

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE
COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE RAINBOW MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
JANUARY 4, 2024**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – The Communications and Customer Service Committee Meeting of the Rainbow Municipal Water District on January 4, 2024, was called to order by Chairperson Shute at 3:31 p.m. in the Board Room of the District, 3707 Old Highway 395, Fallbrook, CA 92028. Chairperson Shute, presiding.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **ROLL CALL:**

Present: Member Shute, Member Hamilton, Member Stewart

Also Present: General Manager Wiley, District Secretary Quintanar, Information Technology Manager Khattab, Alternate Harp, Customer Service Supervisor Cruz, Administrative Analyst Weber

Also Present Via Teleconference or Video Conference: Kevin Schroeder

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

Instructions were read aloud.

5. **SEATING OF ALTERNATES**

No alternates were seated.

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

There were no amendments to the agenda.

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

There were no comments.

*8. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. November 2, 2023

Motion:

To approve the minutes as written.

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

Vote: Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Ayes = 3).

Ayes: Member Hamilton, Member Shute, Member Stewart.

Absent: Member Milakovich

9. GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

Mr. Wiley reported that since the last meeting, big developments have taken place in regard to the detachment. On November 7, 2023, the results were almost 95% in favor of the detachment and we had a great turnout, almost double than County-wide. Subsequently, at the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) Board meeting of November 16, the SDCWA Board approved the terms to the Settlement Agreement, settling the litigation and providing details and a path forward on the detachment for Fallbrook Public Utilities District (FPUD) and Rainbow Municipal Water District (RMWD). On December 4, 2023, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) approved the Settlement Agreement, and RMWD followed suit on December 5, 2023. It was executed on December 21, 2023. FPUD filed their Notice of Completion for the detachment on December 29, 2023, in San Deigo and in Riverside on December 30, 2023. Eastern MWD has entered into a water service agreement with FPUD, and the operation plan for the short term has been completed, in coordination with FPUD. He commented on the cooperative process and, in accordance with the Settlement Agreement, RMWD needs to complete an operations plan and modifications to its system to serve the southern area. He added that this is good news, and although we have technical details to work out, he anticipates everything being complete this fall.

Mr. Wiley also reported that the CropSWAP Program has been moving forward. A draft Memorandum of Understanding is being reviewed at this time and will be presented present to the Board in January. RCWD received a \$5M grant and is making half of that available to regional partners, with the potential to expand to additional agencies. At this time, the core parties are Rancho California Water District (RCWD), RMWD, FPUD, Valley Center WD, and Oceanside. He provided a presentation to the Board in December, explaining that the Project will provide for water conservation and, long term, is a win for the District, and keeps the agricultural fabric of the community alive, and also preserves water sales.

10. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Member Hamilton suggested consideration to amend the Administrative Code to allow ratepayers to be on Standing Committees, to include those not necessarily maintaining a primary domicile within the District's boundary. This was suggested in order to avoid precluding any ratepayers of the District from participating on these committees.

Mr. Stewart congratulated Member Hamilton for his work and dedication to the District and its ratepayers. He praised the efforts of staff and Board for their steadfast work on the detachment and that it is a great benefit that is appreciated. Mr. Shute echoed the sentiments and acknowledged how much time behind the scenes had been spent, a lot of extra work in addition to the day-to-day tasks.

11. LONG-RANGE PLAN UPDATE

Mr. Wiley briefed the Committee on the long-range plan. Part of that is the updating of the Strategic Plan. Standing Committees will be included in the refresh over the next few months. Regarding facilities, a master plan would be prudent. We need an updated hydraulic model, as water operations and distribution methods have changed. The result of this will be a prioritized list of needed improvements and an update to the 2018 study focusing on replacement needs. This work to clearly define our Capital Improvement Program may take about a year to complete. In regard to the headquarters, we've

discovered several concerning issues with the building. He urged discussions of options in order to gain consensus for moving forward.

Some projections have been done and built into our rate model regarding savings resulting from the detachment. However, the fixed rate components are calculated a little differently by EMWD, so staff is working to narrow those details and timelines and incorporate costs into the budget. RMWD is still a member of the SDCWA until the detachment is complete, and we will have some passthrough costs until that point. We are looking at sustainable rates and balancing reserve targets and capital improvements. The master plan will provide a long-term picture. Staff is also evaluating the exit fee and different debt options. An RFP was done to help define options for things such as short-term bank loans, or long-term financing, such as municipal bonds. We have a firm working to present options for financing.

Mr. Wiley reported that Tracy Largent left RWMD for a great opportunity with the Port Authority and wished her well. A new Chief Financial Officer, Rick Aragon will be joining us this month, coming from Coachella Valley Water District. We also have temporary assistance in Finance. Lauren Warren will be assisting until Ms. Poole's return from a planned leave.

In February, a mid-year budget review will be presented to the Budget and Finance Committee. Regarding communications about the detachment, we will continue to coordinate joint messages with FPUD communicate with our customers.

12. FLUME UPDATE

Ms. Weber reported that staff met with the President of Flume to discuss issues and hurdles. The Board approved purchase of 1,000 devices. Of that 750 devices have been purchased, and only 366 are fully installed and operating, 55 started, and 195 are completely recording. Flume has been working with customers to replace outdated Flume 1 devices with Flume 2 devices, and original Flume 2 devices purchased in the past 18 months are being replaced completely. Discussion ensued regarding hurdles, such as battery life, device compatibility, or Wi-Fi access. Staff and Flume representatives are working to find solutions for customers. Many customer calls are for customer service and the District has two videos on our website for help with troubleshooting and general assistance. It is not recommended that District staff provide assistance to customers on private property, but staff does assist with locating their meter. Member Hamilton suggested we include testimonials in our communications plan. He also mentioned offering old meters to customers for use with the device; however, those aged meters are not abundant. Mr. Wiley reported that the operations group is doing a pilot project on Automatic Meter Reads (AMR) to test it with AMI to see if it could be a tool for our customers for leak detection.

13. CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY

Ms. Weber explained that their goal is to establish the best way to communicate and a review of experience, so we can know where to allocate our time. Mr. Stewart asked for a copy of the survey. Ms. Harp talked of pros and cons of two separate surveys, to learn customers' preferred way to communicate, and feedback on how we're doing. But we may increase our odds with one survey. Ms. Weber explained we can distribute the survey to all of our customers, include it in our newsletter and add a message on the monthly invoice. Another option is a phone survey. However, the last phone survey had little response. A third-party vendor performing the survey would not result on a good return on investment. Survey Monkey is a tool staff has been pleased with. The Committee Members suggested consistency with wording and frequency in order to obtain feedback on overall experience and made suggestions for tracking and responding. The Committee encouraged staff to look at industry averages, utilize a California Special Districts Association (CSDA) forum, and learn how other agencies measure customer satisfaction.

14. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Ms. Harp presented a high-level overview of the process for developing a plan. The first step is the “Discovery” process, engaging with stakeholders and holding a workshop with staff members interacting with the public and potentially including this Committee for a joint brainstorming session, perhaps by the end of February. Staff will evaluate content, website, review Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, demographic research, etc. to develop goals and an action plan. The suggestion was made to include representatives from other agencies. Once the tactical action plan is developed, we would formalize the document and get feedback and determine our desired outcomes, such as target audience, key messages, communication channels, guiding principles, and content. The Committee agreed with participating and will also invite other Board Members to participate. Staff would like to schedule a workshop between the January and February Board meetings and will suggest some dates.

15. COMMUNITY EVENTS UPDATE

Ms. Weber reported that RMWD received grant for \$3,000 that will cover our costs to purchase PPE supplies and promotional items, as well as the spring and fall field trips for students. Staff will apply for the grant again next year. The November field trip to Skinner was highly recommended. It was very helpful for understanding how our water is treated, and the infrastructure involved.

Ms. Weber reported that we have a tentative plan for March 24, 2024, to host a group of students to come visit the District. She continued to report on promotional efforts to share about RMWD’s 70th Anniversary and the founding of the District. In the January newsletter, there is an article featuring Bill Hick, one of RMWD’s founders, with stories about first pipelines and milestones. There is also an article in Village News recounting our accomplishments over the past year, the detachment, awards, and our new General Manager.

Staff has been working on the brand roll out and incorporating the new logo into collateral materials such as letterhead, templates, business cards, the website, and customer invoices.

The Avocado Festival is planned for Sunday, April 21, 2024, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. RMWD will have a double walk-through booth at the event.

16. NEWSLETTER CONTENT PLANNING

Ms. Weber reported that staff is finalizing the January issue. In December, we provided an update on the detachment, election results, and where we stand with the lawsuit and moving forward in 2024. It also contained notices for the Division 3 vacancy, the District’s 70th anniversary, and advice to customers to beware of water agency imposters. Mr. Hamilton suggested reminding customers that our responsibility ends at the meter and there is no reason for RMWD staff to enter homes.

For January, we will have history on RMWD’s founding, water awareness and flood readiness, the CropSWAP Program and the water awareness calendar contest with north county. Home school and charter school students can also participate. In February, we will continue our campaign for Flume, and link videos for troubleshooting tips, and will work with engineering to provide and update on capital improvement projects. For March, we will cover understanding backflow devices, planting for spring, turf

replacement, and the calendar contest. A suggestion was made to share information with customers on how much they can save by repairing backflow devices, and also about rebate programs available through MWD. Discussion continued regarding ways to provide information to students regarding water careers via information booths, and offering tours through charter schools, churches or other avenues such as the San Diego Office of Education.

17. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATED MEDIA STORIES

Ms. Weber reported a few stories, opinion pieces, stories about voter turnout, and a KPBS News report highlighting the detachment. Staff presented the video for review. Ms. Weber reported that RMWD awarded one of the top workplaces for the third year. We are number 21 for small employers. We also have the full-page ad, coordinated with FPUD, that was published last week, which has the same information as our newsletter. Efforts will continue to communicate well enough so customers trust that we are trying everything we can to keep quality control and reasonable rates.

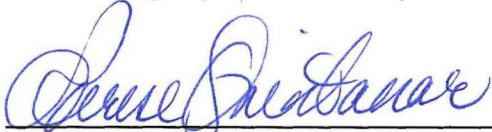
18. LIST OF SUGGESTED AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT SCHEDULED COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE MEETING

An update on the Communications Plan workshop date will be provided, as well as the customer survey, long range planning, CropSWAP, and customer service call center metrics.

19. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson Shute.

The meeting adjourned at 5:02 p.m.



Terese Quintanar, District Secretary



Bill Shute, Committee Chairperson