

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
SAN JUAN WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT
SPECIAL MEETING – MAY 15, 2023, 4pm

Attendance

A Special Meeting of San Juan Water Conservancy District was held Monday, May 15, 2023, at 4 pm in person at 46 Eaton Drive Suite 5 and on Zoom.

The following Directors were present in person: Al Pfister, Susan Nossaman, Doug Secrist, Chuck Riehm, Rob Hagberg, Joe Tedder, and Bill Nobles.

Also present were Sally High (SJWCD Executive Assistant) and Josh Pike (Pagosa Springs SUN).

Attending on Zoom were Director Candace Jones, Renee Lewis (grant writer), and the Pagosa Springs SUN.

Call to Order

The Special Meeting of the San Juan Water Conservancy District (SJWCD) was called to order by Chairman Al Pfister at 4:03 p.m. A quorum was present.

Revisions to Agenda

The Board considered Revisions to Agenda. No revisions were necessary.

Declarations of Conflicts of Interest

The Board considered Declarations of Conflict of Interest. No Conflicts of Interest were identified.

Public Comments (limited to 3 minutes please)

Chairman Pfister opened the meeting to public comment. No public comments were offered.

Introduction of Renee Lewis, Grant Opportunities, and Consideration of Contract for Grant Writing Services

Board members introduced themselves to Renee Lewis. The contract between Renee and Pagosa Area Water and Sanitation District (PAWSD) was sent to Directors by email. If SJWCD enters into a contract, the template and financial commitment would be the same. Renee suggested a discussion of the projects that SJWCD is planning so that a scope of her work can be clearly defined in any eventual contract. Funding sources, grant cycles, schedules, deadlines, sequencing stages of application, and administrative responsibilities were mentioned in discussion.

Regarding Objective One, a Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) grant for technical assistance when applying for federal funds may be appropriate. As discussed at earlier meetings, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has a grant program for building a small reservoir. Directors asked whether sufficient data had been collected to enter the next phase of planning the Headwaters Project. Chairman Pfister assured Directors that SJWCD has the necessary basic information. He recently contacted La Plata Water Conservancy District and engineer, Steve Harris, about the specifications used to build Long Hollow Reservoir (~8,600-acre feet). The Long Hollow water storage project was being built when the CWCB grant for the Headwaters project was submitted in 2016 and 2017.

Renee offered an overview of grant sources. CWCB tends to be more flexible than the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). The required CWCB match can be cash or in-kind and depends on the requested amount. All CWCB requests must be aligned with the Colorado Water Plan.

Director Jones requested that SJWCD produce a (persuasive, factual, publishable) paper to answer these key questions: "Why does our community need water storage at the Headwaters site? Why do we need it now?" The paper would serve as a consistent public relations tool.

The Southwest Basin Roundtable was named as another viable grant resource, especially for smaller requests. Roundtables are the most local component of the CWCB bureaucratic structure and the local group in which grant processes begin.

Thursday, July 27, is the next opportunity to present a grant request to Southwest Roundtable.

Renee explained that a DOLA request is not as time-consuming as a CWCB application. After submission, a presentation to DOLA in Denver is required. A specific project, suitable to DOLA, was not identified.

Board members were asked to submit their ideas for projects to the Executive Assistant by Monday May 29. The list will be shared with Renee so that Directors can consider the viability of projects at a future meeting.

Updates from Chairman

- Directors Pfister and Riehm accompanied PAWSD Manager Justin Ramsey to the recent Aspen Springs Metro District Board Meeting to present information about the potential extension of treated water lines to a fill station on Highway 160 in Aspen Springs. PAWSD proposed that Renee Lewis write a DOLA grant (~\$1.5 million) to fund the project, with the Metro District acting as fiscal sponsor. The response of the Metro District Board was neutral and talks are ongoing.
- Directors Pfister and Hagberg volunteered at the recent 5th grade Water Festival at Fort Lewis College. The annual Water Festival was sponsored by Southwestern Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Water Information Program (WIP). Twenty-eight educational stations taught 756 5th grade students about local water issues. A list of the 28 educational stations was circulated. A suggestion was made that SJWCD may use one of the hands-on educational activities in future educational efforts, like the County Fair.
- Director Pfister and Southwestern Water Conservation District Manager Steve Wolff attended the Dolores Water Conservation District meeting with the Rio Grande Water Conservancy District. Ken Curtis, Dolores Water Conservation District, explained McPhee Reservoir and its operation in providing water to agricultural users, including the Ute Mountain Utes.
- Responses to SJWCD's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests have been received from the United States Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of

Land Management (BLM). SJWCD made the FOIA requests to gather details about the opposed Treasure Pass Water Rights applications currently before the court. Director Pfister explained that the USFS sent “everything,” an extensive compilation that will take some time to sort through. The BLM’s response was more measured and it appears that the BLM is responding to concerns about water not leaving the western slope. West slope oppositions appear to be making a difference. BLM is yet to send details about their proposed actions to include a divergent structure(s) and measurement devices.

- Colorado State Engineer, Kevin Rein, will be in Durango on May 24 at 4 pm to take questions about his responsibilities in the administration of Colorado’s water. The meeting is at the SWCD office and a Zoom option will be offered. Director Pfister will send details to board.
- Upper San Juan Watershed Enhancement Partnership (Mountain Studies Institute) hired a new coordinator.
- Director Pfister talked to Emily Lashbrooke, Archuleta County Community Development Corporation (CDC), about writing a grant for CWCB’s Turf Replacement program. Russ Sands is the CWCB contact. The applicant would need to be the Town or County government (possibly a special district). Water conservation groups, such as Growing Water Smart, PLPOA, and others, would advocate. The amount of money per county is ~\$25K.

Consideration of Treasurer’s Report

Director Tedder distributed a Budget vs Actual spreadsheet dated May 11. He stated that he is not concerned with revenue. He reminded the board that Colorado Trust interest earned is ~\$900 per month, ~5.5%. On the expenditure side, Director Tedder expressed concern about the Water Rights Defense expenses. Given a recent conversation with the Attorney, an additional ~ \$7,000 will be needed in 2023, due to an unprecedented six open Water Defense cases. Tedder predicted a possible overrun of \$11,000 to \$12,000 and suggested that contingency funds be used as needed. Contingency funds will not be moved now.

Director Riehm moved to accept the budget as discussed, with \$6,000 from Contingency Funds earmarked for Water Rights Defense, and to put on hold any future changes to Contingency Funds. Director Hagberg seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Consideration of Strategic Plan Tracker

Directors considered the document included in the Board Packet. Director Jones asked the board whether the template (spreadsheet) reflects the board's expectations. It was clarified that there is no implied order or priority to the actions corresponding to each of the three Strategic Objectives. Director Hagberg accepted responsibility to serve on the Objective Two committee. Directors were reminded that they can work on any action in which they are interested. Committee members were asked to bring changes to the tracker to the next meeting.

Director Tedder suggested that Google Drive be used to keep the working version of the Strategic Plan Tracker current. The Strategic Plan Tracker is a dynamic "living" document. Director Tedder will send the document in Google Drive. Directions about how to use Google Drive will be sent to all Directors, as needed.

Consideration of Directors' Reports on Three Strategic Objectives

Objective One: Advance the San Juan River Headwaters Project (SJRHP) as one resource for meeting agricultural, municipal, environmental, and recreational water needs of the San Juan Water Conservancy District (SJWCD) community.

Director Pfister contacted Steve Harris of Harris Engineering, and Aaron Chubbuck of WCA Construction, engineer for La Plata Conservancy District's Long Hollow Reservoir (~8,600-acre feet). Harris will send relevant specifications for estimating expenses of the Headwaters Project. They discussed the filling of the Headwaters Reservoir, either through a pipeline or by the Park Ditch. Director Pfister will meet with Park Ditch President Steve Laverty on Wednesday at Root Coffee House at 1 pm.

Director Pfister explained that he continues conversations with appropriate CWCB contacts about funding opportunities. The Objective One committee obtained the

form that will grant permission for Directors Pfister and Secrist to address the Southern Ute Council. The completed form will be submitted.

Objective Two: Consider strategies beyond water storage for meeting agricultural, municipal, environmental, and recreational water needs of the SJWCD community.

Director Nossaman explained that the Objective Two committee had not met. Director Jones stated that the consideration of ground water was concluded and asked for a meeting. Directors were reminded that the Plumtaw film about holding water in the forest is Wednesday night at Pagosa Springs Center for the Arts.

Objective Three: Educate the SJWCD community about the water resources of the Upper San Juan River Basin and related issues, including SJRHP, water resource planning, water conservation, and the work of SJWCD.

Director Tedder presented a document outlining proposed actions to move Objective Three forward. Predicted expenses are less than those proposed at the last meeting. Work proposed by Josh Kurz included a Water Summary Graphic, "Your Water" Story Map, three Water Talk Presentations, and A Water Field Trip. Director Pfister reminded the board that the Southwest Basin Implementation Plan (on the CWCB website) has water story maps specific to each river drainage. Josh's existing website is <https://www.southsanjuans.info/>. Director Tedder described the revised plan to transition to the new website theme to be handled by the Executive Assistant, Director Tedder, and Curtis Nehring. The plan to create articles and press releases was redesigned and expenses trimmed significantly.

Estimated expenses to accomplish the Objective Three actions were predicted to total \$7,442 from the Public Education line item. Director Hagberg moved to rescind the motion passed last month and replace that agreement with the actions and expenses described today. Director Nobles seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the Special Meeting was adjourned at 5:58 pm.

SAN JUAN WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

By /s/ Sally High

Executive Assistant for Board of Directors

DISTRICT SEAL

FINAL