

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE  
COMMITTEE MEETING  
OF THE RAINBOW MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT  
SEPTEMBER 5, 2019**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – The Communications and Customer Service Committee Meeting of the Rainbow Municipal Water District on September 5, 2019 was called to order by Chairperson Johnson at 3:35 p.m. in the Board Room of the District, 3707 Old Highway 395, Fallbrook, CA 92028. Chairperson Johnson, presiding.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **ROLL CALL:**

**Present:** Member Johnson, Member Vernon, Member Shute.

**Absent:** Member Hamilton, Member Stewart.

**Also Present:** General Manager Kennedy, Finance Manager Largent, Administrative Analyst Gray.

One member of the public was present.

4. **SEATING OF ALTERNATES**

Ms. Johnson noted Ms. Gray would be taking minutes; therefore, there were no alternates to seat at this meeting.

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

Mr. Vernon requested an opportunity to discuss the SDCWA emergency shutdown. Ms. Johnson agreed to add this discussion to Item #17.

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

There were no comments.

7. **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

There were no comments.

\*8. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. August 1, 2019

**Motion:**

**To approve the minutes.**

**Action: Approve, Moved by Member Vernon, Seconded by Member Shute.**

**Vote: Motion passed (summary: Ayes = 3, Noes = 0, Absent = 2).**

**Ayes: Member Johnson, Member Vernon, Member Shute**

**Absent: Member Hamilton, Member Stewart.**

**\*9. DISCUSSION REGARDING NEW BILLING PORTAL (REQUESTED BY BILL SHUTE)**

Mr. Shute understood some of the challenges associated with the financial software transition including the automatic pay and credit card set up. Ms. Largent pointed out the prior vendor did not notify RMWD they were changing their automatic pay set up a month before RMWD was switching over its software; therefore, customers had to sign up for this program once again.

Mr. Shute stated when he looked into the portal, he noticed some oddities which he provided to the customer service department. Ms. Largent acknowledged staff has received a great deal of input to the new portal and how changes have been implemented. Mr. Shute explained the manner in which a credit card is set up for recurring payment was very hidden which in turn caused some confusion. He referenced the samples in provided in terms of the bill formatting. Ms. Largent noted most of the issues have been cleaned up; however, staff was still working on improvements. Ms. Largent added that staff is looking at another payment portal option offered through Info Send, the company that sends out our billing, but that staff would not be recommending a switch for at least the next year.

Mr. Shute inquired as to the software being designed or custom built per his conversations with customer service. He expressed concern a billing portal, ACH, credit card, etc. would not be something to be created in that it should be standard. Ms. Largent agreed noting options will be explored eventually.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Shute noted it would be in RMWD's best interest to make sure it does everything it can to facilitate its customers being able to pay their bills easily including recurring payments.

Ms. Largent stated her staff has been diligently working on correcting and addressing all the issues experienced with the transition and confirmed the Board and Budget and Finance Committee are aware of the experiences.

Ms. Johnson thanked Mr. Shute for bringing this matter to the committee for discussion. It was noted an update will be provided at the next committee meeting.

**10. DISCUSSION REGARDING CUSTOMER SERVICE DEPARTMENT INPUT REGARDING COMMUNICATING ACCESS FOR THE EQUITY OF THE COMMUNITY IN RELATION TO SECONDARY LANGUAGES**

Ms. Johnson explained the committee wanted to know if there was an interest in supplying information from RMWD in Spanish. Ms. Largent stated there was a new regulation coming out in February where there are certain documents required to be provided in seven different languages and any additional languages spoken by over 10% of its population. She said with that implementation, RMWD will likely need to contract with a third party for translation services. She agreed to provide a list of documents for possible translation as well as the link to the regulation to the committee members as soon as possible with an update to be provided at their November meeting.

It was noted having information provided prior to the committee meeting has been beneficial for the members.

**11. DISCUSSION REGARDING NEW BILLING SYSTEM TRANSITION REPORT INCLUDING CUSTOMER IMPACT**

Ms. Largent mentioned her and her staff are taking the time to hear customer feedback as well as implementing some changes based on the information and suggestions provided. Ms. Johnson said it appears staff were working diligently with customers on any issues.

Discussion ensued.

***Mr. Kennedy joined the meeting at 4:01 p.m.***

**\*12. REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE CODE POLICY CHAPTER 2.09**

Mr. Kennedy mentioned every four years committee members need to be reappointed by the Board; however, this practice has not transpired. He noted the other part of this item was to review the committee's charter to determine if there should be any revisions.

Discussion regarding internal communications. Mr. Kennedy offered to bring information regarding where the language regarding staff positive relations originated to the next meeting. It was noted once the policy has been completed updated, copies will be provided to each committee member.

***Motion:***

***To recommend to the Board deleting "positive staff relations" from the policy and replace "shall be responsible for" with "shall be responsible for providing input or guidance".***

***Action: Approve, Moved by Member Johnson, Seconded by Member Vernon.***

***Vote: Motion passed (summary: Ayes = 3, Noes = 0, Absent = 2).***

***Ayes: Member Johnson, Member Vernon, Member Shute***

***Absent: Member Hamilton, Member Stewart.***

**13. BROCHURE REVIEW**

Ms. Gray noted the brochure has been updated after gathering input from the committee, staff and Board President Brazier. She asked the committee to review the brochure one more time and provide her with their feedback. It was decided Mr. Shute and Ms. Gray will give the brochure a final review and only if there are significant changes will it come back to the committee.

**14. DISCUSSION REGARDING RESPONSE TO SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS**

Mr. Kennedy explained the committee needs to find a means for responding to social media posts without having staff members assigned to reply to all the social media sites. Mr. Shute read aloud the proposed generic response. It was noted the generic response provided was appropriate.

Ms. Johnson requested a recurring item to get updates on social media posts.

**15. SUBCOMMITTEE MISSION STATEMENT UPDATE**

Ms. Johnson referenced the information provided on the ink board. Mr. Shute explained this was the first look at the draft mission statement as he solicited the committee for input.

Mr. Kennedy pointed out according to state laws related to public agencies, the District was allowed to educate but not advocate.

Mr. Vernon inquired as to whether the purpose was to educate and engage the public or the District’s customers. Ms. Gray noted it was not isolated to ratepayers.

Mr. Shute said the proposed mission statement was great for public relations but may need more information included for a broader public aspect. Ms. Johnson stated she like the mission statement in that it was concise and to the point. She thanked the subcommittee for their work on this project.

Mr. Vernon suggested this item be discussed at the next committee meeting when both subcommittee members are present.

**16. UPDATED “THE BETTER WAY” FORM REVIEW**

Mr. Vernon recommended some formatting changes. Mr. Kennedy suggested the proper email address be included on the form. Mr. Shute explained the benefit of the first line read “we welcome your input”.

Ms. Gray offered to implement the changes and email a final version of the form to the committee members. Ms. Johnson clarified only if there are concerns with the final version will this item come back to the committee for further discussion.

**17. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH ITEMS**

**A. Topics**

Mr. Vernon inquired about the SDCWA emergency shutdown and whether this was discussed at the committee meetings. Mr. Kennedy explained this shutdown came about rather abruptly; therefore, it did not allow for committee discussions. He noted one of SDCWA’s pipelines was leaking and how there was concern with it possibly failing catastrophically.

Mr. Shute asked about the communications related to the emergency shutdown. Mr. Kennedy answered combined messages have been circulated in Farm Bureau weekly updates, in The Village News, on the RMWD website, in the San Diego Tribune, as well as on sign boards along the roadways. He described possible impacts should the pipeline not be repaired immediately.

Ms. Johnson suggested having an item on the next agenda coronation of information to customers to allow Mr. Kennedy time to prepare to share how it happens.

Discussion went to Item #19.

Discussion returned from Item #19.

- B.** Strategic Plan Objectives
- C.** Calendar
- D.** Snipes Calendar
- E.** Updates from Other Committees

- F. Customer Relations
- G. Monthly Newsletter Review

There were no additional comments.

Discussion went to Item #18.

## **18. REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF RMWD RELATED MEDIA STORIES**

This item was not discussed.

Discussion went to Item #20.

## **19. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH EASTERN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT UPDATE**

Mr. Kennedy reported the Board adopted the MOU which has since been finalized with FPUD and EMWD. He mentioned at the SDCWA Board meeting, he and Mr. Bebee submitted a summary of information related to the potential deannexation citing the legal framework, concepts, as well as a discussion about the request from SDCWA to calculate an exit fee to be paid by RMWD and FPUD; however, attempts to find a statutory or regulatory framework for such an exit fee was unsuccessful. He said when looking at assets and liabilities to be divided based upon proportional shares using SDCWA's documentation related to their proportional shares in the calculations, it has an affect RMWD and FPUD believe are incorrect in that SDCWA would need to pay for both agencies to leave. He noted SDCWA has been asked to tell RMWD and FPUD the right way to go about exiting. He added he and Mr. Bebee made a request to have an open session discussion on the matter; however, that request was denied and how he and Mr. Bebee were only provided with an opportunity to discuss this matter by pulling speakers slips to address the SDCWA Board prior to their going into Closed Session to discuss the matter. He said he and Mr. Bebee pulled speakers slips, spoke for three minutes each, and then left at the start of the Closed Session. He stated the information reported out from Closed Session was SDCWA authorized an expenditure of \$1 Million to hire an outside legal firm to assist with this process which he and Mr. Bebee found disappointing in that they preferred discussing this matter with SDCWA without legal counsel and additional costs to the ratepayers.

Mr. Vernon inquired as to whether there was a timeline. Mr. Kennedy stated SDCWA has indicated what RMWD and FPUD sent was not a proposal to which RMWD and FPUD replied the proposal was that state law prescribes how this is to be done in the SDCWA Act which was their proposal. He explained RMWD and FPUD tried to look at this a different way per SDCWA's request; however, the only thing they could come up with was not going to work so they in turn requested SDCWA to provide a different means for making the calculations and provide that information to both RMWD and FPUD for consideration. He reiterated RMWD and FPUD continues to request a sit down discussion with SDCWA to avoid having to pay legal fees. He said although this is unfortunate, RMWD and FPUD was moving forward with preparation of application documents for Riverside County LAFCO followed with applying at San Diego LAFCO which he expects to present to the Board at their October meeting.

Mr. Shute recommended these updates continue to be recurring on committee agendas. Mr. Vernon suggested having the outside consultant hired to prepare communications regarding this matter attend a future committee meeting. Mr. Kennedy explained why it would be better to extend the invite at a much later date.

Discussion returned to Item #17.

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

It was noted items for the next agenda include coordination of information to customers, a review of the mission statement, the extended newsletter with WSUP article, strategic plan objectives and a Flume program update be on the next committee agenda in addition to social media posts and the MOU with Eastern Municipal Water District being recurring items.

**21. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson Johnson.

The meeting adjourned at 4:58 p.m.

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**Julie Johnson, Committee Chairperson**

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**Dawn M. Washburn, Board Secretary**