

**WEST SLOPE WATER DISTRICT**

**Regular Board of Commissioners Meeting**

**July 15, 2020**

**Meeting Summary**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Present on Virtual Meeting: Commissioners Michael Hoffman, Noel Reiersen, Andy Smith, and Carol Wild

Management Staff: Michael Grimm, General Manager; Lucy Dawes, Finance & Customer Service Manager

Absent: Chair Charles Conrad

Public: None present

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**1.0 – CALL TO ORDER**

With Chair Conrad absent from the meeting, Commissioner and Acting Chair Reiersen called to order the regular meeting of the West Slope Water District Board of Commissioners at 5:00 P.M., Wednesday, July 15, 2020. The meeting was held through Zoom remote teleconferencing technology. The public was made aware of the meeting through the District’s website (agenda posted on website with the login information).

**2.0 - PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS**

No public comments or communications were received by the District.

**3.0 – CONSENT AGENDA**

Commissioner Hoffman asked to pull Agenda Items 3.1, 3.7, and 3.9. Acting Chair Reiersen requested Agenda Items 3.2 and 3.8 be pulled from the Consent Agenda as well. Acting Chair Reiersen asked if the font size for the table in Agenda Item 3.2 could be larger. Ms. Dawes stated the first page was a summary of all the data in the table, but the table could be printed on 11x17 paper in the future.

Aside: Acting Chair Reiersen thanked Commissioner Wild for a year’s worth of excellent leadership as Chair, and the other Commissioners agreed. Commissioner Wild thanked the rest of the Board.

Acting Chair Reiersen asked if Tualatin Hills Parks and Recreation Department was a District Customer and if the filling of the Raleigh Park swimming pool was done at the Department’s or District’s expense. Ms. Dawes confirmed THPRD paid for the water to refill the swimming pool through their metered connection.

Commissioner Hoffman stated he wanted to make a correction to the meeting summary for the June 17 meeting. He stated he presented some ideas and made several comments about the General Manager's Report (Agenda Item 3.7) that fell on deaf ears or was not supported by the full Board. Commissioner Hoffman stated he wanted to begin a process to be accountable for moving forward and but believes he might be alone with this idea feeling as if he were "left hanging in the middle of a high-five". Acting Chair Reiersen asked Commissioner Hoffman if there was something particular in Agenda Item 3.1 that needed correction or amending as presented in this Board packet. Commissioner Hoffman stated he drew an example of what the Board might be able to do given that he believed the District did not meet the expectations the Board was hoping for and that another approach to formatting those tasks was needed through a flow chart approach. Acting Chair Reiersen again asked if there was anything omitted in Agenda Item 3.1 that needs correcting. Commissioner Hoffman stated he wanted to see a different way of tracking progress and asked if he were the only one on the Board with this request. Commissioner Wild asked if Commissioner Hoffman could clarify the format he was seeking. Again, Commissioner Hoffman asked the Board if he was the only one looking to change the format of Agenda Item 3.7 to improve communication between the Board and the General Manager. Acting Chair Reiersen asked again if the comments in Agenda Item 3.1 were accurately represented, and Commissioner Hoffman stated the comments were accurate with no dispute. Acting Chair Reiersen suggested the current line of discussion would be more appropriate at another point in the meeting such as Agenda Item 5.2 – Other Topics from the Board. Commissioner Smith agreed adding he might have some comments at that point as well.

Commissioner Hoffman stated the meeting summary included comments from him suggesting the District could function with a two-person crew, but Commissioner Hoffman did not believe he stated that based on his own notes. He recalled his comments about reducing the field staff size to a three-person crew to see how that would work operationally. Commissioner Hoffman also mentioned the meeting summary stated (per the General Manager) the need for the automatic gate for the maintenance yard was a security issue but Commissioner Hoffman believes the issue is really a convenience issue as anyone going in and out of the yard can open or close the gate manually.

Commissioner Smith moved to accept the full Consent Agenda (including Agenda Item 3.1 as presented). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hoffman, and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **4.0 – DISTRICT ACTIVITIES**

##### **4.1 – Accounts Receivable & Aging / Past Due Accounts Status**

Ms. Dawes stated the actual revenues for the 2019-20 fiscal year are in, and though the revenue total fell slightly under budget for the year, the revenues were close to Ms. Dawes projections. The revenues were higher than the previous fiscal year in part to the water rate increase passed by the Board beginning in September 2019. Commissioner Hoffman stated he thought the District was waiting for a legislative action to occur before proceeding with past due account collections and asked if the Legislature has made any decisions. Commissioner Smith stated that the Legislature did not set aside any revenue for customer assistance through the special session or the recent Emergency Board meeting. Commissioner Smith also stated he supports investigating opportunities through CARES Act funding and making sure other utilities will be following along with the District. Commissioner Hoffman asked if any other utility has stated they want to pursue a similar course of action. Mr. Grimm stated that several other utilities are interested in pursuing this action but have not discussed the issue with their elected officials.

Related to the CARES Act, Ms. Dawes stated she reviewed the past debt accounts and found 17 accounts owing over \$500 each and not one of those accounts is related to COVID-19 as far as we know. So far, only six customers with past due accounts have stated they have been impacted directly by COVID-19. Ms. Dawes also stated that the District is proactively inquiring of all customers with past due accounts, and those that respond to the District are informed that there is some financial relief available for those impacted by COVID-19. Commissioner Hoffman asked if any customers with past due accounts are found to be renters, would the District pursue payments from their landlords instead. Ms. Dawes responded the District would, and Commissioner Hoffman stated he is an advocate for landlords and the situation that the landlord is in when they are left owing a bill incurred by tenants when no one calls the tenants to be responsible for their own bills. Commissioner Wild mentioned that she has clients who are indeed struggling to pay housing, grocery, and utility bills and understands how landlords are in a tough situation. Ms. Dawes stated the amount of over 60 days debt money owed to the District is not large (over \$6000 compared to \$0 in previous years though), but it will take a lot of staff work and numerous judgment calls to clean up / write off the many accounts the reflect that debt. Acting Chair Reiersen commented that other utilities seem to be waiting for someone to step forward and asked the General Manager if the Board gave staff the approval to use the District's "pre-COVID" standard procedures to stimulate customers with past due account to communicate with the District, would he accept the responsibility and potential visibility of being the first Metro area utility to potentially shut off water to non-responsive customers. Mr. Grimm said the scenario is acceptable. Commissioner Hoffman agreed with that methodology, and Commissioner Smith supported the process as well. Commissioner Smith also asked the General Manager why he thought other utilities were hesitant to lead in this area or even follow us, and Mr. Grimm replied that no specific reasons were identified by other water managers beyond their Board/q City Council "was not in favor of such a move", but optics would likely be the main reason. Commissioner Smith mentioned he wanted to know if other elected officials are hesitant for political optic reasons or for unknown legal reasons. Acting Chair Reiersen stated the General Manager should be clear with other utilities what actions the District is proposing including the definitions of terminology (e.g. what does a doorhanger mean). Commissioner Wild asked about the language proposed in June that would be used in a billing statement or in a phone call / email message. Ms. Dawes reminded the Board that to stimulate customers contacting the District, staff will need to state that customers can avoid their water service from being shut off simply by communicating with the District (Note: that is, the District may actually have to briefly shut off service until the customer responds). Ms. Dawes stated her proposal was to print on the past due bills a sequence of events that would occur if the customer failed to respond to the District. Commissioner Hoffman asked if staff was certain there are no ramifications or adverse outcomes at this time for a utility who shuts off service to a customer. Mr. Grimm stated he was not aware of any federal, state or local rule. Commissioner Hoffman suggested the District investigate that issue to be sure. Commissioner Wild made a motion to move forward with the proposed procedures presented at the June Board meeting for addressing non-COVID-19 related past dues accounts. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hoffman and was passed unanimously.

#### 4.2 – Review of July 7 Board Work Session

Mr. Grimm briefly reviewed the items discussed in the July 7 Board work session related to the four main tasks undertaken in 2020 (AWIA Compliance, Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy Water Main Project, Long Range Water Supply / Public Outreach Efforts, and District Strategic Plan - See Agenda Item 3.7 for specific details). Mr. Grimm commented that the Effective Utility Management (EUM) framework will help shape the tasks the District will strategically undertake in 2021 and beyond. Commissioner Hoffman stated that to complete the EUM self-assessment

it was necessary to assume staff efforts and activities over areas which he did not have much first-hand knowledge.

## **5.0 – COMMISSIONERS COMMUNICATION**

5.1 - Citing personal reasons, Acting Chair Reiersen announced to the Board that he has submitted to the General Manager and the Chair Conrad a letter of resignation from the Board effective August 31, 2020. Commissioner Hoffman commented that Budget Committee member Ramesh Krishnamurthy regularly expresses interest in the Board. Commissioner Smith expressed his sincere gratitude to Commissioner Reiersen for being a servant to the District and demonstrating great leadership on the Board. Mr. Grimm stated he had talked about this issue with Chair Conrad earlier in the month. The Board has several options available to fulfill a vacated position on the Board:

- Launch a District-wide advertisement to recruit a new Commissioner similar to the process used when Commissioner Wild was appointed to the Board. Mr. Grimm does not recommend this process if the Board wishes to have a new Commissioner in position on or about the effective date of Commissioner Reiersen's resignation plus interviewing perspective candidates may be more difficult done through remote meeting technology.
- Select a candidate from a collection of known District customers who have applied to be Commissioner in the past, served (or is serving) on the District's Budget Committee or has been selected in the past to fill another vacated position.

The term of the potential appointment would be up to ten months (September 2020 through June 2021 ... this position is slated for an election in May 2021 for a four-year term beginning July 1, 2021). Mr. Grimm stated the Board tonight may wish to defer a decision until the August meeting when the full Board is likely available or have the General Manager contact any perspective candidate the Board wishes to consider and learn about the candidate's interest in the position. Commissioner Wild commented that both Paul Schuler and Ramesh Krishnamurthy would be very good choices to fill a vacated position. Commissioner Hoffman agreed and stated he enjoyed having Mr. Schuler on the Board during the first half of 2019 and Mr. Krishnamurthy would be good as well. Commissioner Smith agreed that keeping the process simple with two known perspective candidates is good, and he supports having that conversation. Acting Chair Reiersen agreed that either candidate would be a great choice.

Acting Chair Reiersen noted that no Commissioner had attended any outside meetings representing the District.

## **5.2 – Other Topics**

Commissioner Smith stated he believed the General Managers report could be formatted to be in line with Commissioner Hoffman's views to understand the goals of the Board and the General Manager for the next year and be reflected categorically and topically in the report. Commissioner Hoffman stated what would help him is to know what is moving through the mind of the General Manager in terms of accomplishments and short and long term projections, and that tasks would cycle in and out of the queue as tasks are completed or rearranged in the priority for new tasks. The current format does not provide him any sense of timeline for any of the tasks and appears loosely structured and too wordy with two pages of details rather than a simple flow chart. Commissioner Smith supports a linear timeline approach to the report. Acting Chair Reiersen also commented that the Board discussed having the report pulled out of Consent Agenda and placed in the District Activities section. Commissioner Wild agreed that looking at tasks in blocks of time would be helpful but disagreed with Commissioner Hoffman preferring to have some details in the report to provide content not to discuss but to refresh her memory on each task. Another suggestion would be "spotlight" a specific task each month in

the discussion. Acting Chair Reiersen commented the purpose is to have a dialogue about the District's tasks and activities and be accountable to review the accomplishments, and he agreed with Commissioner Wild. He also mentioned he liked the format of Agenda Item 3.8 as well as the style of project status updates on the Green Tank during that active project. Commissioner Hoffman believed the report will be beneficial to use as a launch into a year-end performance evaluation. Commissioner Smith agreed and also commented the dialogue should also include the rationale of moving tasks up and down within the priority list. Mr. Grimm expressed his willingness to tailor the report to be more linear with brief, simple bulleted item details in time blocks, but he is hesitant to spend a lot of time creating an additional graphical timeline (Note: such as a Gantt chart) for the four immediate tasks identified in the report with the goal of creating a report of value that is simple in design. Commissioner Wild expressed concern about having enough information to effectively evaluate performance going forward when the Board only sees the General Manager once each month, so extra detail is actually a good thing for her. Commissioner Hoffman stated it would best to develop this report in a different format so it would be easier for the Board to observe what the General Manager is doing daily to achieve the performance goals. Commissioner Hoffman commented the Board has a certain set of expectations to achieve and the Board desires the General Manager to help achieve those expectations. Commissioner Wild expressed a potential disconnect between the Board's previous year's expectations of priorities and the priority hierarchy of today (Note: that is, the Board may not have been well engaged as those priorities were changing). Commissioner Smith suggested one method is just to assign estimated timeframes for each task to act as bookends.


The consensus of the Board was the meeting went well except for the resignation letter from Commissioner Reiersen. Commissioner Smith thanked Commissioner Reiersen for stepping into to chair the meeting today, and the other Commissioners agreed.

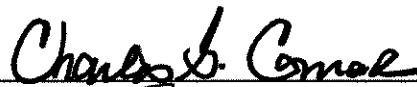


#### 6.0 - ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Commissioner Hoffman moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously. Acting Chair Reiersen adjourned the July 15, 2020 Regular Board of Commissioners meeting at 6:49 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved:

  
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Michael W. Grimm, P.E.  
Acting Secretary

  
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