

**Mercersburg Water Authority Meeting**  
**Borough Hall, Mercersburg, PA 17236**  
**Held at Mercersburg United Methodist Church**  
**105 E. Seminary St.**  
**February 19, 2026**  
**MINUTES**

**ATTENDING:** Chairman Ed Twine, Vice-Chairman Jason Frey, Member Joe Creighton, Member Jacob Morgan, Member Michael Pedersen, Engineer Lance Hoover, Water & Sewer Plant Laborer Donnie Keefer, Solicitor Sam Wiser, Borough Manager Constance Creighton, Administrative Professional Angela Alleman

**GUEST(S)/PRESS:** Reference Sign in Sheets

Chairman Twine called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Jason Frey, Vice Chair of the Mercersburg Water Authority (MWA), introduced himself and noted he has served as a volunteer since 2013. He acknowledged community concerns about statements made by Chairman Ed Twine and explained that while the board did not witness the conversation, Ed is prepared to provide follow-up and take responsibility. Frey emphasized that the board is not defending the statement but highlighted Ed's long-standing dedication to the community. He noted Ed's volunteer efforts, including responding to water leaks at night, assisting inexperienced crews, supporting snow removal, and helping with Buck Run plant improvements—often at personal cost and outside normal duties. Frey concluded by urging the community to recognize Ed's broader contributions, focus on open and honest discussions, work together constructively, and build consensus to meet the Borough's water needs.

Ed Twine, Chairman of MWA acknowledged that he made a mistake by making a phone call outside the Authority and took responsibility for the action. He clarified that his concern was always to protect the Borough's water supply during emergencies and emphasized that he has no animosity toward the Fire Department. He explained that water advisories and system pressures are managed carefully, and that recent leaks and usage near system capacity contributed to his actions. Twine provided context on system operations, noting that the Borough often operates near production limits and that maintaining redundancy is critical to avoid shortages. He described recent leaks and emergency responses, including water drawn for firefighting, and apologized for any stress caused by his call. He shared his history of public service in the Borough, including prior council service, decades of volunteer work with the MWA, and personal investment in local properties reliant on the water system. Twine emphasized the Authority's ongoing efforts to improve system reliability, including the construction of a new \$6.2 million plant and projects to stabilize water supply. Twine also highlighted the expertise of the MWA board, noting the contributions of members with engineering, financial, construction, and municipal experience, and recognized the efforts of borough staff, including current and interim managers, for supporting operations during challenging times. He concluded by reaffirming his commitment to protecting the community's water system and working collaboratively with staff and emergency responders.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Donald Graham** – Rockwell Lane -Stated he has lived in Mercersburg for many years and has known Ed Twine since childhood. He acknowledged Ed's long service on the board but noted that

ongoing billing concerns affect many residents. He emphasized that all board positions hold value and can be filled by qualified individuals, and that other contractors could perform similar work as Ed. He raised concerns about the Borough's water infrastructure, citing frequent water main breaks and boil water advisories, and questioned the accuracy of online reports. He inquired about operational procedures during emergencies, including tank level monitoring during a recent fire, and asked who is responsible for logging system checks and water levels.

**Borough Response** - Donald Graham was informed that Borough Manager Constance Creighton maintains the system logs and was advised that records can be requested through a Right-to-Know submission specifying the information needed.

**Kelly Buterbaugh** - 14 Loudon Rd. - Stated she has lived in the Borough for approximately 25 years and appreciated Chairman Twine's public apology. She noted her water service has generally been reliable, with consistent quarterly bills historically around \$200-\$220. Kelly described past billing concerns, including one high bill of 16,000 gallons, which was reviewed and explained by Borough staff. She emphasized her primary concern is understanding the billing process and ensuring fairness, while also noting community concerns regarding water reliability and fire protection.

**Borough Response** - Member Joe Creighton reported that the Borough has purchased new billing software to replace the existing system, improving usability and billing clarity. Water usage is billed in 1,000-gallon increments. Residents with billing concerns are encouraged to submit a dispute form to the Borough office. He noted responses may take time due to limited staff and system access.

**Deidra Lopez** - 120 Loudon Rd. - Expressed concerns about the Borough's water system, noting the outdated billing program and limited office staff causing delays in responding to billing questions. She voiced frustration over rising bills, water quality, and usability, questioned how collected funds have been used for infrastructure, and noted that some residents purchase bottled water. She also raised personal health concerns related to water quality.

**Borough Response** - Chairman Ed Twine noted that MWA holds public meetings on the third Thursday of each month and encouraged residents to attend to better understand system challenges and recent rate increases. He explained that the Borough's water system operates under Pennsylvania DEP regulations, with water tested regularly—weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually—and results reported to DEP. Staff confirmed that the system meets all regulatory standards, with water drawn from wells, treated at the facility, and then distributed to customers.

**Derek Martin** - 313 Loudon Rd. - Reported a suspected malfunctioning water meter after receiving an unusually low bill. He observed that both interior and exterior meter readings had not changed and contacted the Borough in mid-October. Despite multiple follow-ups and scheduled appointments—two of which were canceled—the meter was inspected weeks later. He then received a bill showing roughly 17,000 gallons of usage, causing frustration due to the delay and difficulty in resolving the issue. Derek also expressed concern that water system discussions were reportedly occurring at the fire hall instead of in public meetings.

**Borough Response** – Chairman Twine acknowledged recent staffing challenges and noted ongoing efforts to improve operations. He reported that new billing software and meter-reading equipment have been purchased to reduce errors and improve accuracy. He added that while the water system and billing infrastructure are outdated, upgrades are underway, though implementation can be slow due to administrative and regulatory processes.

**Josh Redmond** – 12774 BTW - Noted prior experience with similar billing discrepancies in another community, where customer usage varied significantly between quarters. He suggested a root cause analysis to evaluate factors such as supply, demand, and potential leaks. He asked how the Borough tracks water usage, meter reading frequency, and water production versus billed amounts, and requested clarification on the methods used to monitor production, distribution, and overall system management.

**Council President Kelani Craig** – Advised residents with billing questions to contact the Borough office, where staff can access full account records, as detailed reviews cannot always be handled during meetings. Unresolved issues may be brought before MWA. Residents were encouraged to attend meetings to hear discussions on billing, system operations, and audits. Many documents are available online, and the Borough office can assist if information cannot be found. Efforts are ongoing to improve communication and to increase public information.

**Tim Stanton** - 115 S. Main St. - Emphasized Ed Twine's extensive knowledge of the Borough's water and sewer infrastructure, noting that his volunteer service is difficult to replace and losing his expertise could increase reliance on paid consultants. He outlined the Borough's financial challenges with DEP-mandated upgrades, including a new sewer plant, and noted that both MSA and MWA have pending U.S. Army Corps of Engineers funding applications. He explained that state grant eligibility can be limited by per-capita income and utility rates and mentioned plans to pursue a USDA grant or low-interest loan, which would be repaid through system revenues and could affect rates. Finally, he urged that disputes be addressed directly with MWA rather than publicly, including on social media.

**Nelson King** – 223 N. Main St. - A new resident introduced himself, noting his background in commercial and light industrial construction management. He asked whether Authority members or project professionals have financial interests in current or future projects; MWA members confirmed their roles are voluntary with no financial gain. He offered his expertise to assist or volunteer, suggesting a review of system calibrations, such as meters or transmitters, to evaluate water usage discrepancies. He concluded by expressing appreciation for the board's work and willingness to help.

**Sahand Miraminy** – 14 N. Main St. – Acknowledged the Borough's water system challenges, noting similar issues exist elsewhere. Emphasized the importance of cooperation and understanding advisories, such as boil water notices, which are precautionary. Cautioned that social media misunderstandings have fueled concern and encouraged residents to stay informed and calm. He expressed appreciation for MWA volunteers and urged residents with relevant knowledge to get involved. He shared a personal high-bill experience caused by a leak, suggesting residents check for household issues. Concluded by encouraging community collaboration to address aging infrastructure.

**Debra Keefer** – 241 N. Main St. – Addressed MWA about rising water bills, noting significant increases since January of last year. Expressed concern that ongoing billing issues have eroded resident confidence and highlighted the financial strain on those with fixed incomes, including worries about late fees. Concluded by noting community hardship and uncertainty about available solutions.

**Tim Berkstresser** – W. Grandview Ave. – Addressed MWA on long-standing water quality and infrastructure concerns, questioning whether earlier planning could have prevented current issues. Emphasized the need for accountability, transparency, and clearer communication on rising rates, financial planning, and infrastructure projects. Suggested regular public updates through local channels and acknowledged the volunteer service of Authority members while noting community expectations for leadership. Concluded by encouraging trust-building and valuing the expertise of experienced members in addressing water challenges.

**Borough Response** – Chairman Twine provided a historical overview of the Borough's water system. Well #3 was taken offline in the 1990s due to nitrate contamination, with restoration costs of \$2.5–\$3.5 million, but financial constraints prevented the project. Hydrogeological studies and exploratory drilling were largely unsuccessful, while the Buck Run and Zim Wells were later developed with local assistance and remain in service. Twine noted ongoing operational challenges, including equipment failures, well issues, and low reservoir levels. MWA members addressed billing concerns, citing staffing limits and outdated systems. A new billing system and updated meter-reading equipment are planned within the next quarter. Grant funding efforts continue with the assistance of a professional grant management firm. Discussion turned to regulatory requirements. The existing treatment plant is outdated, and the new wells require treatment, including disinfection and iron removal. A new iron-removal facility is required to maintain DEP compliance and ensure full well capacity. Engineer Lance Hoover explained that redundancy standards require the system to meet demand even if one source is offline. The plan includes multiple sources—the Park Avenue plant, Buck Run Well, and Zim Well with the iron-removal facility—to ensure sufficient capacity. Members acknowledged that the scale and cost of improvements are challenging for a small system serving roughly 1,100 customers and noted ongoing discussions with DEP regarding capacity and requirements. Twine also referenced a prior Bear Valley Water proposal, noting their cost estimates were incomplete and that a connection near the park on Mountain Grove would be more practical than the proposed Lemasters extension, which could require multiple private easements.

**Tiffany Black** – Fairview Ave. – Asked how much rainfall is needed to end drought conditions and expressed concern about potential summer restrictions. She suggested including meeting notices or updates on water bills to improve communication and asked if Authority members use Borough water. She proposed Mercersburg Academy assist with funding and emphasized transparency, public discussion, and accountability for Authority statements. She also recognized Chairman Ed Twine's contributions and encouraged sharing his knowledge to ensure continuity and future leadership.

**Borough Response** – Authority members explained that drought designations are set by state and federal agencies based on long-term precipitation, groundwater levels, and environmental indicators. Franklin County has remained in a slight to moderate drought since mid-summer, and current groundwater levels are below average, requiring sustained rainfall for recovery. Borough Manager Creighton noted that the new billing software will allow important notices to appear on water bills. Members confirmed they reside in the Borough or own connected properties and stated that while the Authority has reached out to Mercersburg Academy, it cannot speak for the Academy. Chairman Twine added that he regularly works with staff on maintenance and repairs, sharing operational knowledge, and emphasized that multiple individuals are capable of performing the work.

**Rick Frisby** – 127 S. Fayette St. – Expressed concern over vacant, deteriorating Borough properties attracting animals and creating nuisances. Suggested that addressing these properties could encourage redevelopment, generate revenue, and attract contractors or developers if incentives were offered.

**Borough Response** - Authority representatives stated that vacant property and redevelopment issues fall under Borough Council's jurisdiction and recommended that Council explore ways to encourage owners to maintain, repair, or redevelop these properties.

**Ben Dugas** – 5951 Buchanan Dr. - Expressed pride in the Borough and concern over rising water costs, noting some residents may struggle to pay higher bills. He attends MWA meetings to understand the situation and acknowledged the Authority's limited control over regulatory and external challenges. He praised volunteers and professional support, emphasized water conservation and community education, and encouraged ongoing public participation and better communication on water issues.

**Fire Chief Mark Sanders** - Addressed MWA as both an official and a customer, thanking the Authority for promptly resolving a prior concern within 12 hours. He noted that the Fire Department generally avoids public water system discussions but acted to clarify its ability to use the system for fire suppression, emphasizing ongoing cooperation with MWA. The Chief inquired about the new system's capacity, noted a requested meeting has not yet been scheduled, and clarified that a recent press release aimed to inform the public about fire protection, with all actions focused on public safety.

**Borough Response** – Engineer Lance Hoover stated the treatment system is permitted for about 150 gallons per minute and will use a storage tank over 200,000 gallons alongside existing tanks. During the transition, it will operate with the current plant, reservoir, Zim Well, and Buck Run Well, providing combined capacity above current demand.

Chairman Twine requested that members of the public complete and sign a letter of grant support for submission to the federal government. Completed letters can be turned in tonight for Borough staff to mail.

Chairman Twine reported that Borough Council voted to request his removal from the Authority and asked if members wished to vote on removing him. Solicitor Sam Wiser clarified that MWA members are appointed to fixed terms and cannot be removed by Council during that term except under specific conditions, such as missing three consecutive meetings. Council may recommend a resignation, but the decision rests with the member. He further noted that the Authority cannot remove a board member but may reorganize its officers, including chairperson or vice chairperson, at any time.

Chairman Twine asked if there was a motion from the board to reorganize the Authority's officers. No motion was made, and therefore no action was taken.

#### **TREASURERS REPORT**

**MOTION:** To approve January 2026 Treasure's Report was made by Morgan, seconded by Frey, all ayes, motion carried.

**MOTION:** To approve January 2026 Bills Payable Report was made by Pedersen, seconded by Morgan, all ayes, motion carried

#### **MINUTES**

**MOTION:** To approve January 15, 2026 Meeting Minutes was made by Frey, seconded by Morgan, all ayes, motion carried.

**MOTION:** To approve January 27, 2026 Special Meeting Minutes was made by Pedersen, seconded by Creighton, all ayes, motion carried

#### **ENGINEER'S REPORT**

Water and Sewer Plant Operator Lance Hoover provided an update, reporting stable storage tank levels but low groundwater levels being closely monitored. The Zim Well, reservoir, and Buck Run Well remain in service, with the existing plant producing about 135 gallons per minute and all filtration, disinfection, and required regulatory testing ongoing. Two pressure-reducing valve stations were recently adjusted, lowering system pressure in the Borough from 90 to 80 pounds to reduce strain and potential leaks. Hoover noted that once the Park Avenue treatment plant is operational, pressure is expected to drop an additional five pounds.

#### **WATER AND SEWER LABORER'S REPORT**

Present with no report given.

#### **PUBLIC WORKS**

Written report included.

### **SOLICITORS REPORT**

Solicitor Sam Wiser provided an overview of grant and funding received for water system improvements. He reported that the Authority has received:

- \$200,000 in 2018 through the Pennsylvania Small Water and Sewer Program
- \$2 million in 2022 from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the water treatment plant project
- \$199,000 from Franklin County via federal ARPA funds; and
- \$335,700 in March 2023 from the Commonwealth Financing Authority's Local Share Account program.

Additionally, the Well #3 project was financed through a \$6,201,822 low-interest PennVEST loan at a fixed 1% rate. Mr. Wiser noted that the Authority has applied for additional funding, including potential support from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and will continue pursuing available grant opportunities as projects advance.

### **GMS REPORT**

Not scheduled to be present.

Chairman Twine noted that the Grant Management Services (GMS) report is in the meeting packet. GMS assists MWA with grant applications and identifies funding opportunities. While grant writing has costs, GMS has successfully secured funding. Members Jason and Joe are working with GMS on additional applications, and Kelly O'Connor, GMS's lead, was recognized for her support.

### **MANAGER'S REPORT**

An update was provided on customer billing concerns, noting 29 disputes currently under review. Recent staff changes have affected the handling of these matters. Staff are addressing the issues and will provide a detailed update at a future meeting on resolved and pending disputes.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

**MOTION:** To extend the Water Conservation Notice was made by Morgan, seconded by Frey, all ayes, motion carried.

Member Morgan discussed expanding the Authority's solar array to offset water and wastewater electricity costs. The project, costing ~\$435,000 with a potential 40% federal tax credit, could generate 178,000 kWh annually, pay back in 11 years, and save \$600,000 over 30 years. Commitment is needed by July 4 to qualify for the credit.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Park Ave WTP Project change orders related to construction wage rates were tabled pending receipt of additional information.

**MOTION:** To approve High Tide Invoice #686 was made by Frey, seconded by Morgan, all ayes, motion carried.

**MOTION:** To approve PSI Payment Application #2 – Park Ave. WTP – Electrical was made by Creighton, seconded by Pedersen, all ayes, motion carried.

**MOTION:** To approve PSI Payment Application #6 – Park Ave. WTP - General was made by Creighton, seconded by Morgan, all ayes, motion carried.

Solicitor Sam Wiser reported that MWA reviewed a PennVEST funding offer for the Buck Run project. Although initially announced, the loan terms—1.74% interest for five years, 2.179% for the remaining 20-year term—exceeded expectations, especially compared to the 1% fixed-rate loan recently secured for Well #3. A review identified areas in the Authority’s financial data that could be revised to better demonstrate need, including debt service assumptions and rate calculations. The PennVEST specialist advised that the Authority could reject the current offer and resubmit with updated information, potentially qualifying for a lower rate or grant funding. It was recommended to reject the current offer and resubmit, while continuing discussions with DEP on the project and alternatives.

**MOTION:** To reject the current Buck Run PennVEST Loan offer was made by Morgan, seconded by Pedersen, all ayes, motion carried.

Solicitor Wiser reported that MWA discussed next steps for the Buck Run Treatment Plant consent order, noting that any project changes require DEP approval. Following the decision to reject the PennVEST funding offer, the Authority agreed to request a meeting with DEP to review the project, potential alternatives, and financing options. Past discussions with DEP have been productive, and deadline extensions were previously granted when progress was shown. Members noted that scheduling a meeting in Harrisburg may take 1–6 weeks. The Authority agreed to proceed promptly in requesting the meeting to discuss consent order requirements and possible paths forward.

Chairman Twine reported that MWA has contacted State Representatives about emergency funding to offset water hauling costs. As of February 19, 2026, approximately 762,600 gallons have been hauled at \$0.20 per gallon, with MWA lacking sufficient funds to cover the expense.

The system currently maintains about 32 feet in the storage tank, but production alone cannot meet demand. Additional hauling may be needed, especially in emergencies like main breaks or major fires. Measures at Mercersburg Academy have reduced consumption, but hauling totals are expected to rise. MWA continues working with state officials to secure funding and explore solutions for both immediate hauling costs and long-term water supply challenges.

Water and Sewer Plant Operator Donnie Keefer explained that each hauled water delivery is documented with a driver ticket, noting the truck number, gallons delivered, and source municipality. A chlorine residual test is performed before discharge into the storage tank. Records are maintained on-site for DEP inspection and to reconcile invoices. Hauling costs are tracked separately from wastewater or other operational expenses.

Chairman Ed Twine reported that both Quick’n Easy Auto Wash and Mercersburg Academy have been cooperative in their coordination and work with MWA.

#### **CORRESPONDENCE**

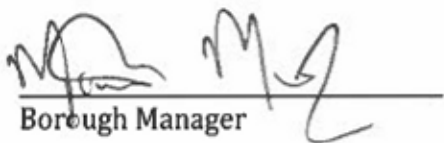
MWA and MMP&W will coordinate a meeting to discuss water system operational parameters and the fire company’s planning needs. A small workshop-style meeting with select representatives was recommended to identify key issues and information needs before holding a public meeting to review findings and maintain transparency. It was noted that the fire company may need additional understanding of certain water system operations, and they will prepare a list of information requests for discussion. MMP&W stated their main goal is to understand how and when they can safely access the water system during emergencies (e.g., brush fires requiring tanker refilling) without affecting system stability. MWA members stressed the need for clear communication and operational guidelines to allow emergency water use while protecting system operations and avoiding regulatory concerns moving forward.

**MOTION:** To enter into Executive Session at 10:17 PM was made by Creighton, seconded by Frey, all ayes, motion carried.

Regular meeting session resumed at 10:58PM.

**MOTION:** To adjourn at 10:59PM was made by Morgan, seconded by Frey, all ayes, motion carried.

**Date Approved:** 3/19/2026    **Motion Made By:** Creighton    **Seconded:** Morgan

  
Borough Manager

**SEAL**

