

SLVWD Board Meeting Summary

August 6, 2020

Mark Dolson

Unfinished Business

Governance Training Debriefing

Consultant Amy Howorth reviewed her work with the Board, which culminated in a 6-hour Zoom session on 7/22. As noted by Director Moran, the Board had a legal obligation to complete this training in the wake of the 2018 Grand Jury report even though the relevant individuals are now different. Independent of this requirement, all the Board members want to work well together and promote civic involvement, and this training had the potential to help with this. Amy summarized the 7/22 session as follows:

- Attributes of the Ideal Board Member. The Board agreed that the Ideal Board Member represents everyone in the District (regardless of who they voted for), listens openly (avoiding premature bias or unstated assumptions), respects everyone (including staff and staff's time), has a history of community involvement, and has experience with water issues (or is willing to learn). The Board agreed that this role is very time consuming.
- Campaigning vs. Governing. The goal of the campaign is to distinguish oneself and win whereas the goal of governing is to find common ground and build consensus. Campaigning is short term, and governing is long term. It is also easy to make campaign promises that turn out to be impossible to fulfill; it is less easy to recognize and acknowledge this. Lastly, governing entirely in public (in conformance with the Brown Act) is particularly difficult.
- Contentious Issues. In individual preparatory interviews with Amy in February, many Board members asked questions of the form, "How do I handle the following behavior or situation?" By July, Board members felt better able to manage these challenges on their own. Board members all want to create an atmosphere that avoids toxic contention. They also want to interact constructively with the public while conforming to the Brown Act. Lastly, it was noted that different individual Board members deal very differently with pointed criticism.
- Differences Between Board and Staff Goals. These were discussed and agreed upon.
- Optional Additional Work on Team Norms. This was on Amy's agenda, but she downplayed it in her summary.

There was no public comment on this agenda item, but Jim Mosher commended the Board for their work on this in a later agenda item.

Rate Assistance Program Update

The new Rate Assistance Program (RAP) launched July 15th, and this was the first opportunity for staff to update the Board on the public response. District Manager Rick Rogers reported that, as of 7/28 there are 14 approved participants and 6 applications still pending. Staff will continue to report on this.

Director Moran asked about next steps, and Rick said that there will be further advertising using social media and other forms of outreach (including live conversation with staff). Director Swan asked about Press Banner publicity (Rick said that this occurred) and possible radio mentions.

Jim Mosher expressed disappointment that so few people have signed up so far and asked about other steps that can be taken to further publicize the program. Various other members of the public said that notification of the RAP program was lacking from their bills. Beth Thomas said that it might take a few months of advertising to get this rolling and suggested reaching out to organizations like Valley Churches United so that they could directly alert people who come to them.

Director Fultz said that it would be desirable to see, over time, if the people with the most difficulty in paying were taking advantage of the program. He also suggested that the District not use all the allocated \$25K if there is insufficient public interest.

Jim Mosher suggested that, if interest remains low, the District could consider increasing the monthly discount from \$10 to \$20. Also, people (particularly those most in need) may be under informed about the PG&E CARE program itself. Director Farris seconded Jim's suggestion that the District seriously consider upping the contribution per person if it continues to run low on subscribers. The intent is to help people as much as possible with the available funds.

New Business

New Budget and Finance Committee Members

The Budget and Finance Committee is composed of two Board members and two public members, all of whom serve until 12/31/20. The only public member resigned in July, and two replacement applications were subsequently received and reviewed by the Board. Both applicants were present and introduced themselves during public input.

Rivka Lund is a CPA who loves numbers and has lived in the SLV for three years. She heard about the position from her neighbor, Director Fultz.

Stephanie Weingarden has spent over 25 years in banking and has had a lot of experience with audits, policy, and procedure. She has lived in Boulder Creek for 14 years with her husband and two daughters. She regularly volunteers at school, loves the local community, and appreciates the opportunity to give back.

A third intended applicant, Tina To, reported that she had applied via US mail weeks ago but never received an acknowledgment. Secretary Holly Hossack stated that she never received anything from Tina. Counsel Gina Nicholls indicated that the formal process calls for the District to consider only those applications officially received. President Swan sympathized and apologized to Tina on behalf of the District and the Board. Tina said that she was a little confused but not offended.

Director Henry made a motion in favor of accepting both applicants. President Swan agreed as did Director Farris. Director Fultz seconded the motion and said that the available talent is astounding; he was pleased and humbled that Rivka and Stephanie were interested. The motion passed 5-0.

Memorandum of Understanding with Employees

Counsel Nicholls explained that all employees are members either of the Classified Employees Union or the Management, Supervisory Employees Unit. The current MOUs with these two entities automatically renew on 1/1/21 if neither party intervenes. Employees have indicated that they do not intend to renegotiate or modify either of the current MOUs. The Board has the option of initiating its own action or continuing the current agreements.

Director Fultz asked what the effect would be if neither side opens negotiations. Counsel Nicholls explained that salary schedules would remain in effect but would be updated according to the annual Cost of Living Adjustment. For Classified employees, the increase is 3%. For Management, a local inflationary index is used (3.7% last year, 2.0% this year). The benefits package automatically increases as dictated by the insurance carrier.

Director Moran asked about the length of the MOU contract. Counsel Nicholls said the original three years expired at the end of 2019. The MOU gets renewed automatically for another year each year that no party gives notice of intent to renegotiate or modify.

President Swan commented that there is a lot of financial pressure on everybody at this time and that it might be prudent to take a look at the agreements currently in place. Director Henry said that she respects the staff's desire not to negotiate. She feels that the staff has been through a lot (exhausting PG&E outages, Covid, etc.), is really proud of them, and doesn't want to force the issue. Director Fultz concurred. The Board decided not to initiate any action.

Department Status Reports

Director Fultz requested an update on the two 2020 pipeline projects. Rick Rogers said that ground will be broken Monday 8/10 on Hillside in Boulder Creek. This project is scheduled to take 59 days. It will be followed by the project on California Drive in Ben Lomond. Both

projects should be completed in 2020. Two other projects are currently in the design phases. They will go out for bid late this fall and start construction in early spring.

Director Henry urged everyone to read the June Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency (SMGWA) report. These reports will get more and more involved as the meetings are growing increasingly technical. The July meeting focused more on surface water. Lois, Lew, and Rick have been working with a hydrologist, and the stakes for the District are significant. The issue will be placed on the agenda of an upcoming Board meeting so that it can be adequately discussed.

Director Moran commented that the minutes for all committee meetings have become both timelier and more helpful. He expressed his appreciation.