

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE
COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE RAINBOW MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
OCTOBER 7, 2021**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – The Communications and Customer Service Committee Meeting of the Rainbow Municipal Water District on October 7, 2021, was called to order by Chairperson Shute at 3:34 p.m. in the Board Room of the District, 3707 Old Highway 395, Fallbrook, CA 92028. *(All meetings are being held with in person attendance following County and State COVID guidelines as well as virtually.)* Chairperson Shute, presiding.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **ROLL CALL:**

Present: Member Hamilton, Member Shute, Member Stewart, Member Vernon *(via video conference)*.

Also Present: Finance Manager Largent, Operations Manager Gutierrez, Alternate Gray, Executive Assistant Washburn.

Also Present Via Teleconference or Video Conference:

Information Technology Manager Khattab, Information Systems Specialist Espino, Human Resources Assistant Ramirez.

One member of the public was present via teleconference or video teleconference.

4. **INSTRUCTIONS TO ALLOW PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS FROM THOSE ATTENDING THIS MEETING VIA TELECONFERENCE OR VIDEO CONFERENCE**

Mr. Shute read aloud the instructions for those attending the meeting via teleconference or video conference.

5. **SEATING OF ALTERNATES**

There were no alternates seated.

6. **ADDITIONS/DELETIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA (Government Code §54954.2)**

Ms. Largent requested Item #17 be deferred to the next committee meeting. It was noted an update on all development projects should be provided. There was no objection from the committee members related to deferring this item.

7. **PUBLIC COMMENT RELATING TO ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA (Limit 3 Minutes)**

There were no public comments.

***8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. September 2, 2021

Motion:

To approve the minutes as stated.

Action: Approve, Moved by Member Hamilton, Seconded by Member Stewart.

Vote: Motion passed (summary: Ayes = 3, Noes = 0, Abstain = 1).

Ayes: Member Hamilton, Member Shute, Member Stewart.

Abstain: Member Vernon.

9. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Vernon stated he was impressed with the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting the District received. Ms. Largent thanked Mr. Vernon.

Mr. Hamilton mentioned the publicity for the Heli-Hydrant that took place on September 14th and commended Mr. Gutierrez for doing an outstanding job in coordinating and planning the ceremonious event. Mr. Gutierrez thanked Mr. Hamilton as well as noted how Supervisor Demond's office was currently looking into getting more funds for additional Heli-Hydrants throughout San Diego County. Ms. Gray pointed out all the video coverage has been combined and uploaded to the RMWD website.

Ms. Largent pointed out both the Certificate of Achievement and Heli-Hydrant installation will assist RMWD with its financing.

Mr. Shute inquired as to whether the recent storm caused damage to RMWD facilities. Mr. Gutierrez explained the water damage was minimal; however, the District's SCADA system took a much bigger hit which were assessed the morning after. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Stewart mentioned the RMWD staff members and contractors installing meters in his area was doing a good job including in their clean up after completing the work. He also talked about a recent break and how grateful his neighbors were for the repairs made by RMWD.

10. POTENTIAL DROUGHT RESTRICTIONS

Ms. Largent reported after speaking with SDCWA earlier in the week, SDCWA stated there were no changes in restrictions coming up as well as any upcoming supply issues. She noted everyone was on the voluntary 15% reduction and although staff has heard nothing further about this, it would be monitored daily.

Mr. Vernon inquired as to whether RMWD has had a 15% reduction. Ms. Gray confirmed this was not probably because it was not mandatory.

11. NON-PAYMENT WATER SHUTOFF UPDATE

Ms. Gray reported Governor Newsom has extended the moratorium until January 2022 and although staff was ready to proceed, everything in place will be put on hold until December in terms of notifying the impacted customers. She noted staff will continue to keep customers apprised of the status of the reinstatement of shut offs.

Mr. Shute asked if there was any benefit to sending out a letter notifying customers of the extension. Ms. Largent stated staff was sending letters explaining the moratorium could be lifted at any time encouraging payment.

Discussion went to Item #13.

12. EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION PROGRAM UPDATE

Ms. Gray explained this item was to follow up on a conversation had during a previous committee meeting to have staff make sure RMWD customers receive emergency notifications. She said after identifying some areas where information may be lacking as well as how RMWD would contact those customers for whom RMWD does not have the correct information. She reported staff was in the process of reviewing everything making sure information provided by customers is getting pushed over to IPS, identifying what pieces of information is missing, and following up with the customers via phone calls, email, and texts to hopefully get the information updated.

Mr. Shute inquired as to how long the analysis phase will take. Ms. Gray reported the analysis is close to being complete and how an article will be published in an upcoming newsletter encouraging those who have been contacted to provide updated contact information. Mr. Shute asked if it would be helpful for staff to outline those findings and what the approach would look like for the committee to discuss at their November meeting. Mr. Stewart suggested getting something going as soon as possible, especially due to it being fire season.

Mr. Hamilton recommended reaching out to all RMWD customers because this is related to emergencies. Ms. Gray clarified the intent was to find a way to get the customers to provide their updated information as well as promote the fact that without the correct information, some may not be notified in the event of an emergency. She noted the District's website includes an emergency notification feature which could be used to pop up a message to encourage customers as well.

Discussion went to Item #14.

***13. WATER BOARD ARREARAGE PAYMENT PROGRAM**

Ms. Largent referenced the letter included in the agenda packet explaining the program. She explained this is a program in which the State is giving RMWD funds to pay off the balances for those customers who did not pay their bill between March 4, 2020 and June 15, 2021. She pointed out RMWD was not allowed to collect on any criteria such as whether the customer was affected by COVID, but rather to issue credits totaling approximately \$1.4 million strictly based on the unpaid amounts for this time period. She pointed out the draft letter presented was intended to be positive, notifying the customers RMWD was applying for this program which in turn will assist with a number of unpaid bills.

Mr. Vernon asked for the percentage of population of customers who did not pay their bill compared to the customers who did pay their bills during this timeframe. Ms. Largent stated she provided similar information to the Board which she would share that with the committee.

Mr. Hamilton asked for confirmation RMWD would receive \$1.4 million. Ms. Largent stated the State said they had \$985 million available and had only received survey results totaling under \$400 million that will cover all the accounts receivable balances that were more than 60 days past due during the March 4, 2020 - June 15, 2021 timeframe. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Largent stated once RMWD receives the funds, staff will be able to populate this to determine which customers will be receiving funds as well as the credit amounts. She pointed out at this time RMWD does not need to send out a 1099C for taxability; however, that could change because historically whenever debt is forgiven, it is taxable.

Discussion returned to Item #12.

14. WATER SERVICE UPGRADE PROJECT (WSUP) UPDATE

Mr. Gutierrez reported the project was 74% complete and just 100 meters from reaching the 75% milestone. He mentioned some of the supply chain issues recently experienced but noted these have not slowed progression on the project. He noted the next steps involve coordinating and scheduling completion of this project. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Gray mentioned she has received so many compliments from customers about how pleased they are with the work being conducted by the crews, how the properties are left, as well as correspondence, communications, and responsiveness.

Mr. Hamilton inquired as to the forecast for completion. Mr. Gutierrez said it has been pushed to December, but could be the first quarter 2022.

Discussion went to Item #15.

15. HELI-HYDRANT UPDATE

Ms. Largent stressed the importance of all the media coverage right now with the detachment, upcoming financing, etc. tell a really good story for the District.

Mr. Gutierrez reported RMWD received notification that \$30,000 of the grant recently received can be utilized to offset the electrical costs associated with the Heli-Hydrant. He also mentioned RMWD was ready to send an invoice to North County Fire for their share of the rock purchased for the project.

Mr. Hamilton asked whether other sites are being considered for Heli-Hydrant placement. Mr. Gutierrez confirmed another site has been identified in the Gomez area as well as mentioned staff was also looking into money saving opportunities.

Discussion went to Item #18.

16. PHONE SYSTEM STATUS UPDATE

Ms. Gray reported the phone system has a call-back feature that is working seamlessly in that whenever a staff member becomes available, the customer is put in contact with them via a call back. Ms. Largent added this update has reduced hold time significantly.

Ms. Gray explained some of the other features the phone system can do that will provide additional assist to the customer service team.

17. DEVELOPMENTS UPDATE

This item was deferred per Item #6.

18. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO APPOINT COMMITTEE OFFICERS (CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON)

Ms. Washburn noted both Chairperson Shute and Vice Chairperson Vernon were appointed as this committee's officers in August 2020 and since the term is for one year, this item was to provide an opportunity for the committee to reappoint Mr. Shute and Mr. Vernon or appoint new officers.

Mr. Hamilton inquired as to the maximum number of committee membership. Ms. Washburn stated it was seven members with two alternates. Ms. Gray confirmed RMWD was actively recruiting for new committee members via the monthly newsletter. Mr. Shute asked whether it would be a good idea to target new customers. Ms. Gray explained she continues to update the recruitment information each time the newsletter is published. Mr. Vernon recommended emphasizing the meetings provide opportunity for members to attend remotely.

Motion:

To reappoint Bill Shute as Chairperson and Russ Vernon as Vice Chairperson.

Action: Approve, Moved by Member Stewart, Seconded by Member Hamilton.

Vote: Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Ayes = 4).

Ayes: Member Hamilton, Member Shute, Member Stewart, Member Vernon.

Discussion went to Item #19.

19. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH ITEMS

- A.** Topics
- B.** Calendar
- C.** Snipes Calendar
- D.** Updates from Other Committees
- E.** Customer Relations
- F.** Monthly Newsletter Review
- G.** Social Media Post Updates

Ms. Gray suggested combining recurring Item #'s 19 and #20 going forward. There was no objection from the committee members.

Discussion went to Item #20.

20. REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF RMWD RELATED MEDIA STORIES

Ms. Gray spoke about a recent Farm Bureau article as she pointed out some of the highlights. Discussion ensued. Mr. Hamilton requested for the article to be circulated to those directors attending the Farmer of the Year event on October 14, 2021, as well as a list of those attending from FPUD.

Discussion went to Item #21.

21. LIST OF SUGGESTED AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT SCHEDULED COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE MEETING

It was noted the status of all developments as well as updates on the water board arrearages program, WSUP, drought restrictions, and emergency notification program.

Discussion went to Item #22.

22. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson Shute.

The meeting adjourned at 4:39 p.m.

Bill Shute, Committee Chairperson

Dawn M. Washburn, Board Secretary