to take care of it.

Chairperson Beauregard asked for a MOTION to receive the staff report. MOTION made by Ms. Conzatti, seconded by Ms. Cabral Mosher. All voted in favor. MOTION passed 6-0.

7. Executive Session

Chairperson Beauregard asked for a MOTION to go into Executive Session Executive Session pursuant to G.L.c 30A, Section 21(a)(7) and G.L. c. 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 because of potential litigation.

MOTION made by Ms. Conzatti, seconded by Ms. Cabral Mosher. MOTION passed 6-0.

The Committee entered into Executive Session at 09:04 A.M.

The Committee returned to Open Session at 09:29 A.M.

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

None

9. Set Meeting Schedule

The following meeting was set for January 15, 2026. The subsequent meeting for February 18, 2026.

10. Adjourn

Chairperson Beauregard requested a MOTION to adjourn. Motion made by Mr. Gagne, seconded by Mr. Patten. All voted in favor. MOTION passed 6-0

The meeting was adjourned at 09:35 A.M.

MEMOS

6A. Temporary Labor Services Contract dated 12/17/2025

6B. Consulting & Engineering Contract dated 12/17/2025

6C. Feasibility Study- Regional Solid Waste Transfer Station dated 12/17/2025

6D. FY2027 Budgeting Discussion

Attachment: Draft FY2027 Salaries and Wages Budget

Attachment: FY2027 Budget Planning- Revenues

6E. Staff Report

Attachment: income statement as of December 12, 2025

Approved by vote of the District Committee on January 15, 2026.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony Novelli", is placed over a horizontal line.

Anthony Novelli, Executive Director