

WEST SLOPE WATER DISTRICT
Regular Board of Commissioners Meeting
September 15, 2021
Meeting Summary

CALL TO ORDER

Present on Virtual Meeting: Chair Andy Smith, Commissioners Ramesh Krishnamurthy, Susan Meamber, Paul Schuler, and Carol Wild

Management Staff: Michael Grimm, General Manager

Absent: Lucy Dawes, District Finance & Customer Service Manager

Public: None

1.0 – CALL TO ORDER & ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE

Chair Smith called to order the regular meeting of the West Slope Water District Board of Commissioners at 5:07 P.M., Wednesday, September 15, 2021. The meeting was held through Zoom remote teleconferencing technology. The public was made aware of the meeting through the District’s website (agenda posted and link to the meeting were posted on the website).

2.0 - PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

No public comments were received by District staff. Chair Smith asked the Board for permission to advance Section 5 (5.2 - Other Topics to be Raised by the Board and 5.3 - Agenda Items for Future Meetings) ahead in the meeting to follow Section 3.0 – Consent Agenda. The consensus of the Board was to proceed as proposed by Chair Smith.

3.0 – CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Wild asked for Agenda Item 3.6 to be removed from the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Wild asked about the meal expenses for two different breakfast meetings involving other water utilities. Mr. Grimm stated the expenses are for two manager breakfast meetings involving Portland wholesale customers and Washington County water managers. Attendees take turns picking up the check for all at each meeting. Coincidentally, it was West Slope’s turn for each meeting. The rotation list is kept updated by TVWD staff. Commissioner Wild made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda consisting of Agenda Items 3.1 through 3.8. Commissioner Krishnamurthy seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

5.0 – COMMISSIONERS COMMUNICATION

5.2 – Other Topics Raised by the Board: Chair Smith stated his desire to have a high-level discussion about the District’s response to the current Covid-19 pandemic, and that his primary concern was doing what was possible from a policy standpoint to ensure a healthy workforce

and a continuity of operation plan (COOP) that can address the District's needs if District staff contracts the Covid-19 virus. The discussion will be about what our plans and goals will be. Chair Smith stated he hoped to have an overview of the federal and state requirements and a review of what the District is currently doing, and said he wasn't looking for a vote on anything at this meeting. However, Chair Smith hoped have enough discussion to provide direction to staff to return to October meeting with policy concepts for the Board to consider.

Commissioner Schuler stated protecting staff to a higher standard is needed for an organization dedicated to protecting public health for employees and District customers.

Chair Smith reviewed the Biden Administration's recent proposed mandate to require private businesses with over 100 employees to implement a mandatory vaccination policy. OSHA would be tasked with producing an emergency rule that state organizations like OR-OSHA and/or OHA could adopt for Oregon businesses public and private. There is no timeline on OSHA issuing a rule. Oregon currently has multiple measures in place to address worker and consumer protection from Covid. The Cities of Portland and Lake Oswego have expressed a desire to implement a mandatory vaccination policy as well as Multnomah County, Washington County, and Tualatin Valley Water District. Some venues have such as Metro's conference center require proof of vaccination or recent negative Covid testing for entry into the facility.

Commissioner Krishnamurthy stated his observations from being in India (a highly densely populated area) for six weeks convince him that masking and handwashing have truly been effective for keeping the spread of Covid in India down. His concern is that we stay within the confines of what is required by OHA and OR-OSHA for West Slope and anything beyond that should be left to the discretion of the General Manager and the District staff to implement effective measures in the within the District's COOP and standard operating procedures.

Commissioner Wild highlighted the need for fiscal responsibility and expressed a concern on what will the impact be to the District's employee health insurance rates if employees get Covid and incur hospitalization and treatment expenses. Also, because the District is small, Commissioner Wild raised the concern if District staff can continue to operate and care for the water system if multiple District staff are struck with Covid. Commissioner Wild referred to (and Mr. Grimm confirmed) the District has a shared worker agreement through ORWARN if staff is needed in an emergency situation (earthquake, terror attack, pandemic, for example).

Commissioner Schuler expressed concern about the District's business continuity in case of a Covid outbreak among staff, and he supports looking at some policy options at a future Board meeting (Commissioner Schuler left the meeting at 5:25 PM).

Commissioner Meamber believes based on science she has seen that individuals need to be vaccinated to stop the pandemic, and a vaccination is the only way to stop the spread of Covid. She cited the City of Portland requiring employees to be vaccinated for Covid and admitted there are/will be lessons to be learned from area organizations who are moving forward with similar policies. Both Chair Smith and Commissioner Wild agreed that they would be interested in learning from other entities. Commissioner Meamber believes individuals have many reasons for choosing not to be vaccinated which are all valid including reasons to seek exemptions for being vaccinated.

Commissioner Wild stated the District's COOP is important to have recognizing the COOP is a dynamic, living document as issues and situations change and District staff need to react to those changes through the COOP. Commissioner Krishnamurthy agreed and stated District staff

needs to have as much flexibility as possible. Mr. Grimm stated the standing COOP was last updated January 2021 before the impact of the Delta variant on the population, and it should be updated now to include issues like how staff can get a Covid test if one is needed.

Chair Smith asked how much of the state's mandates to date have been written into District's personnel policy or are they captured solely in the COOP. Mr. Grimm stated no personnel policies have been adopted into the employee manual as the Board needs to adopt policies to amend the manual. To date, the state mandates regarding Covid impacting the District have been complied with through the COOP and standard operating procedures for staff. Since the mandates have been very dynamic, change frequently, and have not been permanent rules, the District has been complying with the state mandates as a practice of operation. Chair Smith commented District staff should manage the content of the COOP, but stated the Board could help with policies to make sure implementation of state law is compliant with state law and is up to date such as the implementation of an indoor mask mandate (released August 2021).

Chair Smith shared infection and death statistics in Oregon and asked what is the public and private responsibility to create a barrier to Covid citing that health care workers, teachers, and other entities with large number of employees are subject to a mandatory vaccination mandate. Chair Smith views the issue as an operational issue as well as public service issue to protect public health and believes the District has a higher responsibility to follow with firm Board policy.

Commissioner Krishnamurthy agreed with Chair Smith's summary and stated the District should be complying with the requirements that apply to the District. Commissioner Meamber confirmed a policy is needed but the District should have some information available to employees with concerns or desire to seek an exemption to vaccination. Commissioner Wild pointed out the long history we have in the US with vaccinations and would like to see the District move in this direction from a best practices standpoint.

Chair Smith recognized consensus from the Board to look at some policy options at the October meeting of the Board of Commissioners. Chair Smith offered some thoughts on policy options including vaccinations, enhanced masking (KN95 masks, for example) especially for unvaccinated employees, incentives for getting vaccinated, weekly testing, and a timeline to implement such policy options.

Commissioner Meamber stated she would be interested in what other entities have done to address this issue. Commissioner Wild stated other entities have created some FAQ documents for their employees which could be helpful to District staff. Chair Smith asked if Mr. Grimm has enough information to return to the Board in October with policy options. Mr. Grimm responded that staff will do the best job possible to create a presentation for the next meeting understanding his desire is to also review the new OSHA, OR-OSHA, and OHA rules that emerge and may or may not apply directly to the District. Mr. Grimm will also review this issue with staff and will carefully seek the views and ideas from each staff member on the concept of District wide policy. Though policies are appropriate in many parts of the overall workforce, there may be better ways to achieve the health goals we all have without creating more harm than benefit with a hastily created policy before we have all the data. Mr. Grimm acknowledged the value of the Board's opinion and the views of individual Commissioners regarding vaccinations, and he reiterated the value of approaching any kind of policy with careful consideration of all the relevant facts and the inclusion of staff so as not to make any policy appear to be solely a top-down approach.

Chair Smith commented the government mandates are similar to seatbelt and hardhat mandates to protect lives, and stated he had less sympathy toward people's feelings on this issue but recognizes the need for exemptions as needed.

4.0 – DISTRICT ACTIVITIES

4.1 – General Managers Report

Mr. Grimm stated staff will be meeting with AKS Engineering to discuss the coordination with ODOT on the Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway project. The District's Operations Manager Bart Johnson announced his last day at West Slope will be the last week of September (probably the 29th or 30th). Quenton Anderson has been hired by the District to fill one of the vacant field utility worker positions. Phase 2 work with the FCS Group and Portland along with the wholesale water customers has wrapped up with a look at starting Phase 3 (the creation of the new Portland rate model) before the end of 2021. Mr. Grimm provided a short summary of the work done to date in Phase 1 and Phase 2, and what needs to be done by Portland to have FCS continue with the work on this project to get a final agreement by June 2022. Chair Smith asked if the two-month timeline to get a new contract between Portland and the FCS Group is realistic, and Mr. Grimm responded that the process appears to be on an expedited track.

Chair Smith and Commissioner Krishnamurthy both thanked Mr. Grimm for keeping the Board up to date on the wholesale water sales agreement and the Beaverton Hillsdale Hwy water main project. Commissioner Wild asked about the potential for matching grants from SDAO for purchasing security cameras, and Mr. Grimm responded SDAO is offering matching grants up to \$10,000 for the purchase and installation of security cameras.

5.0 – COMMISSIONERS COMMUNICATION (5.1, 5.3, and 5.4)

Commissioner Meamber attended the SDAO Board Member training which switched from an in-person training event to a virtual event and found it be helpful but recognized the benefit of the training being offered in-person to be able to capture the interaction between other elected officials. Mr. Grimm mentioned he updated the Commissioner's Handbook prior to the training events for Commissioners Meamber and Schuler.

Commissioner Krishnamurthy requested the Board's packet be separated into a single Agenda document and then a second document with the rest of the Board packet information. Commissioner Wild also commented it would be helpful to have the meeting summary or a brief summary (high points of decisions and actionable items) sent out to the Board a week or two after the Board's meeting. Commissioner Wild commented she received an anonymous note at her house with her free plums regarding a District vehicle's speed in the neighborhood.

Chair Smith stated he would like to have a conversation about the District's Strategic Plan for the benefit of the two new commissioners at the January 2022 Board meeting. The conversation would include a status update on meeting the plan's goals. Commissioner Wild stated it might be helpful to move that discussion up one or two months in case there are some budget impacts. Mr. Grimm informed the Board that the Strategic Plan is posted on the District's website as well as being part of the Commissioner's Handbook.

The Board's consensus was this meeting went well even through all agenda items.

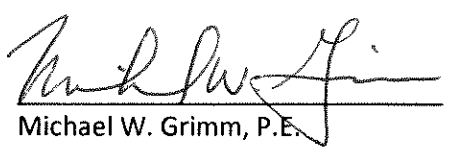
6.0 - ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Commissioner Wild moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Meamber seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Chair Smith adjourned the September 15, 2021 Regular Board of Commissioners meeting at 7:04 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved:



Michael W. Grimm, P.E.
Acting Secretary

