MUD Board of Directors

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Nov. 5: MUD reviews 2026 budget priorities and infrastructure

The Metropolitan Utilities District Board of Directors reviewed ongoing capital projects, property acquisitions and preliminary 2026 budget plans. Chief Financial Officer Steve Dickas reported that while the district budgeted for $149 million in water bonds this year, none were issued. That funding will carry forward into 2026 to support major infrastructure projects, including two new water reservoirs. The board discussed the district's continued effort to address rising water main breaks (432 so far this year) and the long-term strategy to replace older mains with stronger, joint-free materials.

Directors also approved moving forward with the purchase of three properties on North 28th Avenue to expand the safety buffer around the Florence Water Treatment Plant, which stores chlorine and other critical chemicals. The purchase will close in 2026 pending due diligence. During the meeting, staff confirmed that the lead service line replacement program remains on schedule to replace 650 lines this year at an estimated cost of $6.5 million, partly funded through a $40 million zero-interest state loan and federal grants.

In committee updates, Gas Operations Vice President Jim Knight reported that natural gas prices have risen due to export demand, though rate caps and prepayment agreements will help protect customers. MUD's advance payment for winter gas supply saved $14 million this year and is expected to save $16 million in 2026. The district's next gas rate increase from Northern Natural Gas will take effect Jan. 1, but officials said it will have little impact on customers.

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