

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE
COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE RAINBOW MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
FEBRUARY 18, 2025**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – The Communications and Customer Service Committee Meeting of the Rainbow Municipal Water District on February 18, 2025, was called to order by Chairman Shute at 1:00 p.m. in the Board Room of the District, 3707 Old Highway 395, Fallbrook, CA 92028. Chairman Shute presiding.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **ROLL CALL:** Member Shute, Member Stewart, Member Hoffman (Joined remotely at 2:32 p.m.) Member Kozak, Member Johnson

Also Present: Operations Manager Gutierrez, Information Technology Manager Khattab, Administrative Analyst Weber, District Secretary Quintanar, Customer Service Supervisor Cruz, Administrative Manager Harp, Communications Intern Stewart

4. **SEATING OF ALTERNATES**

None were seated. Chairman Shute welcomed Julie Johnson to the Committee.

5. **ADDITIONS/DELETIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA**

None were requested.

6. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Motion: *To approve the Agenda as presented.*

Action: *Approve, Moved by Member Kozak, Seconded by Member Stewart*

Vote: *Motion carried by unanimous vote (summary: Ayes = 4)*

Ayes: *Member Stewart, Member Shute, Member Kozak, Member Johnson*

7. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were none.

8. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. December 17, 2024

Motion: *To approve the December 17, 2024, Minutes as presented.*

Action: *Approve, Moved by Member Kozak, Seconded by Member Stewart*

Vote: *Motion carried by unanimous vote (summary: Ayes = 4)*

Ayes: *Member Stewart, Member Shute, Member Kozak, Member Johnson*

9. COMMENTS & REQUESTS

Operations Manager Gutierrez reported that Mr. Wiley is working with the Fallbrook Public Utilities District, Valley Center Municipal Water District, and Yuima Municipal Water District to finalize a Mutual Services Agreement. Mr. Gutierrez provided some examples of the benefits of the agreement and relayed that our agencies have a great partnership. Member Stewart expressed his support and Member Johnson commended staff and partnering agencies for being a part of a regional effort.

Member Kozak asked for a comparison of other California agencies' rate increases so we can communicate about our savings with our customers.

Member Johnson reported on her attendance at the Bonsall Community Park ribbon-cutting ceremony, which was well attended.

Chairman Shute suggested that the Customer Service Call Center message be adjusted so customers aren't asked to leave a callback number when the wait times are very short. He also complimented the staff's engagement and assistance with the Lilac Fire and acknowledged the immediate response, communication, and efficient use of resources.

10. APPOINTMENT OR REAPPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON

Motion: To appoint Member Shute as Chairperson

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

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

Ayes: Member Stewart, Member Shute, Member Kozak, Member Johnson

Motion: To appoint Member Stewart as Vice Chairperson

Action: Approve, Moved by Member Johnson, Seconded by Member Kozak

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

Ayes: Member Stewart, Member Shute, Member Kozak, Member Johnson

11. REVIEW AND DISCUSS THE DRAFT STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Ms. Harp reported that in early 2024, staff began developing a Strategic Communications Plan. She presented the draft Plan, explaining the content within each component. The Plan itself is intended to be an internal guidance tool. It will be available on our website, and the community will benefit from its implementation.

Chairman Shute emphasized the importance of communication and collaboration and Member Kozak complimented the Guiding Principles and encouraged everyone to reference those on a regular basis. The Brand and Mission Statements were reviewed, and a brief discussion followed regarding residential versus agricultural customers and avenues for communicating with customers in various areas throughout the District's service area. Member Johnson requested a review of the second sentence within the "Helping our community grow since 1953" component to ensure inclusiveness. Member Kozak suggested holding public workshops on various topics, which may also provide the opportunity to share about our other programs and to be proactive in

our outreach. Chairman Shute relayed his support of that idea and suggested partnering with neighboring districts to do this, perhaps on a quarterly basis. He also suggested the utilization of an infographic about who our ratepayers are and the history and growth of the District. A brief discussion followed regarding methods of sharing information with our customers, such as email, website, and social media posts.

Target audiences were reviewed, and Member Shute urged continual efforts to communicate and engage with local elected officials. Member Kozak added that communications with developers are also very important. A discussion regarding incoming development followed. Member Stewart requested that Water Waste Detection be added as a “need,” as it differs from water use efficiency.

Eight high-level Key Messages were reviewed, and the Committee expressed the importance of relaying that we care about our community and that we are committed to emergency response and preparedness. We should also communicate about the challenges with our infrastructure.

The Committee complimented the Goals and Objectives presented and discussion followed regarding tactics for executing the Plan. Regarding language translation, staff explained that the District utilizes Google Translate as a website tool. A review of the Communication Toolbox prompted discussion about various methods for getting important alerts to our customers. A draft social media policy is being developed which will include general ground rules about interaction. The policy should also address misinformation.

The Committee was asked to provide any additional feedback about the draft Plan by March 6, 2025. Feedback will be integrated into a final draft and presented to the Committee for further review and recommendation.

12. QUARTERLY CUSTOMER SERVICE CALL METRICS

Customer Service Supervisor Cruz reported that the average hold time increased at the end of last year due to a billing glitch and the completion of the SDCWA detachment. Hold times have consistently been under one minute. Average talk time is between four and five minutes, and Mr. Cruz explained that much of the time, staff is spending that time educating our customers. Ms. Harp recognized the Customer Service team for being nominated by their co-workers and winning the “Team of the Year” award for the second year in a row. Member Johnson commended the team and acknowledged their consistent customer service.

13. CROPSWAP PROGRAM UPDATE

Ms. Weber reported that \$1,043,450 in funds have been allocated to Rainbow MWD customer projects. 83 Applications were submitted in 2024, and 58 projects have been approved. 14 are in the pre-inspection or wait list phase, and 5 projects have been completed. Rancho California Water District is seeking additional opportunities for funding and extending the Program. All of the funds for the current program need to be distributed by this spring. Ms. Weber also provided a breakdown of the projects by type.

14. WATER USE EFFICIENCY UPDATE

Ms. Weber reported that 104 flume devices were sold in 2024, and only 77 percent of those are installed and operational. Of the 1,000 devices originally purchased, 156 remain. Rainbow offers

an instant rebate, bringing the purchase price for the device down to \$49.00. and we continue to reach out to customers to encourage installation and use. There are only 236 devices connected within our service area. The customer support team at Flume also sends informational tips to customers. To encourage installation, MWD withholds payment of the rebate until the device is installed. MWD also offers five devices, some with remote auto shutoff capability. Ms. Harp mentioned that many insurance companies are requiring homeowners to install an auto shutoff device, which would be beneficial for the customer and the District.

15. 2025 EVENT PLANNING AND COMMUNITY EVENTS UPDATE

Ms. Weber provided an overview of events planned for the year, including the Avocado Festival, Bonsall High School field trip to Lake Skinner, poster contest, wildfire symposium, Vallecitos Rainbow Run, North County Fire open house, job fairs, and blood drives. Staff recommended a reduction of promotional materials and increased educational outreach at this year's Avocado Festival. Chairman Shute acknowledged the challenge of drawing interest to the booth. "Graze at the Fields" is a fund-raising event being planned by the Farmers Bureau, which will require an entrance fee.

Mr. Gutierrez provided information on the Wildfire Symposium planned for May 3, 2025. Ms. Harp reported on the theme of the presentations which will likely focus on knowing your neighbors and zone. Each agency will provide a short presentation and answer questions at the event.

Chairman Shute expressed hesitancy about participating in the "Graze at the Fields" event and expressed support for the other events being planned. Member Hoffman reported that she had attended the Farm Bureau meetings and suggested more involvement with agricultural groups in Riverside County.

16. NEWSLETTER CONTENT PLANNING

The January newsletter featured information on water sources, the Water Awareness Poster Contest, and public safety power shutoffs. February's included Rainbow Water's emergency response efforts to provide aid for the Eaton, Lilac, and Pala fires, a water supply conditions update, flow monitor device rebates, and student programs. The March newsletter will include videos on how to fix a leak, irrigation tips for Water Wise for Life; World Water Day, and educational outreach. Information planned for April's newsletter includes Water Wise for Life and the launch of a new conservation page, a snowpack report, announcements of the Wildfire Symposium and the Avocado Festival, and a construction/traffic notice. Chairman Shute opined that information on how to locate a residential waterline might be very useful, and also suggested the addition of water quality information to our website for instances where customers may notice a change in taste or odor.

17. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATED MEDIA STORIES

Several articles published in Village News and a Municipal Water Leader publication were shared. Mr. Gutierrez reported about mutual aid provided by Rainbow staff during the Eaton Fire. He also relayed information about efforts and resources utilized to fight the Lilac and Pala Fires. Ms. Weber also shared an article published by the Associated Press featuring the District and the use of heli-hydrants to fight fires.

18. SUGGESTED AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Committee Members were asked to provide additional feedback to staff on the draft Strategic Communications Plan.

19. ADJOURNMENT - To Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at 1:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Shute at 3:17 p.m.



Terese Quintanar, District Secretary



Bill Shute, Committee Chairperson