

SLVWD Board Meeting Summary

June 4, 2020

Mark Dolson

Public Input

Jim Mosher questioned a claim made in the previous meeting by Director Fultz. Director Fultz has repeatedly asserted that the rate increase is being entirely consumed by increased operating expenses. Jim Mosher noted that the rate increase was originally motivated by the need for loans for overdue infrastructure repair and that the newly approved budget appears to appropriately reflect this new cost. He requested that Director Fultz either provide some further clarification or else revise his claim. Director Fultz replied that this issue will be best addressed at an upcoming meeting in conjunction with a discussion of all outstanding District liabilities.

Old Business

Santa Cruz County Use of Glyphosate on District Property

Director Moran was concerned that Santa Cruz County might possibly be planning to use glyphosate at easements on the District's Kirby Street property in the vicinity of the Felton Library. Both the county and the District have a goal of eliminating pesticides, but the county allows for individual exemptions whereas the District has an absolute ban on the use of glyphosate, and the county has not committed in writing to honoring this ban on District property. It turns out that this particular exemption was for using a rodenticide for rodent control behind the library. However, this was only discovered after various Board members had already reached out in alarm to multiple elected officials. Director Moran recommended a meeting to develop a formal long-term solution. Staff supports this and will facilitate a meeting between parks, county, library, staff, and Director Moran.

New Business

Integrated Pest Management Policy

Carly Blanchard (Environmental Planner) introduced a draft version of an Integrated Pest Management policy that has been under development for the past year. This draft is informed by multiple other regional plans; it follows the county's policy pretty closely and has been approved by the Environmental Committee. Director Moran noted that this also constitutes

the fulfillment of a personal commitment that he initiated in 2016. He believes that it provides a sound and transparent foundation that the District can continue to build upon.

Director Farris requested an offline conference call with Carly and Rick Rogers (Director Manager) to go over three minor points. Director Fultz agreed that only some minor clean-up is needed to finalize the document and said that he was ready to approve it. Director Henry concurred.

Jim Mosher commended the Board for its work on this and for its goal of eliminating pesticide use. He asked what the plan is for dealing with broom on the Sand Hills. Director Moran replied that Carly has scheduled biologist Jody McGraw to attend the July Environmental Committee meeting. She is working on a habitat conservation plan, part of which involves finding ways to deal with invasive species on the Olympia Watershed. Broom will be discussed at this time.

The Board adopted the draft policy as final by a vote of 5-0.

California Special District 2020 Board of Directors Election

Rick Rogers asked the Board to review and consider the nominees for CSDA Board of Directors Seat C in the Coastal Network for the Term 2021-2023. There are two nominees, and the District is entitled to one vote, to be submitted by July 10, 2020.

None of the Board members or public attendees had any personal knowledge of the two nominees, but Directors Fultz, Henry, and Swan all expressed a preference for candidate Ferrante based on his submitted material. The Board voted 5-0 to approve him.

CALFIRE California Forest Improvement Program

Carly Blanchard explained that the District needs to formally name a representative, ideally someone who can both serve as a contact and sign documents, as part of the grant application process. The Board voted 5-0 to approve Rick Rogers as contact and signatory with the understanding that Rick will continue to bring important documents to the Board for its review.

Board Policy Manual Update

Gina Nicholls (General Counsel) explained that the use of Zoom meetings has introduced a complication into the District's established practice for conforming to legal requirements that Board documents be available to all in advance of Board discussions. It is no longer sufficient for last-minute hard-copy documents to be made available in the meeting room, so a revised policy is needed.

The Board engaged in an extended discussion of the various issues that need to be balanced. It may not always be feasible to post last-minute documents online, and it is also generally desirable for Board members to receive all relevant materials well in advance. On the other hand, there may sometimes be last-minute revisions or customer requests which it would still be desirable to bring promptly to the Board's attention. Another question is whether the same rules should be applied to both Board meetings and Committee meetings. The Board decided to send this topic to the Administrative Committee for further discussion.

Public Relations Presentation

Marie Bracco of Chatterbox provided a first report on the work conducted for the District by Chatterbox since the signing of their contract in March. The primary topic was the April survey of District customers which elicited nearly 1000 responses. These responses were intended to represent 1000 different households (out of roughly 8000), but there is some possibility that multiple members of a household may have responded from separate IP addresses.

Marie characterized the response rate as unexpectedly high (by maybe a factor of two) and the overall response as overwhelmingly positive. 79% of respondents rated themselves as either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" while only 6% were "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied." 52% of customers said that the amount they pay for water is "about right," while about 31% called it "too high."

Directors Farris and Foltz questioned the demographics (elderly customers were over-represented) and also suggested that dissatisfaction with the current rates might well be much higher than these numbers would indicate.

Chatterbox will be meeting with Carly and Rick to plan next steps. Chatterbox envisions more use of social media, regular public relations outreach, monthly press releases, grassroots community relations, local events to consider participating in, speaking engagement opportunities, monthly e-newsletters, quarterly print newsletters, and more. A detailed plan and timeline should be available in the next 60 days.

Board members were appreciative of the work done by Chatterbox to date. They expressed the greatest interest in learning more about negative/critical public comments and about engaging more effectively with the 30-50-year-old demographic. Director Fultz also asked how we will measure the impact of this outreach going forward (i.e., how will we calculate Return on Investment?).