

**MANCHESTER UTILITIES AUTHORITY
MONTHLY MEETING JANUARY 12, 2026
CONDUCTED REMOTELY VIA ZOOM CONFERENCING
7:30 P.M.**

TIME: 7:31PM

• MEETING CALLED TO ORDER – OPEN PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE READ

STATEMENT OF PUBLIC NOTICE-TAKE NOTICE that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided in accordance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-8 and N.J.S.A. 10:4-10 as follows: A notice of the meeting was prominently posted on the bulletin board at the Haledon Municipal Building, located at 510 Belmont Avenue, Haledon, NJ on February 12, 2025. A copy of the Annual Meeting Notice was advertised on February 16, 2025 in the North Jersey Herald News and The Record.

A LINK AND A TELEPHONE NUMBER TO JOIN THE MEETING VIRUTALLY CAN BE ACCESSED ON THE MUA WEBSITE AT WWW.MUAWATER.NET. ELECTRONIC PROVISIONS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR THE PUBLIC TO PARTICIPATE DURING THE PUBLIC COMMENT PORTION OF THE MEETING.

Formal Action will be taken.

Proper notice having been given, the Secretary is directed to include this statement in the minutes of this meeting.

• FLAG SALUTE

• ROLL CALL ATTENDANCE

Present: D'Ambrosio, Chowdhury, Flach, Smith

Absent: Muzibul, McKenney

Other notable attendees: Casey Cordes, Attorney
Jerry Mitchell, Engineer
Roxana Cerna, Commissioner (term begins 2/1/26)
Robert DeBlock, Licensed Operator
Robert McNinch, Auditor
Mayor George, North Haledon

**• PUBLIC HEARING- 2026 CONNECTION FEE INCREASE
2026 RATE INCREASE
2026 BUDGET**

Motion by Smith seconded by Flach to open the public hearing for discussion of the above three items only.

YES: D'Ambrosio, Chowdhury, Flach, Smith

ABSTAIN: -0-

NO: -0-

Robert McNinch, Auditor provided the following information:

We have three resolutions on the agenda this evening:

1. An adjustment to the 2026 connection fee,
2. A proposed increase to the Authority's 2026 water rates, and

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3. The adoption of the 2026 budget.

I'll walk through each of these items and then pause at the end for any questions or comments from the public or from the Board.

2026 Connection Fee

The Authority is proposing a \$140 increase to the connection fee, bringing it to \$4,845. Under NJSA 40:14B-21, there is a statutory formula that determines what constitutes a fair connection fee. The formula calculates the total amount invested in the Authority's infrastructure and divides it by the number of equivalent dwelling units, or EDUs. The statute also requires that this fee be recalculated annually and adjusted as needed. It's important to note that this is not a recurring charge for our users—it is a one-time fee assessed when a property connects to the system. Adjusting this fee each year is standard practice. I would also point out that, even with this increase, our connection fee remains relatively low compared to other municipal utility authorities across the State. Many of my utility clients have water connection fees in the range of \$8,000 to \$12,000.

2026 Rate Increase

The Authority is proposing a 3 percent increase to water rates for 2026. This adjustment is necessary to ensure we can adequately fund operating costs, debt service, and anticipated capital expenses for the year. Our firm has completed several financial projections, and we are expecting notable increases in several key areas, including a 4.3 percent increase in PVWC charges, an 18.5 percent increase in electricity costs, and higher contractual expenses with the Borough. In addition, the Authority is introducing a contingency reserve in this year's budget. This reserve is intended to help absorb unexpected costs—similar to those we experienced during the August water main break. The proposed 3 percent rate increase allows the Authority to responsibly fund these needs while remaining mindful of the impact on ratepayers.

2026 Budget

The final resolution concerns the adoption of the 2026 budget. This budget was introduced at our December meeting and includes \$3,681,000 in anticipated revenues and appropriations, along with \$5,609,000 in planned capital expenses. It was submitted to the Division of Local Government Services last month and received conditional approval, contingent upon the adoption of the 3 percent water rate increase. Approval of this resolution will satisfy the Authority's statutory requirement to adopt an annual budget.

That concludes my presentation on these three items. I'm happy to take any questions from the public or from the Board.

Mayor George - North Haledon, NJ

What was the amount of the Budget increase?

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Mr. McNinch: The Budget was increased by 3%, which corresponds with the 3% rate increase and is much lower than PVWC's annual increases which are generally in the range of 6%.

Motion by Chowdhury seconded by Smith to close the public hearing.

YES: D'Ambrosio, Chowdhury, Flach, Smith

ABSTAIN: -0-

NO: -0-

• REPORTS AND DISCUSSION

CHAIRMAN

Victor D'Ambrosio spoke on the following:

The MUA has always done its best to keep rates as low as possible- typically only raising rates in the range of 2 -3%. The MUA has established a budget reserve, which was a goal and currently has the lowest Non-Revenue Water numbers in the MUA's history. These are all huge accomplishments.

He welcomed the new Commissioner, Roxana Cerna and encouraged her to reach out to the professionals for answers to questions and to learn more about MUA operations.

His term ends on January 31 and he was not reappointed. He is extremely proud of his work as the MUA Chairman for 15 years. The MUA's job is to provide safe, clean water at the lowest cost possible to customers. His focus is now on the transition and he thanked all of the staff, commissioners and professionals who he has worked with over the years.

Ongoing Projects:

- (1) Heights Tank Restoration is complete.
- (2) Emergency Interconnection analysis is ongoing.
- (3) System expansion into North Haledon is ongoing review.
- (4) Lead & Copper Replacement Program is ongoing. Reports need to be prepared and filed. A path forward needs to be examined and decided on.
- (5) Meter Replacement Program: Meters are 10 years old or older. Financing is being sought for the replacement program.

Ongoing Issues:

- (1) Interlocal Service Agreement with Haledon – Pay only for labor costs. All other costs are separate.
- (2) PVWC Water Main Break Bills – The issue of whether or not to submit these bills to PVWC for reimbursement needs to be determined.
- (3) Unidentified Interconnections must be explored further.
- (4) Improvements are needed on communications with customers. Need to acquire a new person for this role or get a representative and/or plan to fill this role.
- (5) Reorganization Meeting is February 2026. He recommends Jerry Flach-Sybesma for the new Chairman position. Commissioner Flach has been actively involved with the MUA and has the experience and leadership needed for this change. As for the professionals, the MUA undergoes

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an open and fair bidding process. He recommends reappointing the current professionals for the 2026 year. There are a lot of new Commissioners and the professionals have worked for the MUA for years and have the institutional knowledge needed to work together to give people clean, safe water at the lowest amount possible.

He wishes the MUA well.

ENGINEER

Jerry Mitchell submitted a report which is on file and discussed the following items:

He wishes Chairman D'Ambrosio well and welcomed new Commissioner Cerna to the MUA.

Action Items: Recommend approval of the Badger quote for replacement of meter tops for an amount not to exceed \$7,000. Recommend approval to use the Emergency Repair Contractor to complete test pit locations on Pompton Road and determine next steps for addressing a service line access issue at 234 Pompton Road.

Capital Improvements: Heights Tank Improvements Project-Nearing completion. PSE&G has delayed the necessary work, so a second time extension is being prepared.

Holland Christian Home Water Main Extension Project: Time extension Change Order No. 1 due to road opening permit delays. Work is beginning on site on January 12, 2026.

Engineers are preparing a list of capital improvements to make post-PVWC water main break as an update to the Capital Improvement Plan.

Facilities: The emergency PRV has been ordered and will be installed once delivered.

Engineer is preparing the bid documents for the Meter Replacement Project.

Acoustic Leak Detection Program is ongoing. One leak was found and its repair is being coordinated.

High Service Reservoir site improvements costs and plan are being finalized.

The Non-Revenue Water annual rolling average is 8%.

ATTORNEY

Casey Cordes submitted a report which is on file and discussed the following items:

She thanked Chairman D'Ambrosio for his many years of service to the MUA. They have served together for 15 years and in all of that time he has always served with professionalism and integrity by treating others the way he would like to be treated. He was a pleasure to work with and wished him well. She welcomed new Commissioner Cerna to the MUA.

Litigation: 1163 Belmont – complaint was filed and awaiting receipt of court date.

Contracts: 987 Belmont Project – Developers Agreement is being prepared.

AUDITOR

Robert McNinch discussed the following:

He thanked Chairman D'Ambrosio for his service and welcomed new Commissioner Cerna to the MUA. No further report.

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LICENSED OPERATOR

Robert De Block discussed the following items:

He thanked Chairman D'Ambrosio for his service and welcomed new Commissioner Cerna to the MUA.

234 Pompton Road: Customer complaint of no water was addressed and is being further investigated.

575-515 PRV: The Pressure Reducing Valve (PRV) providing backup to the 515 zone needs replacement.

Reservoir Point: Work is ongoing to relocate the alarm system antenna to improve communications.

Lead Service Line Inventory: Reports were submitted on August 8, 2025. Next report is due July 10, 2026.

WQAA: Annual WQAA Certification was submitted on December 29, 2025.

Disinfectant By-Products: Quarterly sampling was completed in November. Results are below the MCL. Next sampling event is scheduled for February. Additional sampling of Heights Tank will be done to determine the benefit of mixing and ventilation has been in abeyance.

Motion made by Chowdhury seconded by Smith to change the MUA meetings to in person.

YES: D'Ambrosio, Chowdhury, Flach, Smith

ABSTAIN: -0-

NO: -0-

• **REVIEW OF MINUTES**

Motion made by Smith seconded by Flach to approve the Minutes and Executive Minutes for December 15, 2025.

YES: D'Ambrosio, Flach, Smith

ABSTAIN: -0-

NO: -0-

• **CORRESPONDENCE**

1. Passaic Valley Water Commission Correspondence/4.3% Rate Increase
2. North Haledon Planning Board/32 Rothesay Avenue
3. North Haledon Planning Board/34 Williw Brook Court

Motion made by Flach seconded by Smith to accept and file correspondence.

YES: D'Ambrosio, Chowdhury, Flach, Smith

ABSTAIN: -0-

NO: -0-

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- **NEW BUSINESS**

1. Badger Meter Price Quote/Meters-Stock-Discussed under Engineer Report.

- **COMMITTEE REPORTS AND DISCUSSION**

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE-Next meeting scheduled for January 28, 2026

- **OLD BUSINESS**

1. Water Connection Application/987 Belmont Avenue, Haledon-Discussed under Attorney Report. Engineer review is pending as well.

- **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Motion made by Chowdhury seconded by Flach to open public hearing.

YES: D'Ambrosio, Chowdhury, Flach, Smith

ABSTAIN: -0-

NO: -0-

Mayor George - North Haledon, NJ

How far along is the MUA with the plan to extend into North Haledon? There is a potential for 1,500 new customers; however, a direct line will be needed from a water provider other than PVWC. Also, the costs were to be provided to the State. Has this been done?

Motion made by Flach seconded by Chowdhury to close public hearing.

YES: D'Ambrosio, Chowdhury, Flach, Smith

ABSTAIN: -0-

NO: -0-

MUA COMMISSIONERS RESPONSES TO PUBLIC COMMENT/INQUIRIES

MUA Engineer responded that the North Haledon cost analysis has been provided to the NJDEP. A copy of that analysis can be provided to North Haledon. The costs are estimated at over \$100 million dollars. A meeting should be coordinated with the Borough and State to discuss the analysis and plan.

RESOLUTIONS TO BE PASSED BY CONSENT

**2026-01 AUTHORIZATION TO APPROVE FOR PAYMENT THE WATER
OPERATING BILLS AS SET FORTH IN THE WATER OPERATING BILLS
LIST DATED JANUARY 12, 2026**

2026-02 ADOPTION OF THE 2026 CONNECTION FEE

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2026-03 ADOPTION OF 2026 RATE INCREASE

2026-04 ADOPTION OF THE 2026 BUDGET

**2026-05 AUTHORIZATION TO APPROVE CONTRACT CHANGE ORDER
MODIFICATION NO. CO-001 FOR THE CONTRACT FOR THE
FOLLOWING PROJECT: MANCHESTER UTILITIES
AUTHORITY HOLLAND CHRISTIAN HOME WATER MAIN
EXTENSION CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT, PROJECT NO. 1603001-004**

**2026-06 AUTHORIZATION TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF WATER METER
EQUIPMENT FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$7,000.00**

Motion by Smith seconded by Chowdhury to add Resolution 2026-06 entitled
**“AUTHORIZATION TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF WATER METER
EQUIPMENT FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$7,000.00”**

YES: D’Ambrosio, Chowdhury, Flach, Smith

ABSTAIN: -0-

NO: -0

Motion by Chowdhury seconded by Smith to pass the Resolutions by Consent as amended.

YES: D’Ambrosio, Chowdhury, Flach, Smith

ABSTAIN: -0-

NO: -0

**• EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR CERTAIN SPECIFIED PURPOSES: LITIGATION AND/OR
CLAIMS, CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS, PERSONNEL, OTHER**

WHEREAS, the MUA is a public body subject to the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq.; and

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act requires a Resolution of this MUA in the event the MUA determines it has a need and is permitted by law to exclude the public from an executive session;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the MUA that the public be excluded from its meeting for the purpose of discussing matters covered under N.J.S.A. 10:4-12B, set forth as follows:

A. CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS-Interlocal Service Agreement with the Borough of Haledon

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED, that the public shall not be admitted to the portion of the meeting at which time the foregoing matters will be discussed, and it is not known when or if the matters to be discussed in closed session can be disclosed to the public; and

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IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED, that at the conclusion of Executive Session, formal action may be taken.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED, that the within shall take effect immediately upon passage and publication as provided by law.

TIME: 9:27PM

Motion by Chowdhury seconded by Smith to go into executive session as indicated above.

YES: D'Ambrosio, Chowdhury, Flach, Smith

ABSTAIN: -0-

NO: -0-

TIME: 9:41PM

Motion by Chowdhury seconded by Flach to reconvene the regular meeting.

YES: D'Ambrosio, Chowdhury, Flach, Smith

ABSTAIN: -0-

NO: -0-

TIME: 9:42PM

• MEETING ADJOURNED

Motion by Flach seconded by Chowdhury to adjourn meeting.

YES: Chowdhury, Flach, Smith

ABSTAIN: -0-

NO: -0-

Respectfully Submitted,
Denise Wahad, Recording Secretary