

WEST SLOPE WATER DISTRICT

Regular Board of Commissioners Meeting

February 15, 2023

Meeting Summary

CALL TO ORDER

Present: Chair Paul Schuler, Commissioners Ramesh Krishnamurthy, Susan Meamber, and Carol Wild; Commissioner Andy Smith joined virtually

Management Staff: Michael Grimm, General Manager; Wendy Irwin, Finance Manager

Absent: None

Public: Jennifer Bauman, West Point Garden Club; Judy Clarke, Team HR

1.0 – CALL TO ORDER

Chair Schuler called to order the regular meeting of the West Slope Water District Board of Commissioners at 5:01 P.M., Wednesday, February 15, 2023. The meeting was held as hybrid meeting – in person and virtual. The public was made aware of the meeting through the District’s website (the meeting agenda and Zoom meeting link were posted on the website).

2.0 - PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

The District had not received any public comments regarding agenda items or other issues for the Board to consider.

2.1 – Jennifer Bauman made a short presentation to the Board on the history of the Eden Garden (located on the north side of SW Canyon Road between SW Canyon Lane by the Canyon Grill and SW 89th Avenue). The garden is located in ODOT right-of-way on land specifically dedicated for the garden. The volunteers of the West Point Garden Club perform all of the planting, weeding, and maintenance of the garden. Ms. Bauman shared the Garden Club has many partners including this District for the maintenance of the garden’s irrigation system. Ms. Bauman gifted the District with an historic photograph of the garden from the 1970s. The Board thanked Ms. Bauman for the kind words and the photograph to be displayed in the District office.

3.0 – CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Wild made a motion to accept the entire Consent Agenda Items 3.1 through 3.7. Commissioner Meamber seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously (4-0).

4.0 – DISTRICT ACTIVITIES

4.1 – General Manager’s Report: Mr. Grimm highlighted several key issues from the General Manager’s report:

- Long term source of supply: Mr. Grimm shared the preliminary wholesale rate for West Slope for the FYE 6.30.24 is \$1.895/CCF, an increase of \$0.424/CCF. Ms. Irwin stated without any compensating action by the District, the result of a higher wholesale water rate to Portland is there will be less money in the District's budget available for capital investments. The current fiscal year saw close to \$2 million set aside for capital projects, but only \$0.75 million would be projected to be available in FYE 6.30.24. Mr. Grimm stated staff would present scenarios to the Board for ways to keep the District moving forward with capital projects.
- Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy Water Main Project: Mr. Grimm stated ODOT has conditionally approved the permit for the project pending approval of the final traffic control plan from the District's construction contractor. The District has received an approved permit from the City of Beaverton following a successful negotiation with the City over paying a fully refundable deposit of \$4,000 to the City in lieu of having to purchase a non-refundable bond at a cost of \$4,000 as a performance bond for the \$129,000 worth of work in the City's right-of-way in this project. Commissioner Wild asked about the wisdom of loaning the City any District money and the assurance the District will actually get the money returned. Mr. Grimm stated we have a written statement from the City that the \$4,000 in lieu of a bond is fully reimbursable. As long as the City abides by the agreement, there will be no need for any legal action. The District is still waiting for permits to be approved from Washington County and Clean Water Services. Our most recent discussion with Emery & Sons finds they are planning on construction to start in early April.
- Mr. Grimm shared the District now has all the equipment to begin the GIS data collection project, and the District will have a kick-off meeting with staff at Frontier Precision to explain their software and the use of their equipment. Commissioner Krishnamurthy asked if there is a project schedule / timeline for completing the GIS data collection. Mr. Grimm responded it is difficult to know how much time it will take to complete the data collection task until we have some experience with the equipment and see how long it takes to complete given other field operations staff tasks (repairing water main breaks, reading meters, installing services, etc.). Our strategy is to collect data as we are performing tasks on District assets such as semi-annual valve turning and water main flushing, hydrant maintenance, and annual meter vault cleanouts. With this strategy, we believe it will take a little over a year to complete. Commissioner Wild suggested the progress of the GIS data collection tasks be included as an agenda item once the collection work starts.

4.2 – Finance Manager's Report: Ms. Irwin stated she has begun to develop the District's budget now that we have a preliminary wholesale water rate from the Portland Water Bureau. One key component of the budget is the decision on how to spend the District's capital reserve (that is, on which project) in the new fiscal year. Ms. Irwin also attended the Washington County budget seminar and learned about the County's current budget shortfalls. The new Springbrook "go-live" date has been pushed back to March 27. The District has three applicants for the open utility worker position anticipating a start date in March. Ms. Irwin stated the District will be working with Streamline on a new cost effective website that will be ADA compliant. Commissioner Krishnamurthy asked about the merchant services credit card fees, and Ms. Irwin stated that the District is now being charged a \$1 transaction fee for ACH/credit card payments. The District is leaning toward absorbing the transaction fees rather than passing it on to the customer making the payment. Commissioner Wild suggested the District post on the website that credit card payments are charged a \$1 fee for transactions. Ms. Irwin suggested this discussion be continued at the May budget committee meeting as part of the overall budget discussion. Commissioner Meamber asked about the payout of comp time to District

employees. Ms. Irwin stated the District banks employee comp time rather than pay it out in the employee's monthly paycheck. Each employee can request a payout of their comp time bank when they so desire.

4.3 – System Development Charged Proposed Increase: Mr. Grimm stated the Board's resolution is to index SDC rates annually following the 2015 rate study. The index is based on the Construction Cost Index for Seattle (closest city) from December to December annually. The index increase for December 2021 to December 2022 is 10.6%. Ms. Irwin reminded the Board the SDC revenue is a small portion of the District's budget.

Commissioner Wild made a motion to approve Resolution #02-2023 indexing the current SDC rates by 10.6% effective April 3, 2023. Commissioner Meamber seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously (4-0)

4.4 – Installation Charge Increase – New Proposed Schedule of Rates: Mr. Grimm shared that in addition to SDCs, customers requesting a new water connection also have to pay a cost of service rate for installing a new water service. The installation fees include the cost recovery for new meters, copper piping, meter boxes, and fittings as well as the use of District equipment, vehicles, and labor. Other fees that were increased in the Schedule of Fees include the refundable deposit to residential renters and commercial lessees. Ms. Irwin stated the real target for the fee increase from \$50 to \$100 for residential renters are renters who move out without paying their final bill.

Commissioner Krishnamurthy made a motion to approve Resolution #03-2023 as presented. Commissioner Meamber seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously (4-0). The new Schedule of Fees will take effect April 3, 2023

4.5 – Approval of Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA): Mr. Grimm presented the cost of living adjustment using the Consumer Price Index-Urban (CPI-U) Pacific for January 2022 to January 2023 is 6.0%. Staff is also proposing that COLA increases for 2022 be applied as of March 1 instead of July 1 in order to avoid having District employees wait until August 2023 to realize the salary adjustment for the increased cost of living in 2022. Commissioner Wild questioned the legality and the wisdom of moving away from the COLA increase being applied at the start of the fiscal year. Mr. Grimm reminded the Board that the District budget approved by the Board is a categorical budget not a line item budget meaning that the Board approves a Personnel Services budget but does not individually approve all of the components that comprise that particular budget amount (Note: On June 15, 2022, the Board approved a Personnel Services budget and the matching appropriations of \$955,000 that includes employee salaries, overtime pay, medical and dental insurance costs, retirement costs, payroll taxes, workers compensation costs, and other employee related costs). Staff estimates the Personnel Services budget will have about \$30,000 capacity by the end of the current fiscal year. Commissioner Wild stated she is not in favor of a change in the practice of COLA increases being applied at the start of the new fiscal year. No vote was taken on this resolution, and the Board agreed to review the cost of living adjustment again at the May 17, 2023 meeting with an index this year that spans January 2022 to April 2023 and thereafter April to April for subsequent budget years.

Judy Clarke from Team HR joined the meeting and was invited by the Board to be included in the Board's Executive Session.

6.0 – EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board left the regular session of the meeting at 6:17 PM and entered into Executive Session in accordance with ORS 192.660(2)(i) to conduct the performance review of the District’s General Manager. The General Manager left the Executive Session while the Board discussed the performance review with Ms. Clarke. During the Executive Session, Commissioner Smith joined the meeting. At 8:17 PM, Chair Schuler concluded the Board’s Executive Session, and the Board returned to regular session. Commissioner Meamber made a motion to grant a merit increase of 3% to the District’s General Manager’s annual salary effective March 1, 2023 and apply the District’s cost of living adjustment to the salary and salary range when the Board approves the cost of living adjustment for the rest of the District staff in May. Commissioner Krishnamurthy seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

5.0 – COMMISSIONERS COMMUNICATIONS

Chair Schuler and Commissioners Meamber and Wild attended the Special Districts Association of Oregon annual conference. The general consensus of the Board was that this current meeting was well run and valuable.

7.0 – ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Commissioner Wild moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Meamber seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously. Chair Schuler adjourned the February 15, 2023 Regular Board of Commissioners meeting at 8:33 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved:

Michael W. Grimm, P.E.
Acting Secretary

