



Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District (EPCWD)
Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Groundwater Sustainability Agency (EPCGSA)
Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday May 8, 2024

Windfall Farms Conference Room, 4710 Flying Paster Lane, Paso Robles

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 3:01PM by Dana Merrill

Directors Roll Call:

Dana Merrill – present
Lee Nesbitt - present
Jerry Reaugh – present
Hilary Graves – present
Herb Rowland – absent

Others present:

Blaine Reely, SLO County
Willy Cunha, Shandon-San Juan Water District
Matt Turrentine, Shandon-San Juan Water District
Patricia Wilmore, Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance
Guests (in person and by teleconference)

ITEM 2: REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF APRIL 10, 2024 MEETING

MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES OF APRIL 10, 2024 MEETING made by Hilary Graves, seconded by Lee Nesbitt, voice vote, motion passed 4-0.

ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENT

Willy Cunha (Shandon-San Juan Water District) discussed the Special Joint Meeting between Shandon-San Juan Water District/GSA and EPCWD/GSA scheduled for 9:00AM Wednesday, May 22 at SVP Winery, 111 Clark Road, Shandon.

ITEM 4: DISCUSSION AND CONSIDER ACTION ON EPCWD 2024-2025 DRAFT BUDGET

Jerry Reaugh opened the discussion describing the current status of the Paso Basin Cooperative Committee (PBCC) and the GSAs cooperating under a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The percentage financial participation were developed by the calculated approximate percentage of total extraction for each GSA. Kurt Ammann asked for clarification on how the \$7.6M State grant has been allocated throughout the County. Jerry Reaugh described the different amounts/projects among the North County participants. Some GSAs have additional participated with in-kind contributions with examples being Blaine Reely's position being paid for by the County GSA, and EPCWD's monitoring network. The proposed PBCC budget, which the GSAs must approve, is a budget for administrative functions and does not include any projects to enhance the Basin's status; those projects must be approved by the voters via a Prop 218 ballot proceeding.

Jerry Reaugh then moved to what progress the PBCC has made including the Blended Water project RFP; the Alluvial Wells (required by the GSP) project design RFP; the award of the Land IQ project contract; The RFP for the Expanded Monitoring Network; the Rate Study RFP awarded; the RFP for the State Water Project Recharge project; the MILR program status; the RFP for Real-Time Monitoring Network; Stream Gauges; a program available for dry drinking water wells; Well Verification and Registration.

Jerry Reaugh described what will take place in 2024-2025, including the Annual Water Report and the 5-Year GSP evaluation, items that are budgeted to cost \$600,000, with EPCWD's participation payment to be \$175,800. The projected PBCC budgets for beyond 2025 seem to be conservative when compared to other Basins' budgets. The idea of a modification the form of governance was discussed, with the MOA being somewhat cumbersome. The MOA's benefit was that it prevented five or more GSPs being written for the Basin and the concomitant coordination difficulties of that approach.

There was a brief comparison of administrative budgets of other GSA agencies. There would be options as to how to fund an administrative budget including by irrigated acre or by amount pumped. Michael Baugh asked if 60,000 AF of extraction is sustainable. Hilary Graves responded that we don't know how much is being extracted, and that Land IQ's evapotranspiration measurements and calculations are a better option than trying to establish extraction reporting or metering which will take time. There are some drawbacks to the ET data, but it still is the best quickest option, and is extensively "ground truthed." Additional weather stations are planned for installation in the Basin.

Jerry Reaugh then discussed upcoming EPCWD budget needs, with the \$174,800 needed for the Annual and 5-Year GSP Update reports requiring an increase in EPCWD assessment levels to \$15.00 per irrigated acre. In 2025-2026, that could jump to \$24.50 per irrigated acre depending on the results of the in process Rate Study. Hopefully, by 2025-2026, uniform funding across the Basin will be in place with all landowners being assessed at the same rates by their GSAs. Dana Merrill reminded the Board and attendees that the original Prop 218 ballot at formation of the EPCWD allowed for a maximum of \$35.00 per irrigated acre.

Discussion followed regarding how the County GSA is funding its part in the PBCC which is through the general fund, essentially all taxpayers in the County. Questions from guests included why have EPCWD rates gone up and down? Answer: the District has not maintained a big reserve in the past, has a very modest budget, and doesn't maintain a contingency fund for projects. Assessments have been based on need. Assuming a larger funding vehicle, does that change EPCWD's funding needs? Answer: hopefully by 2025-2026, funding will be established across the Basin and EPCWD would have its separate budget. If the MOA is replaced by a joint powers agreement (JPA), how does the authority migrate? Answer: with central and equivalent funding across the Basin, District rates can stabilize for their own needs. How to soften the increase "blow" to members? What language to use to help explain the increase? Answer: to be determined.

Jerry Reaugh suggested tabling any action on the District Draft Budget until the June regular meeting, as the May 22 PBCC meeting should flesh out that budget better.

ITEM 5: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING BOARD VACANCY

Director Herb Rowland has notified the Board of his resignation. His term (until December 2027) can be filled by Board appointment. It was noted that now that the District is a GSA and participant in the PBCC, the importance of director positions on the District Board is increased. The Board is encouraging potential candidates to step forward.

ITEM 6: UPDATE ITEMS

Note: The Update Items were discussed generally out of order and will be shown here in the order taken, with the correct numbering:

a. Groundwater Levels Monitoring

1) EPCWD Groundwater Monitoring Network

Jerry Reaugh reported that the second readings of the year have been completed and he will be preparing data charts. That data will be included in the Annual Report to help estimate the amount of water in storage in the Basin. The Land IQ data currently has no place to "land", a topic the PBCC will be taking up.

b. SLO County Board of Supervisors meetings

No update provided.

c. WRAC meeting May 1, 2024

Lee Nesbitt reported that the County Flood Control budget for 2024-2025 was presented. The County has slated \$1.12M for desalination project, \$656K to the Salinas Dam Retrofit project, \$326K to North County projects.

e. Paso Basin Cooperative Committee update

1) PBCC meeting May 22, 2024

2) PBCC staff report and PBCC RFPs and projects

The PBCC meeting on May 22 will include items a) through f) and will be reported on at the June meeting.

ITEM 7: TREASURERS REPORT

a. Monthly Financial Status Report

The report stands as presented. No comments.

ITEM 8: NEW BUSINESS

No new business was presented.

ITEM 9: SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING – SPECIAL JOINT MEETING WITH SHANDON-SAN JUAN WATER DISTRICT/GSD MAY 22, 2024, 9:00AM IN SHANDON

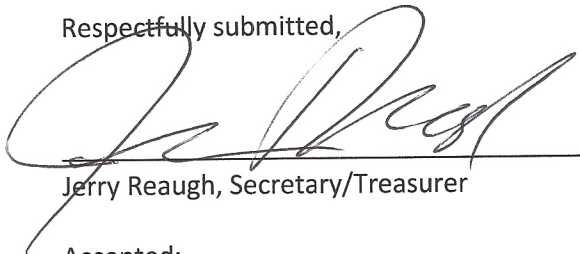
The meeting will be held at SVP Winery, 111 Clark Road, Shandon.

ITEM 10: NEXT REGULAR MEETING JUNE 12, 2024

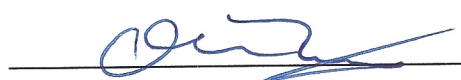
ITEM 11: ADJOURNMENT

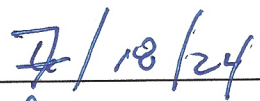
MOTION TO ADJOURN made by Hilary Graves, seconded by Lee Nesbitt, voice vote, motion passed 4-0 . Meeting adjourned at 4:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,


Jerry Reaugh, Secretary/Treasurer

Accepted:


Dana Merrill, President


Date 