

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE
COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE RAINBOW MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
MARCH 2, 2023**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – The Communications and Customer Service Committee Meeting of the Rainbow Municipal Water District on March 2, 2023, was called to order by Chairperson Shute at 3:32 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 Milakovich (*via teleconference*), Member Stewart.

Also Present: General Manager Kennedy, Executive Assistant Washburn, Finance Manager Largent, Operations Manager Gutierrez, Human Resources Manager Harp, Information Systems Specialist Espino.

Also Present Via Teleconference or Video Conference:

Engineering and CIP Manager Williams, Human Resources Assistant Ramirez.

Three members of the public were present in person, via teleconference or video conference.

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**

No alternates were seated.

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

Mr. Kennedy stated Item #12 needed to be deferred.

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

There were no comments.

*8. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. March 2, 2023 (*Note – Correction minutes are for February 2, 2023.*)

Motion:

To approve the minutes as written.

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

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

Ayes: Member Shute, Member Milakovich, Member Stewart.

9. GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

Mr. Kennedy reported an analysis was conducted as part of backfilling the Customer Service and Communications Supervisor position and how Ms. Harp came up with a plan that was approved by the Board. He explained the Customer Service Supervisor position was restructured to solely supervise customer service with the pay grade adjusted accordingly. He noted within this process there was enough remaining dollars between to the previous pay grade and the new one to hire a part-time Communications Specialist for 16-hour work weeks. He mentioned the job has been posted with good response, and that the position will be dedicated to this committee as well as tasks related to communications without distractions from other primary responsibilities.

Ms. Harp reported the job opening will close on March 5th after which she will start the screening candidates.

Mr. Kennedy reported on the current situation related to the extreme weather conditions. He stated some of the restrictions have been taken back so more water can be moved into storage. He noted although cuts will still take place, it will depend on how those cuts are allocated.

Mr. Stewart asked if there will be efforts to fill all local reservoirs as much as possible. Mr. Kennedy stated the local reservoirs are filling up; however, it is the bigger ones that are a part of the state water project that will be more beneficial to RMWD.

Mr. Kennedy provided an update on SDCWA's CY2024 rate proposal and how the increase to wholesale costs will total approximately 14%. He mentioned SDCWA was forecasting sales of only 360,000 acre feet a year which is a more reasonable amount than in previous years; however, the challenge with this is SDCWA having take-or-pay contracts where the member agencies could have to pay for water they cannot use.

Mr. Stewart asked whether RMWD's work on the pump stations and storage help in terms of this proposed rate increase being passed. Mr. Kennedy clarified RMWD can only avoid transportation charges which is holding steady at \$173/acre foot in this current proposal. Mr. Stewart inquired as to RMWD's total acre foot price. Mr. Kennedy stated it was roughly 10%; however, the wholesale average all-in costs for non PSWAR water will be approximately \$2,200 per acre foot.

Mr. Shute mentioned an article he read recently about prehistoric water and wanted to know if this was something on the horizon for consideration. Mr. Kennedy explained there are some that can tap into this in certain areas; however, it is very deep, difficult to access, cost prohibitive, and remains unknown what will transpire once the water is all extracted since it will take 1,000 more years for replenishment. Discussion followed.

10. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Stewart stated he was happy to hear Cynthia Gray was going to continue to serve on the committee. Ms. Washburn clarified an item was placed on the agenda; however, Ms. Gray has decided to hold off for a bit at this time.

11. CIP UPDATE PRESENTATION (ENGINEERING)

Mr. Williams shared a “Communications & Customer Service Committee Meeting CIP Project Updates” presentation noting there were twelve active projects as well as displayed a breakdown in the FY22-23 approved budget summary for potable water CIP, wastewater CIP, and wholesale water efficiency.

Mr. Shute requested more information on the Camino Del Rey Waterline Relocation Project. Mr. Kennedy explained each time the road is heightened, the pipe keeps getting deeper, and pipes are not designed to have that much ground cover on it. He confirmed the pipe will remain in the same location. Mr. Kennedy confirmed it would remain in the same area.

Mr. Williams continued with the presentation providing details on each of the projects.

Mr. Shute asked for a copy of the slide show be emailed to the committee members.

12. HOA AND SUBMETERING OUTREACH UPDATE

This item was deferred per Item #6.

13. DETACHMENT UPDATE

Mr. Kennedy reported LAFCO has set a date of March 17th for a draft report to be discussed at Special District Advisory Committee and City Advisory Committee meetings at which feedback will be collected. He noted following these meetings, the feedback will be included in the final report which is scheduled to be released sometime in April for a 45-day review period for the Commission meeting on the first Monday in June. He stated they want to hold at least 2-3 Commission meetings to review the final report; however, LAFCO is dark in July which means August would be the earliest. He mentioned he had recommended a special meeting be held in July. He pointed out the proposal terms and conditions as well as whether the schedule will hold are unknown.

Mr. Kennedy excused himself from the meeting at 4:29 p.m.

14. RMWD HEADQUARTERS BECOMING FIELD TRIP DESTINATION FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS UPDATE

Ms. Harp stated she spoke with a Bonsall High School yesterday and how visits have been scheduled for the week of March 20th with approximately 10-15 high school students coming for approximately two hours to watch a series of short demonstrations from different departments including engineering, operations, IT, and administration. She noted these were students focusing on STEM careers; therefore, the teacher wants the students to understand all the different skillsets related to real world applications. She mentioned a trial run will take place with new hires prior to the day the studies arrive.

Mr. Shute asked Ms. Harp to notify the committee of the date the event with the students so the members can attend if appropriate.

Ms. Largent pointed out the part-time public relations position will become a part of the human resources department.

Ms. Harp noted she was not sure how many field trips RMWD wanted to host; however, this was what was calendared for now. Mr. Shute has been scheduled. Mr. Shute explained the committee's goal to this idea was to hammer out a repeatable program that RMWD would have the ability to execute.

15. DISCUSSION REGARDING ON-LINE BILL PAY AND HIGHER RATES OF ADOPTION

Ms. Largent referenced the handout noting 69% of the customers are using on-line payment options and automatic payments. She pointed out the amount of customers set up for bill pay or automatic payments have increased. She noted 8% of the customers prefer to drop off a payment in the drop box, and others who prefer coming into the office. Discussion followed.

Mr. Shute inquired as to how RMWD could reach 75% of its customer base. Ms. Largent explained this would most likely occur somewhat naturally with the changing demographics of the population.

16. COMMUNICATION ANNUAL CALENDAR AND NEWSLETTER ENHANCEMENTS

Ms. Harp referenced the handout listing of newsletter content ideas containing Mr. Gray's initial list, some of her ideas for feedback and input, as well as blanks for which ideas from the committee can be incorporated. She noted her preference would be to go through each topic listed get input from the committee as to what should be included in the March 2023 newsletter at a minimum.

Mr. Shute asked how much space was available in the March 2023 newsletter. Ms. Largent stated enough for 2-3 articles.

Ms. Harp read aloud the list of items for those attending the meeting remotely as well as mentioned updates on any CIP projects customers may notice occurring in their neighborhoods. Ms. Largent suggested combining the "Fix a Leak Week", "How to Understand Your Water Meters, and Flume Program would be a good trio for the month of March.

Ms. Harp recommended the committee help plan for the April newsletter. Mr. Shute suggested drought tolerant landscaping. Ms. Largent stated there may also be some messaging regarding wastewater rate increases. Ms. Harp noted the free site audits being available by Mission Conservation District was previously recommended by Ms. Gray. Mr. Stewart agreed this would be a great timing for the audits to be mentioned.

Ms. Largent pointed out Human Resources Assistant, Claudia Ramirez, also suggested featuring the March event with the high school students touring the District. Mr. Shute thought this was a great idea.

Mr. Stewart suggested adding flushing pipes with the free site audits. He explained this would be mostly making everyone aware to drop their water meter once per year to clean out the bottom. Ms. Harp acknowledged this request.

Mr. Shute asked the committee to review the list and bring any additional ideas to the next committee meeting.

17. CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION OPTIONS

Ms. Largent noted this was a carryover item from the previous month for which she had prepared a handout. She stated the committee had asked what type of communications RMWD has with

its customers and as a follow up to that, there was a question as to how many customers RMWD had as well as how many of those for which RMWD had email addresses and phone numbers. She reported RMWD has email addresses for 75% of its 9,631 customers and phone numbers for 62%. She explained staff has a really active effort when customers come to the district offices or call for collecting the most up-to-date information. She mentioned reminders of the importance of RMWD having current phone numbers in the event of an emergency or shutoffs are periodically included on RMWD's website as well as in monthly newsletters.

Mr. Stewart recommended staff get cell phone numbers so that RMWD could send text blasts as a means of communicating quickly with the customer base. Ms. Largent said cell phone numbers are preferred.

Mr. Shute asked if there was any way to have the mail house identify the 25% of the customer base for which RMWD does not have email addresses on file and provide an insert requesting this information to be provided to the District. Ms. Largent stated this is something staff can try; however, the customers that do have addresses on file do not always check their emails for communications from RMWD. She noted the push has been more to get telephone numbers, especially to provide shutdown notifications. Mr. Shute said he realizes not everyone checks their emails, but this was just an idea as to how those without email addresses could be targeted specifically.

Ms. Milakovich stated there is often a link provided by entities where customers can sign up for text alerts. She said although she was unsure of how difficult it would be, but maybe staff could consider doing something like this so that customers could sign up for text alerts or provide their email addresses to receive communications from RMWD.

Ms. Largent stated these were all good ideas.

Mr. Shute inquired as to whether there was something that could be used to encourage customers to provide this information. Ms. Largent stated it should be tempting enough to want information if water service will be interrupted or another emergency was taking place. Mr. Shute agreed. Ms. Milakovich recommended utilizing a capturing graphic may assist. Ms. Largent stated part of this was having staff constantly and continuously pushing customers to provide their contact information.

18. PREPARATION FOR AVOCADO FESTIVAL: APRIL 23, 2023

Ms. Harp referenced a handout she provided noting staff was in the process of ordering promotional products due the current inventory being very low. She pointed out there were some suggested items provided in the handout on which staff would like to receive input from the committee. She mentioned the list of products needs to be narrowed down to keep within the planned budget for this event. She suggested the committee choose two of the three products to have as promotional items for handing out at the Avocado Festival.

Mr. Shute selected the All-in-One Avocado Tool and Avocado Stress Balls. Ms. Milakovich selected the All-in-One Avocado Tool and Hot/Cold Packs. Mr. Stewart agreed with the All-in-One Avocado Tool. Ms. Harp mentioned in previous years, hot/cold packs have been popular as giveaways.

It was noted the committee agreed upon proceeding with the All-in-One Avocado Tool and Hot/Cold Packs.

Ms. Harp talked about the products provided on Page 2 of the handout as she solicited the committee for input as to whether they wanted to continue with the water bottles the District has given away previously or would rather go with a small water bottle along with one of the other products listed. She described the bottles given away in the past are very nice, vacuum insulated, and stainless steel which has been impressive to those visiting the District's booth.

Ms. Milakovich inquired as to how many people visit the District's booth. Ms. Harp noted almost everything brought to the festival is given away.

Mr. Stewart asked the preference of those who have attended the event in the past. Ms. Harp said RMWD should continue to give away a water bottle since RMWD is a water district as well as to encourage the use of reusable water bottles to be refilled with district water; however, it was a matter of how much to spend. She mentioned some ideas for controlling the amount of the more expensive items being given away such as encouraging a type of action to be taken.

Ms. Milakovich recommended there be some means available for to encourage engagement with those who visit the booth. Ms. Harp noted a spinning wheel has been ordered for use at community events where pictures of the promotion items to be won can be displayed.

Mr. Shute pointed out more visitors would have the opportunity to receive a water bottle by going with the smaller one. Ms. Harp added by selecting the smaller water bottle, it would be available to have a variety of other promotion items as opposed to one or the other.

Ms. Milakovich inquired as to whether RMWD's logo would be on the promotional products. Ms. Harp clarified these products would all be ordered with RMWD's logo printed on them. Ms. Milakovich and Mr. Shute stated they preferred the smaller water bottle and Stay Coll Spray Bottle & Fan. Ms. Harp agreed this was a great plan.

Ms. Harp concluded with mentioning the event will be discussed further at the next committee meeting in terms of volunteering to work the booth on April 23rd.

19. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND REAPPOINTMENTS

Ms. Washburn stated Bill Shute has served on the committee for four years and was now up for reappointment. She also mentioned should Frank Becker wish to express an interest in serving as a member of this committee, this would provide an opportunity for the committee to make a recommendation to the Board for that appointment. She confirmed any recommendations made by the committee today would be taken to the Board for consideration on March 28, 2023.

Motion:

To recommend the Board reappoint Bill Shute.

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

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

Ayes: Member Shute, Member Milakovich, Member Stewart.

Mr. Shute stated Mr. Becker has shared with him that he would prefer observing the committee for a while longer before becoming a member.

20. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON

This item was deferred to the April committee meeting.

21. RMWD'S 70TH ANNIVERSARY BRANDING/LOGO PRESENTATION (HUMAN RESOURCES)

Ms. Harp shared a presentation regarding some of the ideas for consideration in terms of planning for RMWD's upcoming 70th anniversary celebration. She noted some of the ideas derived from input from what FPUUD did for their 100th anniversary as well as others she and Mr. Kennedy had already discussed.

Ms. Harp mentioned one of the first items was having a refresh of RMWD's logo, creating one especially for the 70th anniversary, and holding an employee contest for design ideas. She provided additional details on each of the ideas under consideration such as a brand refresh with a permanent logo change, a social media campaign, media/press release/advertisement, anniversary edition challenge coin, community event, educational workshops, volunteer community service project, and district name change.

Ms. Harp reviewed some considerations related to a new logo in terms of simplicity, versatility, scalability, representative, readability, uniqueness, and timelessness. Mr. Shute asked if the goal would be to launch something that would coincide with the 70th anniversary. Ms. Harp stated the promotion would start before then as a means of building up to an anniversary event.

Ms. Harp talked about the possible advantages and risks associated with considering a district name change as well as staff's suggestion for consideration is North County Municipal Water District. Ms. Largent asked whether there was a requirement to include "municipal" in the name or if there was any benefit for such. Ms. Harp said she did not believe there was a requirement.

Ms. Harp reviewed the estimated budget impacts for a 70th anniversary celebration with no primary logo change, new logo with anniversary celebration, and changing the district's name along with a new logo.

Mr. Stewart expressed concern that this was a great deal to consider. He asked when Ms. Harp would like this to go to the Board for consideration. Ms. Harp stated staff had initially envisioned presenting the idea of the employee logo contest to the Board that could be launched rather quickly; however, when this was brought to the Board, it was recommended a name change also be considered which would require more time. She said it was her inclination to defer any name change until a decision is made on the detachment, a new general manager is hired, and a new vamp on the strategic plan takes place.

Mr. Shute agreed the logo needs to be updated; however, if the name is going to change it may be prudent to hold off on the logo. He stated the other ideas presented in terms of celebrating RMWD's 70th anniversary had his support. Ms. Harp noted the logo refresh could take place without the name change while still taking advantage of the 70th anniversary; however, repetitive costs may be paid should it be decided to change the name at a later date.

Ms. Largent pointed out it may be decided not to change the district's name due to RMWD's reputation improving after doing numerous great things that may not want to be lost. Mr. Stewart agreed this could be even more true after detachment.

Mr. Shute asked whether specific costs associated with changing the logo have been broken down by cost. Ms. Harp stated changing the logo along would cost approximately \$30,000; however, some of these expenses would have been incurred already due to a natural

replenishment cycle for certain items (i.e., hats, logo shirts, etc.). She reviewed a breakdown of the costs associated with a logo change. Mr. Shute shared his experience with rebranding and name changes from the past and did not recommend modifying a logo if there is a pending decision for a name change. He suggested focusing on the other activities around the 70th anniversary for now as opposed to going through all the steps to update the logo on everything and having to repeat those steps and incur more costs should RMWD detach from RMWD.

Mr. Stewart stated he was uncomfortable with spending extra money when RMWD was trying everything possible to detach from SDCWA so that water rates can be reduced. He noted RMWD was actively monitoring its spending at a time when it is being forced to spend a great deal of money on capital improvements. He added after looking at the multi-year projections being created as part of the last month's financial review it was realized RMWD will not get to a point where there is financing to replace the 50-60 year old waterlines which will only result in huge operating expenses.

Ms. Largent agreed it may not be a good time to be spending these monies with the messaging coming out soon related to increased rates. She noted she was unsure what the return on investment would be for changing the district's name.

Mr. Gutierrez recommended exploring the name change and getting everything in place should the Board to decide to move forward with such. Mr. Shute agreed it may be best to tie the logo and name change together for use in the future and focus on the 70th anniversary part now.

Ms. Harp noted the Board asked for an estimated cost for changing the name which will be presented at the March Board meeting following which staff can receive guidance as to how to proceed.

Mr. Shute suggested when looking at the name and branding, it would be the time to bring the culture and all the different things that make up what the organization stands for today and in the future and rolling it all into the branding and messaging. He offered to share what he has from he worked on something similar in the past. Ms. Harp noted to do a full initiative would require an outside public relations firm which would cost approximately \$60,000-\$70,000 for their consulting piece in addition to all the other actual costs.

Ms. Milakovich stated due to the upcoming rate increases and wastewater issues, she agreed with the other committee members.

22. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATED MEDIA STORIES

There was no discussion.

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

It was noted appointment of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, RMWD's 70th anniversary branding and logo, committee membership, preparation for the April 23, 2023 Avocado Festival, communication annual calendar and newsletter enhancements, RMWD headquarters being field trip destination for local schools update, detachment update, and HOA and submetering outreach should be on the next committee agenda.

24. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson Shute.

The meeting adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

Bill Shute, Committee Chairperson

Dawn M. Washburn, Board Secretary