

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE
COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE RAINBOW MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
AUGUST 6, 2020**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – The Communications and Customer Service Committee Meeting of the Rainbow Municipal Water District on August 6, 2020 was called to order by Vice Chairperson Shute at 3:30 p.m. in the Board Room of the District, 3707 Old Highway 395, Fallbrook, CA 92028. Vice Chairperson Shute, presiding.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **ROLL CALL:**

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

Also Present: General Manager Kennedy, Engineering Technician Rubio, Information and Technology Specialist Espino.

Present via Teleconference or Video:

Finance Manager Largent, Information and Technology Manager Khattab.

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

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 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)**

There were no changes to the agenda.

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

There were no public comments.

8. **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO APPOINT COMMITTEE OFFICERS**

Mr. Shute announced Ms. Johnson, has decided to join the Budget and Finance Committee as well as is running for the Division 1 seat in November; therefore, the committee needed to appoint committee officers.

Motion:

To nominate Bill Shute to serve as Chairperson and Russell Vernon to serve as Vice Chairperson.

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

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

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

9. GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS/COVID-19 UPDATE

Mr. Kennedy reported everything was the same and how everyone continues to wear masks. He mentioned one of Concord's lead employees did become ill; however, by following the proper protocols everyone that was tested came back negative for the virus. He said RMWD does not anticipate any changes for quite some time.

Mr. Kennedy mentioned LAFCO had the detachment on a few public meetings and how it seemed as though SDCWA was unfortunately trying to malign the District's reputation as opposed to sticking to the facts. He stated this was disappointing to have occur when working on matters of importance. He noted RMWD and FPUD want to avoid putting out communications such as this because it is not in the best interest of the public but rather communicate the facts.

Mr. Hamilton pointed out RMWD was awarded the District of Distinction Accreditation in March. He also noted at the first committee meeting resulted in SDCWA attacking the messenger which he found to be extremely inappropriate.

10. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Hamilton stated he had a ratepayer contact him regarding a billing issue and how the "Class Code" was not easy to locate on the District bills. Mr. Kennedy suggested having a meeting to discuss bill design at a future meeting.

Ms. Gray mentioned she had provided a response to Mr. Hamilton noting where the Class Codes can be found to determine the customer is being billed correctly.

Ms. Largent said the problem would be if the billing code is made bigger, then it would be difficult to locate the meter size. She suggested revamping the back of the bill explaining how to read the information contained on the front page of the bill.

Ms. Gray agreed with bringing this matter back to the committee at a future date to determine how to best update the back of the bill. She offered to mail the language out to the committee members in Word format so they can remit their input.

Mr. Stewart stated there was a meeting a few months ago with contractors putting in pressure reducing stations to discuss the process. He requested an update on this matter. Mr. Kennedy said based on the contractor's failure to start the work on the project, the engineering department was actively looking to find a replacement contractor to get the job done.

Mr. Vernon noted he submitted a question to which he had not yet received a response. He asked for the expected turnaround time should be for inquiries made through the customer service link on the website. Ms. Gray said this should have come to her directly; however, she did not receive Mr. Vernon's inquiry. Mr. Vernon agreed to try it again so staff can be sure the system is working.

Mr. Shute asked if the numbers provided in the newsletters are factual. Ms. Largent confirmed the numbers are based on forecasted demands as well as SDCWA's current and future rate structure. She stated she has taking these numbers and run them through the budget to verify them and presented them to the RMWD's rate structure consultant for additional verification. Mr. Shute suggested adding qualifiers in the language when presenting numbers as part of ensuring they can be defended.

***11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. July 2, 2020

Motion:

To approve the minutes.

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

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

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

12. HEADQUARTERS FACILITY UPDATE

Mr. Kennedy recalled the Board approved a contract with MasterCraft to perform the planning and land use zoning type changes or entitlement for this land to help determine the property's market value as well as how it can be converted into a new building facility. He explained it would not be beneficial to restore the current buildings due to its age and current condition. He noted a first site visit was held outside while observing COVID-19 safety precautions with the ad hoc committee members which resulted in deciding the first step would be to find out the property value as well as conduct a preliminary analysis on its suitability for different construction types.

Mr. Kennedy pointed out Director Mack shared his experience with the City of San Marcos and how they decided to build some office buildings near City Hall as well as a multi-story mixed use office and retail building. He stated one of the consultants explained right now the market for retail and office space has been tricky due to so many people utilizing online shopping, even prior to the pandemic. He noted the consultants will analyze whether office space is an appropriate use; however, it is anticipated a residential development would return more for the dollar. He added the consultants did believe the construction costs would be much lower than the cost estimate provided a few years ago.

Mr. Kennedy said he would be taking the lead on this project and hopes to have something from the consultants in the next few months to review.

Mr. Vernon inquired as to whether there was another property to which the District offices could be relocated to. Mr. Kennedy stated the Campus Park West project may have some extra space and relocating to that area has been actively discussed. He pointed out it was preferred to remain near the geographic center of the District boundaries; however, should something be available outside the central proximity, an analysis would need to be conducted to determine any potential additional costs associated with dispatching crews.

13. NEWSLETTER ENHANCEMENTS TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Mr. Kennedy explained at the recommendation of the CSUSM students, Ms. Gray utilized Canva to produce an updated version of the newsletter.

Ms. Gray mentioned she had emailed the committee members three different newsletter setups offering various dynamics as well as enhanced messages to highlight important information. She asked the members for their feedback.

Mr. Vernon said he found Option #1 easier to read and Option #2 a little more difficult to follow.

Mr. Kennedy asked for the EMWD and SDCWA logos removed from the newsletter entirely.

Mr. Vernon recommended to have a little information graphic describing the rate increase that was not passed on to the customers and the next increase that will be passed on. Ms. Largent agreed to put together some small graphics and send a mockup to the committee members.

Mr. Vernon asked when the detachment would likely come to a vote, how long it will take once the people decide whether to proceed, cost estimates, and anticipated average savings to the customer. Mr. Kennedy explained why some of this information may not be readily available to advertise at this point.

Mr. Hamilton said there may be a case of mixing the messages. He explained communicating RMWD has this process that could potentially save the customers money; however, until a determination is made, the customer's costs will increase due the passing through SDCWA's rate increases. He recommended the message should be there is a rate coming and RMWD was not raising the rates, but rather being passed through from SDCWA. Ms. Largent pointed out this message needs to get out as soon as possible and continue to communicate it every month. Discussion followed.

Mr. Kennedy explained when involved in something that could go to election, all communications must be worded carefully to avoid legal ramifications. He said it is not in the District's best interest to brainstorm communicating these matters in a public meeting. He recommended if the committee members have input, they may want to forward that to the appropriate District staff who in turn will verify it is appropriate to publish.

Mr. Hamilton recommended mapping out the projected process timelines in future newsletters.

Mr. Shute stated he liked the format presented in Option #1 best. Mr. Hamilton noted he liked Options #1 and #3.

Ms. Gray asked the committee to select one of the three options to proceed with as opposed to having three separate newsletter formats. Discussion ensued. The committee agreed to utilize the version labeled Option #1 and to work on making suggestions on this one only.

Mr. Shute recommended the title "Penalty Charges" be changed to "Update on Late Fees". Mr. Stewart suggested it be changed to "Late Fees Reinstated" to notify the customers the suspended late charges are now back in effect. It was noted the reinstatement date needs to be included in the message. Mr. Hamilton recommended this very important message be moved to the front page of the newsletter.

Mr. Hamilton recommended the EMWD and SDCWA logo pieces be removed. Ms. Gray pointed out the graphs Ms. Largent was preparing will replace these logos.

Mr. Kennedy asked whether the committee would prefer having a rotating newsletter format or stay with one format. Mr. Vernon said he liked the idea of rotating the newsletter format. Ms. Gray pointed out each format has its own structuring; therefore, she would like the idea of having other options should one style work best for a certain article. Mr. Shute agreed with having the flexibility in styles; however, he asked for the website to be included in the content in each style. Mr. Hamilton said he was copasetic with these ideas. The committee members were encouraged to remit photos to Ms. Gray.

Discussion returned from Item #14.

Mr. Shute asked whether there was time to allow for an updated version of the August newsletter to be provided to the committee members for input. Ms. Gray said she would email it to the committee members on August 7, 2020 prior to remitting it to billing for distribution as long as Ms. Largent will have her graphs readily available. Ms. Largent said she would have the graphs ready; however, she would suggest leaving out the one with qualifiers. Discussion ensued.

Discussion went to Item #15.

14. 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

Mr. Hamilton suggested The Village News article from a few weeks ago regarding the SDCWA rate increase be added to the RMWD website. Ms. Gray offered to get this added.

Discussion returned to Item #13.

15. REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF RMWD RELATED MEDIA STORIES

Mr. Hamilton mentioned several Village News articles published over the last several weeks.

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

It was noted the enhancing the backs of the bill, refining the newsletter templates, an update on WSUP and a Flume presentation should be on the next agenda.

17. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned with a motion by Member Stewart and seconded by Member Stewart.

The meeting adjourned at 4:53 p.m.

Bill Shute, Committee Chairperson

Dawn M. Washburn, Board Secretary